

# Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

January 2007

<i>NOAA Gulf of Mexico News</i> .....	3
<b>Gulf of Mexico Alliance Nutrients Team Holds Criteria Conference</b> .....	3
<b>Volunteer Phytoplankton Monitoring Network Expands</b> .....	3
<b>CICEET Sponsors Workshop for Newly Funded Investigators</b> .....	3
<b>Families Discover NOAA at First Annual Ocean Celebration</b> .....	3
<b>Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Mapping Web Site Launched</b> .....	4
<b>Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center Grand Opening</b> .....	4
<b>NOAA Dedicates Commemorative Marker and New CORS Station</b> .....	4
<b>Reef Fish Guide to Aid South Florida/Caribbean Monitoring and Management</b> .....	5
<b>Interagency Report on List of Top Scientific Publications</b> .....	5
<b>Watershed Task Force Will Revise Landmark ‘Dead Zone’ Action Plan</b> .....	5
<b>“One-Stop” For Gulf Coast Severe Weather Planning and Preparation</b> .....	5
<b>NOAA’s Largest Barrier Island Project</b> .....	6
<b>Studies of HAB Effects on Copepods to Inform Ecosystem Models for Improved Prediction of Harmful Algal Blooms</b> .....	6
<b>New Optical Method Tested for Routine Monitoring of <i>Karenia brevis</i> to Improve Early Detection of Harmful Algal Blooms</b> .....	7
<b>Increasing Seagrass Abundance in Florida Bay Indicates Resiliency of this Critical Component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan</b> .....	7
<b>2006 Coastal Resource Management Survey Results</b> .....	7
<b>Digital Coast: Legislative Atlas Web Site Now Available</b> .....	7
<b>NOAA National Ocean Service 2006 Accomplishments Report Available On-line</b> .....	8
<b>“One-NOAA” Collaboration Produces Tool for Habitat Restoration Monitoring</b> .....	8
<b>NOAA Makes Ocean Temperature Data Available to All</b> .....	8

NOAA Seeks Input on Ocean Fisheries Research Plan.....	9
Sanctuary Program’s New Star Takes the Stage.....	9
<i>In the Gulf States</i> .....	10
Alabama Working Waterfronts Coalition Partners with MS-AL Sea Grant.....	10
Two Conservation Groups Unveil the Alabama Water Agenda .....	10
Rookery Bay Holds Annual Birding Festival.....	11
New Green Lodging Partner Promotes Resource Conservation.....	11
Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Receives International Recognition.....	12
Louisiana DNR Hosts Clean Cities Conference in New Orleans.....	13
Governor Blanco Announces \$6.2 Million in Funding for Atchafalaya Basin Projects.....	13
In Unanimous Vote, Plaquemines Parish Adopts Flood Elevation Guidelines.....	13
Mississippi Reveals Plans for Storm-proof Infrastructure .....	14
Coast Artist Marty Wilson Holds Poster Signing at MS DMR.....	14
Sempier to Coordinate Regional Marine Research Planning Project .....	15
Galveston Bay Estuary Program to Receive Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Award in Washington, D.C.....	16
Patterson Focuses on Coast for 80 <sup>th</sup> Legislative Session .....	16
Brays Bayou/Mason Park Project Earns National Acclaim .....	17
<i>Grant Opportunities</i> .....	19
Private Stewardship Grants Available .....	19
National Water Quality Monitoring Network: Announcement of Pilot Studies and Request for Statement of Interest .....	19
EPA Requests Applications: Smart Growth Implementation Assistance .....	21
<i>Energy</i> .....	22
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Holds Hearing on OCS Resources; Senator Landrieu Plans 'OCS II' Bill .....	22
Clean Energy Bill Passed in the House; White House Issues Statement on Bill.....	22
<i>Training and Conferences</i> .....	23
HD.gov – A New Interagency Human Dimensions Web Portal .....	23
Global Climate Change: The Status of Science and Implications for Coastal Louisiana .....	23
Ecological Impacts of Hypoxia on Living Resources Workshop.....	24
Gulf Coast Floods Recovery: Mission Mitigation.....	25
Florida Climate Change Conference .....	26
8th Annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference on SMART GROWTH.....	26
Call for Abstracts, Center for Natural Resource Economics & Policy.....	27

## NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

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### ***Gulf of Mexico Alliance Nutrients Team Holds Criteria Conference***

The 2007 Nutrients Criteria Conference was held from January 16-18 in Gulf Breeze, Florida. Sessions focused on the status of criteria development at the federal and state level, a review of data resources for nutrient criteria development, a review of Chlorophyll methodologies, the role of ocean observations, remote sensing, and modeling, and State monitoring needs. Two poster sessions were also held that highlighted different nutrient measurement methodologies, nutrient reduction strategies, and ongoing nutrient collection studies. Presentations and posters from the conference are available [online](#). The Alliance Nutrients Team meets regularly to address the nutrient reduction goals identified in [The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan](#). For more information, contact [Laurie Rounds](#).

### ***Volunteer Phytoplankton Monitoring Network Expands***

The Southeast Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (SEPMN), in collaboration with Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the Texas Naturalist Program, has incorporated sample sites along the Texas coast. Data generated by the Texan volunteer groups will support the NOAA Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast by providing distribution and seasonal abundance of the toxic dinoflagellate, *Karenia brevis*, critical for the validation of the forecast. SEPMN enhances the awareness of harmful algae and directly engages volunteers in coastal stewardship, with 60 schools and citizen groups monitoring over 72 sites in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Virgin Islands, Hawaii and now Texas. For more information, contact [Steve Morton](#).

### ***CICEET Sponsors Workshop for Newly Funded Investigators***

The University of New Hampshire/NOAA Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) hosted a workshop for newly-funded investigators and Gulf of Mexico coastal managers at the Five Rivers Coastal Resource Center in Daphne, AL. Each CICEET project that began in fiscal year 2007 was selected for its potential to address a priority coastal management challenge through the enhancement or development of technology. The projects focus on challenges that include harmful algal bloom assessment, water quality monitoring, nutrient pollution mitigation, improved stormwater control systems, the treatment of contaminated sediment, and seagrass restoration. The workshop allowed CICEET-sponsored investigators to present their projects directly to coastal managers and elicited feedback to help increase the usability of their tools. For more information, contact [Dwight Trueblood](#).

### ***Families Discover NOAA at First Annual Ocean Celebration***

Three hundred people attended the first annual NOAA Ocean Discovery Day in Galveston, TX, for a day of fun and education featuring 20 activity stations from different NOAA programs. The event was organized and hosted by the staff of Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary and NOAA Fisheries' Galveston Lab to celebrate NOAA's 200th anniversary and the sanctuary's 15th anniversary. Visitors learned such things as how geographic information systems are used to characterize habitats in

NOAA Sanctuaries, why wetlands are important and how NOAA Fisheries protects them and to how to tie knots that a NOAA Corps officer might use on a research vessel. In addition to local staff, representatives from Monitor, Gray's Reef, and Florida Keys national marine sanctuaries were on hand to make the day a success, as well as 25 volunteers. For more information, contact [Shelley DuPuy](#).

## ***Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Mapping Web Site Launched***

The NOAA Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project recently launched its official project website. In the wake of the 2005 hurricane season, nearshore waters of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana are being surveyed for the purpose of locating and mapping marine debris. This site is an outlet for all information associated with hydrographic survey data identifying risks to commercial fishing and shrimping activities in the Northern Gulf of Mexico coastal zone and provides users with critical information and maps of debris laden survey areas, indicating the geographic position of each debris contact. The Office of Response and Restoration team is also developing an Internet Mapping System interface to deliver debris data and location to users via dynamic, scaleable, and easy-to-use web-based maps. This information will be useful to ongoing debris removal efforts being coordinated by state natural resource managers, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. For more information, visit [www.gulfofmexico.marinedebris.noaa.gov](http://www.gulfofmexico.marinedebris.noaa.gov).

## ***Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center Grand Opening***

On January 13 in Key West, NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary hosted a grand opening ceremony in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the South Florida Water Management District. This state-of-the-art facility was created to inspire students, local residents, and visitors to become good stewards of the unique Florida Keys ecosystem, and help visitors develop an appreciation and personal responsibility for protecting the Florida Keys and south Florida ecosystem. The festivities included a donor recognition breakfast, grand opening ceremony, ribbon cutting, premiere of the Center's orientation movie, and activities for the children. For more information, contact [David A. Score](#).

## ***NOAA Dedicates Commemorative Marker and New CORS Station***

At the opening of the Eco-Discovery Center in Key West, NOAA will also be placing a commemorative geodetic marker and recognizing the installation of the 1001st Continuously Operating Reference Station (CORS). The station will usher in a new generation of CORS by becoming the first to provide precise positioning data in real time from both the U.S. Global Positioning System and the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System. The station is part of the International Ocean Observing System (IOOS) and is co-located with the tide station in Key West to provide crucial data for measuring local sea level changes. For more information, contact [Casey Brennan](#).

## ***Reef Fish Guide to Aid South Florida/Caribbean Monitoring and Management***

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, in collaboration with the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center, University of Hawaii, and University of Miami, has developed a comprehensive [Guide to Monitoring Reef Fish in the National Park Service's South Florida/Caribbean Network](#). Based on fieldwork and reef fish data gathered over the past 10 years, the guide details survey strategies that could be used to support management decisions on maintaining, enhancing, or restoring the ecological integrity of reef fish communities. For more information, contact [Charles Menza](#).

## ***Interagency Report on List of Top Scientific Publications***

The Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force report on the levee system around New Orleans was named twelfth in [Discover Magazine's](#) list of the Top 100 Science Stories of 2006. The report, the work of many organizations including NOAA's National Geodetic Survey (NGS) and NOAA's Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, identified several locations in southeast Louisiana where additional NOAA Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS) and National Water Level Observation Network instrumentation is needed. It also cited the need for additional supporting infrastructure to define and monitor changes in geodetic and water surface elevations datums. This report was the impetus for NGS' current cooperative project with FEMA to provide updated heights on approximately 320 benchmarks in southern Louisiana, in addition to establishing many new CORS. For more information, contact [Gilbert Mitchell](#).

## ***Watershed Task Force Will Revise Landmark 'Dead Zone' Action Plan***

The 13th Meeting of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Task Force convened an executive session on January 10 with VADM Lautenbacher and Jack Dunnigan representing NOAA. A public meeting followed on January 11. The task force adopted six major themes to guide the revision of the landmark 2001 Action Plan for Reducing, Mitigating, and Controlling Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, which specifies actions to reduce the gulf's hypoxic zone -- commonly called the "Dead Zone" -- from its current decadal average area of 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> to 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Thematic areas include integrating task force activities into national trends, and policies including biofuel-driven changes in agriculture, reauthorization of the Farm Bill, and relationships with wetland loss/restoration in the lower basin. The themes also call for more specificity and accountability in the actions, as well as robust public participation. More information can be found online at: [www.cop.noaa.gov/stressors/extremeevents/hab/features/hypoxiafs\\_report1206.html](http://www.cop.noaa.gov/stressors/extremeevents/hab/features/hypoxiafs_report1206.html). For more information, contact [Rob Magnien](#) or [Alan Lewitus](#).

## ***"One-Stop" For Gulf Coast Severe Weather Planning and Preparation***

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, NOAA's National Coastal Data Development Center expanded its efforts to develop a comprehensive Gulf of Mexico coastal region information center by launching the Coastal Studies, Information, and Data for the Ecosystem (C-SIDE) website. C-SIDE provides direct links to local, state and federal information pertaining to severe weather preparation, monitoring and

impact across the Gulf of Mexico coastal region as well as recommendations for home preparation and evacuation, time-sensitive weather products and storm surge data.

## **NOAA's Largest Barrier Island Project**

Despite delays caused by Hurricane Katrina, NOAA is on schedule to complete the first phase of an 800-acre barrier island project in Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish. This is one of the largest island restoration projects ever carried out by NOAA. Workers are dredging and performing major earth-moving activities to create beach and marsh habitat that will help protect Louisiana's coastal communities and infrastructure from the devastating effects of wind, waves and flooding. Contractors are installing sand fencing to create dunes and planting native vegetation for intertidal marsh habitat. Over the years the shoreline along the project area has been severely eroded. Recent storms also breached the shoreline and segmented the 2.6-mile island into three smaller fragments. Left unaddressed these breaches threaten the integrity of several major natural gas pipelines. Since wetlands and barrier islands are the first defense against storms, the effort will help absorb surging water and wind during storms, protecting both national energy assets and Louisiana's coastal communities. At \$60 million, this NOAA Fisheries Service-led project is the largest funded Coastal Wetlands Protection, Planning and Restoration Act project to date. Thanks to NOAA project manager Rachel Sweeney and a terrific NOAA team, including Patrick Williams, Richard Hartman and Erik Zobrist. Thanks also to our indispensable external partners. This work is critical. During the 20th century, coastal Louisiana lost over 1.2 million acres of land, an area more than 25 times larger than Washington, D.C.

[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects\\_programs/CWPPRA/index.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/CWPPRA/index.html)

## **Studies of HAB Effects on Copepods to Inform Ecosystem Models for Improved Prediction of Harmful Algal Blooms**

In a recent study sponsored by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's [Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algae Blooms Program](#), researchers concluded that the deleterious effects of *Karenia brevis* on the copepod *Acartia tonsa* were due to poor nutritional quality rather than toxicity, resulting in copepod starvation. This finding improves understanding of the interaction between zooplankton and *Karenia brevis*, the Florida "red tide" organism, and will inform future ecosystems models used to predict harmful algal blooms (HABs). Researchers compared nutritional status, egg production and hatching, and fecal pellet production for *Acartia tonsa* when they were fed toxic *K. brevis*, fed another non-toxic dinoflagellate, or not fed at all. For more information, please contact [Quay Dortch](#). NCCOS Findings to Guide Designation of Sanctuary Protected Areas Within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

While working under the long-term agreement with National Marine Sanctuaries, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) scientists documented high diversity of species of macroalgae in channel-bank systems (average of 27.5 species per site) in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS), indicating a relatively stable and productive habitat. This finding is part of a larger biophysical characterization of the channel-bank systems which will help NCCOS scientists make recommendations for designation of Sanctuary Protected Areas (SPA's) within the FKNMS. The channel-bank systems occur near-shore north of the middle Florida Keys, between Moser Channel and the western boundary of FKNMS, and are characterized as elevated banks of *Porites* coral rubble on limestone bedrock, bisected by channels with variable surface substrates. The macroalgal diversity of the channel-bank systems was higher than those of surrounding off-bank seagrass habitats and other species-rich habitats of south Florida, such as coral reefs. For more information, please contact [Vanessa McDonough](#).

## ***New Optical Method Tested for Routine Monitoring of *Karenia brevis* to Improve Early Detection of Harmful Algal Blooms***

Researchers, funded through National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's [Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algae Blooms program](#), determined that a new instrument, the FlowCAM, is less time consuming than standard microscopy for detecting and enumerating *K. brevis*, the organism that causes the Florida "red tide." The FlowCAM is a continuous imaging flow cytometer designed to automatically characterize and count particles (20 to 200 microns in size) in natural plankton samples, using size and pigment fluorescence to distinguish different types. Improvements in image analysis, such as improved accuracy in identifying the target harmful algal bloom species, are needed before the instrument can provide resource managers with fully automated monitoring for detection and early warning of *K. brevis* blooms. For more information, please contact [Quay Dortch](#).

## ***Increasing Seagrass Abundance in Florida Bay Indicates Resiliency of this Critical Component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan***

Research conducted through the Fish Habitat Assessment Program (FHAP), part of a collaborative multi-agency and academic research program in Florida Bay, have documented a ten year trend of increasing seagrass abundance in western Florida Bay. This information will help inform management decisions as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and has demonstrated the resiliency of the seagrass ecosystem following an initial large scale die back over two decades ago. The research conducted by an Environmental Careers Organization Intern at the National Center for Coastal Ocean Science was incorporated into her Master's Thesis at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. The Thesis has won the 2007 Innovative Application of Technology in a Master's Thesis Award to be received at the 36th Annual Meeting of the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee. For more information, please contact [Brooke Landry](#).

## ***2006 Coastal Resource Management Survey Results***

Results from an extensive survey of local, state, and federal coastal resource management professionals are now available online at [www.csc.noaa.gov/survey](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/survey). NOAA's Coastal Services Center conducts the periodic survey to better understand the issues and needs of the nation's coastal management community, which includes state regulatory and natural resource management agencies, coastal and marine protected areas, emergency managers, and others concerned with coastal resource management. For more information, contact [Tom Fish](#).

## ***Digital Coast: Legislative Atlas Web Site Now Available***

The Nation's coastal resource managers have a new Web tool to help them better understand complex legislation and policy governing coastal and marine resources. *Digital Coast: Legislative Atlas*, developed by the NOAA Coastal Services Center, contains a searchable database of Federal and State coastal and ocean legislation. On-line mapping provides visualization and analysis of "georegulations," which are spatial representations of Federal and State legislation and jurisdictional boundaries. The project currently covers key Federal georegulations and agency jurisdictions for the ocean coasts of the continental U.S.

and State georegulations for the Gulf of Mexico. Coming soon: Federal laws for the entire U.S. and State laws in California, Hawaii, and the Northeast. For more information, visit the Digital Coast: Legislative Atlas Web site at: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/legislativeatlas/> or contact [Hamilton Smillie](#).

## ***NOAA National Ocean Service 2006 Accomplishments Report Available On-line***

The 2006 National Ocean Service (NOS) Accomplishments Report is now available on-line. Please visit the [NOS website](#) and look in the "Of Special Note" section to view an electronic version of the report. For hard copies and more information, contact [Paul Taylor](#).

## ***“One-NOAA” Collaboration Produces Tool for Habitat Restoration Monitoring***

The Restoration Monitoring Planner is a Web-based application that helps NOAA grantees and aspiring grantees create science-based monitoring plans for habitat restoration projects. Plans developed with this tool will meet the minimum project monitoring and evaluation standards set by the Estuary Restoration Act of 2000. NOAA’s Coastal Services Center and Office of Habitat Conservation, Restoration Center, partnered to develop this new tool. The planner can be found at [www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/rmp/](http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/rmp/). For more information, contact [Bethney Ward](#).

## ***NOAA Makes Ocean Temperature Data Available to All***

*New NOAA Archive Gives Temperatures from International Satellites Since 1981*

NOAA has completed a first-of-its-kind, long-term archive for international satellite-based observations of global, high-resolution ocean temperatures, dating back to 1981. NOAA is now able to acquire, archive, and provide access to satellite-based sea-surface temperature products and information from a variety of national and international partners. The effort is part of the larger Global Ocean Data Assimilation Experiment, a complex system of models that monitors and forecasts ocean variability. The GODAE High Resolution SST project’s Long Term Stewardship and Reanalysis Facility in Silver Spring, Md., established by NOAA’s National Oceanographic Data Center, is making all of the satellite data available online at: <http://ghrsst.nodc.noaa.gov>.

“Ocean surface temperatures are critical for applications that range from hurricane forecasting and climate modeling, to defining marine mammal habitats and coral bleaching,” said Zdenka Willis, NOAA’s National Oceanographic Data Center director. “The ocean temperature archive is a significant contribution to the international effort to connect the scientific dots by linking the world’s environmental satellites with the thousands of land and sea data stations in order to yield the science on which sound policy is built. That initiative is known as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems.”

NODC is part of NOAA’s Satellite and Information Service, which also contributes new SST products generated at its National Climatic Data Center, Center for Satellite Applications and Research, and Office of Satellite Data Processing and Distribution. Work in NOAA’s Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research has led to improvements in SST products and methods for understanding the effects of daytime warming on the data.

## **NOAA Seeks Input on Ocean Fisheries Research Plan**

*Opportunity to Comment on Agency's Science Priorities*

Jan. 24, 2007 — The [NOAA Fisheries Service](#) is seeking public comment on its research direction and priorities for the coming years. The agency's "Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research," first developed in 1998, covers four major areas of research: (1) research to support fishery conservation and management; (2) conservation engineering research; (3) research on the status of fisheries; and (4) information management research. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that the plan be updated every three years.

The NOAA Fisheries Service's research program consists of peer-reviewed science that is used by industry, environmental groups, resource managers and others who are dependent on fisheries science to accomplish their tasks. One of the major goals of this draft plan is to ensure that NOAA's fisheries science information is of the highest quality.

"This plan affirms the agency's ongoing commitment to science-based conservation and management and will serve as a guide for carrying out our research activities for the next five years," said [Bill Hogarth](#), director of the NOAA Fisheries Service. "I encourage people to review and comment on the research priorities we present."

The draft plan outlines a number of research objectives. Among them are: monitoring trends in the availability and degradation of fish habitat, and improving the collection of socio-economic data and the models used to analyze and assess the performance of management actions. The plan also discusses the priorities for studies on seafood safety, research to develop environmentally sound marine aquaculture practices and further implementation of the national Fisheries Information System. The agency also is seeking input on proposed studies in bycatch, the unintentional catch of protected species and marine mammals by fishers targeting fish species managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This research improves fish conservation and management while also making important contributions to supporting Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act science.

The NOAA Fisheries Service will accept comments on the draft through February 23, 2007. Comments should be sent to Mark Chandler; Office of Science and Technology; NMFS; 1315 East-West Highway; Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225 (301-713-2367 ext. 152); by fax to 301-713-1875; or via e-mail at [NSPFR.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:NSPFR.comments@noaa.gov). A copy of the draft strategic research plan may be obtained by contacting the same office or [online](#).

### **Relevant Web Sites**

[NOAA Fisheries Service Office of Science and Technology](#)

[NOAA Fisheries Portal](#)

## **Sanctuary Program's New Star Takes the Stage**

Sanctuary staff met with representatives from SeaWorld Orlando and Spectrum Studios to complete filming for the initial Sanctuary Sam release "The Interview," the NR-1 expedition "short," and three public service announcements on trash/debris, National Marine Sanctuaries, and ocean etiquette topics. The video pieces will introduce Sanctuary Sam, a well-trained sea lion, to the public as the sanctuary program's mascot and an ambassador of ocean literacy. The filming was extremely successful — Sanctuary Sam is a seasoned SeaWorld actor! For more information, contact [Michiko Martin](#) or [Matthew Stout](#).

## **In the Gulf States**

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### ***Alabama Working Waterfronts Coalition Partners with MS-AL Sea Grant***

The Alabama Working Waterfronts Coalition in partnership with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium is seeking proposals for an inventory of water-dependent businesses and associated public and private infrastructure in southwest Alabama.

The successful proposal should include the use of a variety of data collection methods including the use of existing data sets, interviews and surveys. The inventory should include, at a minimum, identification of types of waterfront businesses, identification of water-dependent businesses not directly on the waterfront, public and private navigation and harbor infrastructure and a survey of town, city and county officials to determine if waterfront access is addressed in planning documents. The project outcomes should be compatible with GIS. MASGC will provide \$60,000 in federal funds. There is a non-federal match requirement of 50% of the total federal request. The deadline for proposals is February 2, 2007.

The Sea Grant programs bordering the Gulf of Mexico (Florida, Mississippi-Alabama, Louisiana and Texas) are requesting proposals for a regional project on Coastal Community Resiliency. The total funding available is \$400,000 for one or more projects. Each proposal must include investigators from at least two of the five Gulf of Mexico states.

Priorities include, but are not limited to: hazard mapping and mitigation, risk assessment, improving structures for hazard resistance, ecologically-friendly redevelopment strategy and public awareness. The full announcement and preproposal submission guidelines can be found at <http://www.flseagrant.org/funding/GOM/index.htm>.

### ***Two Conservation Groups Unveil the Alabama Water Agenda***

The Alabama Rivers Alliance and Southern Environmental Law Center unveiled the Alabama Water Agenda at a press conference along the banks of the Alabama River. The agenda presents a bold vision for restoring and protecting the state's water resources and outlines a series of specific actions toward achieving that goal. The agenda was developed over several months with the input of dozens of grassroots groups dedicated to river conservation and water quality protection, and many other Alabama citizens. It notes that Alabama ranks #1 in the country for freshwater species diversity, but is also #4 in number of species at risk for extinction. The state has fully assessed the quality of only 7 percent of the state's 77,000 river miles, and of that small fraction, 40 percent are considered to have poor water quality. The agenda will be presented to the staff of Governor Bob Riley, as well as to each member of the General Assembly and the key staff of the various agencies with oversight of Alabama's water resources. To view the Agenda visit [http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/al\\_water\\_agenda/casepage.htm](http://www.southernenvironment.org/cases/al_water_agenda/casepage.htm). (Source: CSO Weekly Report 1/26/07: <http://www.coastalstates.org/pages/pub.html#csoweek>)

## **Rookery Bay Holds Annual Birding Festival**

*--Festival highlights species in their native habitat--*

**NAPLES** – Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve today welcomed visitors to the Southwest Florida Birding Festival, allowing both beginners and experts to explore the bird life and environment of Southwest Florida. Continuing through the weekend, the third annual festival features presentations, biology activities, conservation information and field trips for birding enthusiasts.

“With more than 220 bird species, Rookery Bay offers a wealth of education opportunities for visitors,” said Rookery Bay Reserve Manager Gary Lytton. “By learning about birds from the Florida scrub jay to coastal wading birds, festival visitors explore a unique part of South Florida’s natural resources.”

Wildlife artist and National Public Radio commentator Julie Zickefoose opened the event with a keynote address on environmental journalism featuring highlights from her new book, *Letters from Eden*. Presentations by birding experts will continue throughout the weekend, including basics on birding for beginners, bird biology and the preservation of Southwest Florida birding habitats.

In addition, regional birding experts will lead 25 guided tours, allowing visitors to explore wildlife in its natural environment. The tours will take participants to 18 locations including Sand Dollar Sandbar and Lagoon, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

Rookery Bay was established 28 years ago as a partnership between the State of Florida and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The reserve is one of 27 research reserves operating across the nation. The Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) manages Rookery Bay along with 44 other sites that include aquatic preserves, National Estuarine Research Reserves and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. CAMA’s programs and activities are designed to help Floridians better understand and conserve the State’s resources through research, education and preservation. For information about Rookery Bay or Florida’s estuaries, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/). For more about the Friends of Rookery Bay, visit [www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org).

## **New Green Lodging Partner Promotes Resource Conservation**

*-- OzoneSolutions partners with the state to promote ‘green’ business practices--*

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is partnering with OzoneSolutions Inc. to help Florida’s lodging industry protect the state’s environment. The partnership is the latest component of DEP’s *Green Lodging* initiative to encourage hotels and motels to adopt cost-saving ‘green’ practices that conserve energy, reduce water consumption, protect air quality and reduce waste.

“Through the *Green Lodging* program, DEP is encouraging the lodging industry to become environmental leaders in their community,” said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. “Florida’s certified *Green Lodges* and program partners continue to save money and conserve resources while at the same time protecting our environment.”

For the past decade, OzoneSolutions has worked with on-premise laundry facilities to conserve water and energy through its ozone water purification system. The product uses cold water to conserve energy and reduces water consumption by as much as 25 to 50 percent. Through a public-private partnership, OzoneSolutions will offer *Green Lodging* applicants and certified lodges free energy savings analyses for laundry operations and a free one-year extension of its service and maintenance contract.

“OzoneSolutions is very excited to help promote energy conservation to Florida hotels and motels through the *Green Lodging Program*,” said OzoneSolutions Sales and Marketing Manager Jason Downey. “With the application of our Laundry Ozone System, a substantial reduction in utility usage for on-premise laundries will help properties become Green Certified. We look forward to helping the Department save Florida's environment.”

Launched in March 2004, the Florida *Green Lodging* Program establishes environmental guidelines for hotels and motels to conserve natural resources and prevent pollution. As reward for designation, Florida is recommending *Green Lodges* to companies, trade organizations and local governments seeking eco-friendly lodging and convention facilities. For more information about the Florida *Green Lodging* program, visit [www.floridagreenlodging.org](http://www.floridagreenlodging.org). For more information on OzoneSolutions, visit [www.ozonesolutionsonline.com](http://www.ozonesolutionsonline.com).

## ***Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Receives International Recognition***

*--International institute recognizes bridge project with Award of Merit--*

**BIG COPPITT KEY**– A Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail bridge engineering project, which is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT), was recently presented an Award of Merit from the International Concrete Repair Institute. The Trail project was recognized for an innovative technique used to repair and rehabilitate the historic railroad bridges on Big Coppitt Key.

“We are pleased and excited to see worldwide recognition given to a creative engineering venture that enhances the safety of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail,” said Jena Brooks, Director of OGT. “Through this project we have increased the structural soundness of the bridges as well as helped preserve the historical integrity of the trail as a whole.”

The OGT contracted with Coastal Gunit Construction Company to use carbon fiber reinforced polymer bars to strengthen deck panels on six bridges. The bars increase the flexural strength of the deck panels through a more efficient installation process and prevent corrosion. The Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail bridge project was one of only ten projects selected worldwide to receive the 2006 Award of Merit, presented annually by the International Concrete Repair Institute to recognize outstanding projects in the concrete repair industry.

The historic bridges that were built early in the 20th century for railroad developer Henry Flagler’s Overseas Railroad are now an integral part of the multi-use bicycle and pedestrian Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail. The OGT currently maintains 42 miles of existing trail and bridges. The remainder of the 106 mile trail, which will link the 32 island chain from Key Largo to Key West, is presently in the design phase with construction to follow.

The Office of Greenways and Trails manages eight state trails, including the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, Florida’s longest green corridor stretching 110 miles from the St. Johns River near Palatka to the Gulf of Mexico. DEP, through OGT, also maintains five rail-trails, which are railroad tracks restored and converted to recreational trails for hiking, biking and skating. Through *Florida Forever*, the state’s premier land acquisition program, \$4.5 million dollars is spent annually to purchase land for future trail areas and build and maintain Florida’s greenways and trails. For more information on Florida’s Greenways and Trails, visit [www.FloridaGreenwaysandTrails.com](http://www.FloridaGreenwaysandTrails.com).

## ***Louisiana DNR Hosts Clean Cities Conference in New Orleans***

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hosted a statewide Clean Cities Conference on January 24-26, 2007 in New Orleans at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel. The conference promoted the use of alternative fuels to reduce air pollution and improve air quality. It also focused on practices that help reduce dependency on foreign oil.

“Clean Cities programs are administered in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Shreveport,” reports DNR Energy Programs Manager Paula Ridgeway. She said that conference presentations are meant to educate members of these groups about latest technologies and alternative fuel products and services. Topics of discussion included the use of bio-diesel and compressed natural gas for transit fleets, how to reduce gasoline emissions, and featured a display of AFV’s (alternatively-fueled vehicles) and hybrid vehicles.

For more information about the Clean Cities Statewide Conference, contact the DNR Technology Assessment Division, Energy section at 225-342-8574 and visit the website at [www.dnr.louisiana.gov](http://www.dnr.louisiana.gov).

## ***Governor Blanco Announces \$6.2 Million in Funding for Atchafalaya Basin Projects***

BATON ROUGE - Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco today approved 18 local projects worth \$6.2 million through the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' Atchafalaya Basin Program (ABP). "These projects will allow our citizens to continue enjoying this piece of our Sportsman's Paradise and allow visitors to experience the wonders of the Atchafalaya Basin," Governor Blanco said. "I am committed to a holistic approach to improve both the basin region as well as the water quality in the basin. These enhancements to our communities will help grow our eco-tourism economy, inviting visitors to share in the cultural prize that we know as the Atchafalaya Basin."

In 1986, Congress authorized \$250 million dollars to preserve and enhance the Basin through the Corps of Engineers by expanding public access, environmental easements, water-management, and recreation. In 1999, the Louisiana Legislature voted unanimously for the State Master Plan of the Atchafalaya Basin (Act 920), authorizing \$85 million to be spent over a 15 year period, in order to match the federal dollars. In the past two years, ABP has completed two major water quality projects, and currently three others are under review for implementation.

In the 2006 Legislative Session, \$9 million in funding was authorized for the Atchafalaya Basin Program, and was approved by the State Bond Commission. For more information on the Atchafalaya Basin Program of the state Department of Natural Resources, go to [www.dnr.louisiana.gov](http://www.dnr.louisiana.gov).

## ***In Unanimous Vote, Plaquemines Parish Adopts Flood Elevation Guidelines***

### **Approval Clears Way for Up to \$64.2 Million in Recovery Funding**

BATON ROUGE, La. (January 25, 2007) - The Plaquemines Parish Council today voted unanimously to adopt the Advisory Base Flood Elevations (ABFE) as recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and required by the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), clearing the way for a total of up to \$64.2 million to the parish for repair and rebuilding efforts. Now that the parish has adopted the new guidelines, it is also eligible to receive \$13 million for parish recovery projects,

\$19.7 million in shared costs for repairs to public schools and up to \$26 million in shared costs for repairs to government buildings. In addition, the Council's action makes \$5.5 million available to help raise area homes and public buildings to a safer elevation.

"Today's vote demonstrates President Nungesser's and the Council's steadfast commitment to rebuilding safer, stronger and smarter," said LRA board member Rene Cross. "It's our hope that this additional funding accelerates their efforts toward a speedy and successful recovery."

Parishes that fail to adopt the ABFE guidelines as recommended by FEMA will not be eligible for the cost sharing program or additional funds for hazard mitigation. The following parishes and municipalities previously adopted the ABFE guidelines: Calcasieu, Lake Charles, Sulphur, Vinton, Westlake, Cameron, Iberia, Jeanerette, New Iberia, Jefferson, Grand Isle, Gretna, Harahan, Jean Lafitte, Kenner, Westwego, Golden Meadow, Lockport, Thibodeaux, Orleans, St. Charles, St. Mary, Baldwin, Franklin, Morgan City, St. Tammany, Madisonville, Slidell, Tangipahoa, Ponchatoula, Terrebonne, Vermilion, Abbeville and Delcambre.

### ***Mississippi Reveals Plans for Storm-proof Infrastructure***

Water21 global news digest, 23 January 2007; Available online at:  
<http://www.iwapublishing.com/template.cfm?name=gnd23jan07>

Mississippi's governor, Haley Barbour, has unveiled plans to provide \$630 million to develop and enhance water systems on the state's hurricane-damaged Gulf coast. Hurricane Katrina destroyed water and sewer systems serving tens of thousands of people in 2005, and the plan will improve and storm-proof this infrastructure so that future hurricanes do not have the same devastating impact. Infrastructure is also needed for new developments inland. The plan has been submitted to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for approval.

### ***Coast Artist Marty Wilson Holds Poster Signing at MS DMR***

***Buy Your MS Recreational Saltwater Fishing License at DMR Jan. 22 through Feb. 28 and Receive a Fish Poster Signed by Artist Marty Wilson***

BILOXI, Miss. – To celebrate the second printing of its full-color poster "Saltwater Fish Common to Mississippi," and encourage residents to buy a recreational saltwater fishing license, the Department of Marine Resources has teamed up with Coast artist Marty Wilson to do a poster signing at its headquarters at the Bolton State Office Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue in Biloxi on **Jan. 29 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.** Everyone who stops by the DMR license lobby and either purchases or shows their valid 2007 Mississippi recreational saltwater fishing license during that time, will receive the DMR saltwater fish identification poster, hand-signed by the artist. Limit is one signed poster per person. Can't make the event? Just buy a recreational saltwater fishing license at the DMR office in Biloxi anytime between Jan. 22 and February 28 (Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.) and you'll receive a poster signed by the artist, while supplies last. The license is required for all recreational methods of finfish harvest in the coastal and marine waters of the state. Licenses cost \$5.85 and are valid from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007.

The poster features the artwork of Coast artist Marty Wilson and depicts more than 30 saltwater fish common to Mississippi waters. An avid fisherman, Wilson grew up at his father's fishing camp on Point Cadet in Biloxi, trawling for shrimp and casting for specks. He specializes in scenes inspired by nature, a field with which he is intimately familiar. To see more of Wilson's work, visit [www.martywilson.com](http://www.martywilson.com).

The poster includes a brief description of each fish, including scientific name, peak season, habitat, average size and characteristics plus interesting facts about various species.

“While the law requires that saltwater anglers have recreational fishing licenses, it is also important to fishery managers in order for them to get a good count of the number of fishery participants and set up the creel interview sessions based on these numbers,” DMR Fisheries Director William Perret said. “This also allows us to document the economic importance of this segment of our fishery.”

According to the State Marine Patrol, of the 842 violations reported for calendar year 2006, 330 of them—nearly 40 percent—were for the charge of fishing without a recreational saltwater fishing license. And two-thirds of those were for fishing without a resident license. Fines for fishing without a license range from between \$100 and \$500.

**Note:** Any person under the age of 16, residents 65 years of age or older, and residents who are adjudged totally service-connected disabled by the VA or 100 percent disabled through Social Security are exempted from obtaining recreational fishing licenses. Temporary residents stationed at a military base in MS can use a military I.D. to buy a resident fishing license.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at [www.dmr.state.ms.us](http://www.dmr.state.ms.us) for a list of licensing agents.

## ***Sempier to Coordinate Regional Marine Research Planning Project***

Steve Sempier has joined the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Sea Grant regional coordinator for a Gulf of Mexico marine research planning program.

Sempier will review federal and state agency research plans and seek input from constituents from across the Gulf of Mexico. This information will lead to a comprehensive strategic and implementation plan for marine research. The Gulf-wide plan will identify top-priority areas and identify opportunities for regional research collaboration.

Sempier earned a bachelor’s degree in marine science from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla., and a master’s degree in marine resource management from Oregon State University. He previously was the assistant director of research at the Aquaculture Collaborative Research Support Program in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Mississippi State University. More recently, he worked on the National Risk Management Program for Aquaculture.

Sempier is a resident of Starkville, Miss., and his office is located at Mississippi State University. He can be reached at (662) 325-5509 or [stephen.sempier@usm.edu](mailto:stephen.sempier@usm.edu).

## **Galveston Bay Estuary Program to Receive Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Award in Washington, D.C.**

The Galveston Bay Estuary Program will receive the first Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Partner Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at an awards luncheon on March 9 in Washington D.C. This award recognizes fisheries and habitat conservation partners whose work clearly provides significant benefits to the American people and honors those who are working to sustain and enhance fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

Helen Drummond, estuary program director and John Huffman of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Texas Coastal Program will receive the award on behalf of the Estuary Program's Natural Resource Uses Subcommittee.

Over the last ten years, the subcommittee has conducted dozens of individual habitat and wildlife conservation projects with partners, implementing the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Galveston Bay. Since 1995, the Estuary Program and its partners have collaborated on projects protecting, enhancing, and restoring over 8,000 acres of wetlands and important coastal habitats. Projects include; creating, restoring, and conserving wetlands, beneficial uses of dredge material, restoring oyster reefs, reducing shoreline erosion, restoring sea grass and coastal prairies, protecting freshwater inflows and bird habitats, managing invasive plant and animal species, and research. To find out about more about the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, please call (281) 218-6461 or visit: <http://www.gbep.state.tx.us/>.

## **Patterson Focuses on Coast for 80<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session**

*Dedicated funding source sought to protect eroding beaches*

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today announced an agenda for the 80th Legislature that focuses squarely on the Texas coast. “Finding a dedicated, permanent source of funding to protect the Texas coast is my highest priority,” Patterson said. “It makes sense that the money to help protect beaches comes from the same source as money to fund parks. Much like Texas parks, the Texas coast is an environmental and economic treasure worth saving.”

All funding for the Land Office's coastal protection programs dries up at the end of this biennium. Patterson is requesting \$30 million in general revenue over the next two years to keep up the fight. Patterson is asking legislators to consider funding his request with leftover money from a sales tax on sporting goods after the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has been fully funded. Patterson supports increased parks funding and does not intend for the coastal protection programs to compete with state parks for funding.

Texas has some of the highest coastal erosion rates in the United States. But in 2005, faced with a huge budget deficit, the Legislature cut funding for renourishing beaches in half, from \$15 million a biennium to \$7.38 million. Lawmakers also changed the source of funding for the Land Office's coastal programs, shifting it from general revenue to the Coastal Protection Account, a fund set aside to clean up oil spills in Texas. A 1.2 cent-per-barrel fee on oil that is shipped through Texas ports supports this fund.

Another thrust of Patterson's legislative agenda includes dealing with one of the most pernicious problems caused by coastal erosion — private houses on the public beach. “This problem has vexed Texas for decades,” Patterson said. “I've put forward an eight-point plan that will finally address it in a

comprehensive manner, protecting both private property rights and the public's right to beach access that's guaranteed under the state's Open Beaches Act."

Implementing Patterson's plan will require passing laws that:

- Create fines and criminal penalties for those who willfully erect structures that hinder access to the public beach,
- Deny renewal of state backed windstorm insurance coverage for structures on the public beach that present a public safety hazard or interfere with public access,
- Create setbacks for new construction, and
- Make provisions of the Open Beaches Act clear to buyers — in plain language — on disclosures for all coastal property transactions.

Patterson and his staff plan to discuss his agenda with House members and former colleagues in the Senate. "In the past couple of sessions, legislators gave the Land Office more flexibility to diversify the income stream of the state's Permanent School Fund through investing in real estate," Patterson said. "With that accomplished, it's clear that the focus must now be on the coast."

A Vietnam veteran and Marine aviator, Patterson retired from the Marine Corps Reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1993. Patterson served six years as a state senator and authored major legislation such as the Texas Concealed Handgun Law, the Texas Coastal Management Plan and the law creating Texas State Veterans Homes. He and his wife Jennifer — and their twins, Samantha and Cole — live in Austin. He also has a daughter, Emily, who is an attorney in Kosovo and a son, Travis, who is a Marine attack helicopter pilot.

## ***Brays Bayou/Mason Park Project Earns National Acclaim***

HOUSTON — A created freshwater/tidal marsh beside Brays Bayou at Mason Park on Houston's east side has claimed several regional environmental awards and is also featured in Building Better II, a Sierra Club report profiling 10 outstanding examples of innovative and environmentally sensitive ways to manage stormwater. The 3.5-acre Brays Bayou Wetland Partnership at Houston's Mason Park recently received a Gulf Guardian Award from the Gulf of Mexico Program, a non-regulatory, inclusive partnership formed by the Environmental Protection Agency to provide a broad geographic focus on the major environmental issues in the Gulf.

The project began in 2001 when the Harris County Flood Control District was planning to widen Brays Bayou at Mason Park and met with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department staff to discuss environmental impacts. The flood control district welcomed the TPWD idea to create wetlands in conjunction with the project. The department then sought and received an EPA grant to develop the biological design and collect and grow marsh plants for the project. Department employees also designed and placed educational signage for park visitors viewing the storm water treatment and wildlife habitat marsh. Employees worked with a variety of partner groups to bring the multi-year project to fruition.

Many partners were brought in, including the Texas A&M University system. Their Texas Coastal Watershed Program had already received a grant from the Galveston Bay Estuary Program to develop a wetlands for stormwater clean-up demonstration project and they ended up not only developing the hydrologic design of the wetlands, but also leading the effort to bring in community volunteers to collect, propagate and install plants for the marsh. More than a dozen agencies and organizations ended up participating in the project. "Some of the value of the project has also been in bringing all these different

parties together,” said John Jacob of the Coastal Watershed Program. “The path has been laid for future collaborative work.”

The Mason Park project features both a stormwater treatment and a tidal wetland. Stormwater runoff is a major cause of water pollution because it picks up toxic chemicals from streets and other paved areas and carries them into waterways. Also, sewer overflows associated with poor stormwater management can carry untreated sewage into streams and bayous. The tidal wetlands were designed to not only clean water flowing in Brays Bayou, but also provide habitat to herons, egrets, ospreys, and many types of marine animals such as white shrimp and blue crabs.

TPWD’s Coastal Fisheries Division had sampled near the site and found that a surprisingly high number of shrimp has moved up into Houston’s bayous in recent years and wanted to provide some additional habitat at the site for marine organisms.

A variety of plants were introduced to help remove pollutants from stormwater that flows into the marsh from a nearby neighborhood. Marissa Sipocz, a coastal restoration specialist with the Texas Coastal Watershed Program in the Houston area, said that the plants were chosen to tolerate some salinity, to be able to recover from destruction by nutria and carp, and for their attractiveness. “I chose some plants with showy flowers or seeds, like irises, swamp and spider lilies, and bull rushes,” Sipocz said. “Something is interesting in every season.” Sipocz said the plants were gathered from wetlands within 50 miles of the site. “It is important to use field collected plants to maintain genetic integrity,” Sipocz said.

High school students from Chavez and Austin High Schools were major participants in the project. Working with Texas Master Naturalists and the Park People, the students helped collect wetland plants, took care of them until the area was ready, and then, sometimes working in waist-deep water, helped plant them. Sipocz said that the area was planted in stages from October of 2005 through this past September. As expected, many of the first plants were eaten by animals, but, “like we planned, the plants came back from stubs,” she said. “We have already measured improvements in water quality,” Sipocz said. She estimated the value of donated services for the project at at least \$2 million.

The wetland was officially dedicated on October 27, 2006. It includes interpretive signage to educate visitors about the project’s environmental benefits. Eric Olson, the Sierra Club staffer who selected the projects featured in Building Better II, said that the Houston project was noteworthy for several reasons. “We liked it because it returned nature to an urban area, because it involved so many community groups, and because it is a model that can be replicated elsewhere,” Olson said. The Sierra Club report also mentions other projects from the flood control district that begin to reverse years of environmental damage to area waterways.

Earlier this year, Harris County Flood Control District, Texas Cooperative Extension/Texas Sea Grant, and the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department also won The Park People's Partnership Award for their efforts on the project. The project also recently received a Gold Medal award from The Texas Council of Engineering Companies for “Exploring New Horizons in Storm Water Management.”

## Grant Opportunities

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### ***Private Stewardship Grants Available***

The Private Stewardship Grant Program is currently open and seeking grant applications. All applications must be received in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southeast Regional Office by close of business February 14, 2007. Please share this information with your partners who may be interested in undertaking a voluntary project to benefit endangered and threatened species.

Additional information is available at the following website: Go to: <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/grants> Then click on the green button "Private Stewardship Grant Program" to access a fact sheet, the request-for-proposals and other helpful materials.

### ***National Water Quality Monitoring Network: Announcement of Pilot Studies and Request for Statement of Interest***

***Please respond by February 23, 2007***

The National Water Quality Monitoring Council has produced a design of a National Water Quality Monitoring Network for U.S. Coastal Waters and their Tributaries (the Network) as called for in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan and with guidance from the President's Council on Environmental Quality and the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC). The Network design is a framework for linking water quality monitoring in coastal bays, estuaries and the Great Lakes with observations in upland areas and offshore waters, and includes freshwater flows and contaminant input from inland and coastal rivers, ground water, and atmospheric deposition. A description of the Network design is available at <http://acwi.gov/monitoring/network/design>.

The next phase in the Network development is to conduct one or more Pilot Studies on a regional or sub-regional basis to test and help improve the Network design. Each study should encompass pertinent resource compartments in the region, e.g., an estuary or a coastal bay, its watershed and upland areas, adjacent coastal ocean, the atmosphere, surface water and/or groundwater.

An interagency working group of staff from the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy will coordinate activities related to the Pilot Studies. The National Water Quality Monitoring Council, a subgroup of the Advisory Committee on Water Information will continue to play a role in reviewing and helping to coordinate the Pilot Studies.

#### **What is Expected from a Pilot Study**

Pilot Study partners will establish a project team that will undertake the following:

- Inventory current data and information collection in the study area at a scale similar to that proposed in the Network design.
- Identify gaps between existing monitoring and that indicated by the Network design. Estimate costs of on-going monitoring and costs to fill identified gaps.

- Investigate data comparability and data sharing issues in the study area and recommend procedures for their resolution.
- Prepare a report that documents activities and accomplishments of the Pilot Study and participate in preparing reports that refine Network observational requirements.
- Identify management issues in the study area that would be better addressed if the monitoring gaps noted in item 2 above were filled and data were more comparable and accessible. Examples of such management issues could include habitat impairment, limits on existing uses of the water body, loss of wetlands, or excess nutrients.

### **Criteria for selection as a Pilot Study**

- Identification and commitment of resources, including in-kind contributions, from the project team that should include multiple partners.
- A commitment to successfully complete the Pilot Study and produce a draft report by January 2008.
- Pilot Study areas can be entirely within one State. Pilot Study areas that include no more than three States are preferred. Pilot Studies with several monitoring program data sources are preferred.
- Ability to leverage on-going Federal efforts and cooperative efforts among the monitoring community in the study area.
- Identification of water quality-related resource management issues in the region that could be addressed more effectively if monitoring gaps were filled and data were more comparable and accessible.
- The ability to actively communicate the role of the Network and the progress of pilot studies to the coastal monitoring community nationally during the Pilot Study.
- The ability to organize and integrate existing monitoring projects into a cohesive program that could demonstrate the benefits of a fully implemented Network.
- Knowledge of and accessibility to monitoring data from appropriate resource compartments in the Pilot Study area. There do not need to be large quantities of data available for each of the compartments, but the study team will need to inventory the data that do exist. For study areas where direct ground-water discharge or atmospheric deposition of contaminants to the coastal environment is known or expected to be significant, an inventory of ground-water and atmospheric deposition data sources should be included.

### **Statement of Interest in becoming a Pilot Study**

Groups interested in conducting a Network Pilot Study should send their statement of Interest, electronically or in paper (5 copies requested) for receipt no later than **February 23, 2007** to:

Judith B. Griffin  
 Executive Secretary, National Water Quality Monitoring Council  
 Mail Stop 417 USGS National Center  
 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive  
 Reston, VA 20192  
[jbgriff@usgs.gov](mailto:jbgriff@usgs.gov)

Statements of interest should be between 5 and 10 pages in length. At the minimum, the statement of interest should include the following:

- Description of the proposed study area with at least one map.
- Name and contact information for the primary contact person.
- List of key study partners, with institutional affiliations and clear statements of interest in participating in the Pilot Study phase of the Network, including a brief description of

contributions that proposed partners will make to the Pilot Study effort. It is anticipated that additional partners may join the effort at a future date.

- An approach and a detailed course of activities to accomplish the Pilot Study along with identification of anticipated milestones.
- Description of any on-going collaboration among study partners such as data sharing efforts or cooperative data management efforts.
- A list of already-planned regional meetings or events that can serve to aid in coordination and communication during the Pilot Studies.
- Brief description of major Federal and non-Federal monitoring programs active in the study area.

For additional information, please contact:

Charles Spooner at [spooner.charles@epa.gov](mailto:spooner.charles@epa.gov)

Gail Mallard at [gmallard@usgs.gov](mailto:gmallard@usgs.gov)

Jawed Hameedi at [jawed.hameedi@noaa.gov](mailto:jawed.hameedi@noaa.gov)

## ***EPA Requests Applications: Smart Growth Implementation Assistance***

Free technical assistance available!

Are you trying to encourage specific smart growth techniques like transit-oriented development? Or direct your state department of transportation investments to better support smart growth? Are you looking to use smart growth to reach economic development goals? Do you need help ensuring that school investments help your state or community meet multiple goals? Do you need to retrofit a commercial corridor? Or coordinate your community's smart growth design with an active aging program?

The Development, Community, and Environment Division in U.S. EPA's Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation is responding to this need by issuing a request for applications for the Smart Growth Implementation Assistance program. Through this program, a team of multidisciplinary experts will provide free technical assistance to communities, regions, or states that want to develop in ways that meet environmental and other local or regional goals.

Communities, regions, and states around the country are interested in building stronger neighborhoods, protecting their environmental resources, enhancing public health, and planning for development, but they may lack the tools, resources, or information to achieve these goals. EPA can help applicants overcome these roadblocks by providing evaluation tools and expert analysis.

EPA is soliciting applications from states or communities that want help with either policy analysis or public participatory processes. Selected communities will receive assistance in the form of a multi-day visit from a team of experts organized by EPA and other national partners to work with local leaders. Applications will be accepted until March 8, 2007. For more information and application materials, please go to [www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia.htm)

## Energy

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### ***Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Holds Hearing on OCS Resources; Senator Landrieu Plans 'OCS II' Bill***

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing this week on offshore drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf. Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) noted during the hearing there is no consensus in the new Congress to repeal existing offshore drilling moratoriums, and said "with only minor exceptions, for many years there has not been the political will to reverse these leasing bans, and I believe there is not a political will to do so now." Senator Bingaman scheduled the hearing at the request of Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM), ranking member, who has an interest in lifting the offshore moratoriums. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), questioned industry executives as to why moratoriums should be lifted when so much offshore acreage is currently available for leasing.

At an different energy form this week, Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) said she is developing on an "OCS II" bill with Rep. John Peterson (R-Pa.) that would open up more offshore areas for natural gas drilling only. Landrieu also said she supports an opt-out provision from the broad drilling bans that would allow individual states such as Virginia to pursue exploration off its coast if it chooses. Whether Senator Bingaman would support an opt-out provision is unclear. In addition, Senator Landrieu would like to see royalties from new production go to support renewable energy research. (Source: CSO Weekly Report 1/26/07: <http://www.coastalstates.org/pages/pub.html#csoweek>)

### ***Clean Energy Bill Passed in the House; White House Issues Statement on Bill***

In January, the House voted 264 to 163 to roll back two tax breaks and force oil and gas companies to renegotiate royalty-free leases. The bill ([H.R. 6](#)), the "CLEAN Energy Act of 2007", would raise \$14 billion over the next decade that would be used to establish a new fund and budget account to invest in clean, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The bill is intended to correct problems with certain royalty-free offshore lease contracts issued in 1998 and 1999 in the Gulf of Mexico. After the vote, Senate Energy Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) said he has asked that the House bill be placed directly on the Senate calendar, so that it could be brought up at any time.

Prior to the House passing the bill the White House issued an official Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) on the bill. The White House came out against several tax and royalty provisions in House energy legislation, warning that the measure as written could delay future oil and natural gas lease sales. Also drawing criticism were provisions that would pressure Gulf of Mexico producers to renegotiate flawed 1998 and 1999 leases. To view the SAP in detail visit the White House website at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/sap/110-1/hr6sap-h.pdf>. (Source: CSO Weekly Report 1/22/07: <http://www.coastalstates.org/pages/pub.html#csoweek>)

## Training and Conferences

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### ***HD.gov – A New Interagency Human Dimensions Web Portal***

We would like to inform you of an upcoming opportunity to have a say in the development of a new interagency Web portal and information resource focusing on the human dimensions of natural resource management – HD.gov. This three hour meeting will include a walkthrough of the current Web layout and quality control mechanisms, presentations from partners, information on becoming a partner, and an interactive demonstration of some cutting edge technologies that we will be using to integrate multiple web resources. Please see invitation below:

The HD.gov team will be hosting two half-day meetings -- **February 21st and 22nd** -- in Washington, DC to talk with partners, potential partners, and other interested parties about opportunities to become involved with the development of HD.gov. If you cannot attend either of these meetings you also have the option of calling in and watching the presentations through WebEX on your own computer and Internet browser.

This meeting will be a great opportunity to network with other social scientists from state and government agencies, academia, and non-governmental organizations and learn about their interests, products, and initiatives. Many of the potential HD.gov Web portal contributors will discuss contributions and anticipated benefits of the portal to their organizations. The meetings will be held on:

Wednesday, 21 February 2007, Hosted by the SCB Social Science Working Group at the World Wildlife Fund Offices, 1250 24th Street, NW, Washington, DC

Time: 1:00-4:00PM

(Metro Stops: Dupont Circle, Farragut North, Farragut West)

Thursday, 22 February 2007, Hosted by the USDA Forest Service

Time: 1:00-4:00PM

Location: Training Room, Yates Building, 201 14th Street SW, Washington, DC

(Metro Stop: Smithsonian)

Please register in advance at: <http://www.hd.gov/register>

### ***Global Climate Change: The Status of Science and Implications for Coastal Louisiana***

March 20, 2007 --- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Third Presidents' Forum on Meeting Coastal Challenges will provide an opportunity for state and community leaders to learn about the accepted pool of scientific information on global climate change and discuss its implications for coastal Louisiana. The one-day meeting will focus on three areas: trends in temperature, precipitation and run off; tropical storm frequency and intensity; and sea level rise in coastal sustainability.

The morning session will consist of presentations by national experts in each area, followed by a local or regional expert on the same topic. The afternoon session will consist of panel discussion about how state and community leaders can use what they've learned for future planning.

The Forum, to be held at the Lod Cook Alumni Center on the LSU Baton Rouge campus, is hosted by LSU System President William Jenkins. Other organizers include the Governor's Coastal Commission, U.S. Geological Survey and the State's higher education community.

Persons wanting to attend the forum can contact Jo Paula Lantier at [jopaula@lsu.edu](mailto:jopaula@lsu.edu) or (225) 578-6445 to reserve a seat. A block of rooms has been set aside at the Lod Cook Hotel at a rate of \$96 per night for conference participants. For hotel reservations, call (225) 383-2665 and ask for the SEA GRANT block of rooms.

For additional information please contact:

Bob Stewart - [bob\\_stewart@louisiana.edu](mailto:bob_stewart@louisiana.edu)

Virginia Burkett - [virginia\\_burkett@usgs.gov](mailto:virginia_burkett@usgs.gov)

Chuck Wilson - [cwilson@lsu.edu](mailto:cwilson@lsu.edu)

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<http://www.laseagrant.org/forum/03-20-2007.htm>

## ***Ecological Impacts of Hypoxia on Living Resources Workshop***

Meeting Announcement and Call for Presentations

March 26-27, 2007 Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

NOAA is convening a meeting in coordination with the Northern Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Institute in Stennis Space Center, Mississippi to assess the current state-of-knowledge of the Ecological Impacts of Hypoxia on Living Resources focusing on the application of science to coastal decision-making. The effectiveness of existing approaches for evaluating the impacts of hypoxia on ecological, commercial, and recreational important fish and shellfish populations will be compared between three coastal centers noted for seasonally recurring hypoxic zones: Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, and Lake Erie. Other regions will be included as comparative systems.

Information on meeting logistics and other details will be posted on: <http://www.ngi.msstate.edu/hypoxia>

We are seeking both oral (15-minute) and poster presentations for scientific sessions that will be open to the public. These presentation/poster sessions should address one of the following topics:

- Historical perspective on research: development of the hypoxia problem, link to eutrophication and other anthropogenic stressors
- Historical perspective on management activities and policy decisions regarding hypoxia: recognition and response to the problem
- Direct and indirect effects of hypoxia: Interactions with climate, overfishing, or other stressors
- Impacts on food web structure and function
- Management tools applied to hypoxia issues:
  - Indicators
  - Models
  - Economics

Please note that time is limited during the oral sessions on March 26-27, 2007. Thus, not all oral presentations may be accepted, and instead we may ask you to present a poster. Please submit an abstract electronically by February 15, 2007 with the following format:

#### Abstract Format

- Use Times New Roman, 12-pt font
- Indicate whether oral or poster is preferred
- Titles must be entered in CAPS
- Enter all authors and identify presenter by an asterisk
- Enter authors' names, institution, city, state/province, country and email.
- Abstract must be in simple text format only. For equations, special characters or symbols use text equivalents instead.
- Maximum length: 200 words (approximately 1245 characters, including spaces)
- Do not skip lines between paragraphs
- You can choose a session from those listed above, if desired. Otherwise it will be placed by the meeting's steering committee.

**All abstracts should be submitted to [Alan.Lewitus@noaa.gov](mailto:Alan.Lewitus@noaa.gov)**

#### Contacts:

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Russ Beard, NOAA National Coastal Data  
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(228) 688-3026  
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## ***Gulf Coast Floods Recovery: Mission Mitigation***

**April 9-12, 2007, New Orleans, Louisiana**

Do you have more to do, but less resources to do it with? Are public expectations and demands stressing you out? Do you need workable solutions? Perhaps a mentor? There are answers, and there is help!

Gulf coast communities suffered unfathomable damages in 2004 and 2005. How can we best help those affected by floods? What can we do to avoid this recurring? Comprehensive solutions to prevent future losses are needed NOW! This training workshop will identify mitigation measures Gulf Coast States and communities can undertake to minimize future damages as they cope with recovery and reconstruction. The speakers and facilitators are experienced practitioners who have many successes to share from working with multiple programs and entities through the years.

The workshop will be held noon Tuesday 4/10/07 through noon Thursday 4/12/07, with special training classes on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, plus a "mobile class" (field tour) on Tuesday morning. The target audience is flood hazard management staff at all levels of government and decision makers in flooded communities. Topics will include flood mitigation planning and program options,

funding sources, construction standards, lessons learned, success stories, insurance issues, recovery mapping, grant applications, coastal challenges, legal implications, and more. Session themes of "Looking Ahead by Looking Back", "Before the Storm", "After the Storm", and, "You Can Do It, We Can Help", will include presentations by invited speakers along with facilitated group discussion among attendees. Exhibitors and networking sessions provide opportunities to share ideas and challenges with your colleagues.

The brochure and registration forms will be posted at <http://www.floods.org/> by February 1. Scholarships for registration and travel expense are available to local community officials in the Gulf Coast states. Hotel reservations may be made now by calling the Intercontinental Hotel at 504-525-5566, be sure to mention "Mission Mitigation" to get the special rate of \$148. You may contact Diane Brown at [diane@floods.org](mailto:diane@floods.org) or 608-274-0123 for more information.

## ***Florida Climate Change Conference***

Please join us May 9-11, 2007 at the Tampa Renaissance Hotel for the first conference on climate change in Florida! This timely conference will focus on Florida, providing the latest scientific findings and identify impacts and actions that should be taken to respond to climate change. Global, national, and state experts will share their perspectives with conference participants in both general and concurrent sessions. Click here for a preliminary agenda: <http://www.ces.fau.edu/ccc/agenda.php>. For sponsorship and exhibit opportunities see: <http://www.ces.fau.edu/ccc/sponsors.php>. For hotel accommodations, go to <http://www.ces.fau.edu/ccc/accommodations.php>. Visit [www.ces.fau.edu/ccc](http://www.ces.fau.edu/ccc) in February to register for this event.

## ***8th Annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference on SMART GROWTH***

**May 9-10, 2007**

### **IP Hotel and Casino Royal Halls, Biloxi, Mississippi**

The conference is considered to be the premier smart growth conference on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) and partner, the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce, are proud to host this conference. Over the past years the conference attendance has increased as we present a variety of topics, speakers, strategies and tools to protect our environment, our economy and our quality of life in Southern Mississippi. The main focus for this annual conference is to continue our work as a region of decision makers to balance the conservation efforts and economic development as we proceed with planning, designing and building safe, healthy and livable communities for Southern Mississippi. This conference is for you! The multidisciplinary event draws elected officials, city and county staff, contractors, developers, bankers, planners, realtors, engineers, landowners, industry, students, federal and state agencies, county boards of supervisors, lawyers, private and corporate entities, environmentalists, resource managers and others committed to building the Gulf Coast. Join us!

For information contact: Mississippi Dept of Marine Resources Tina Shumate (228) 523-4122 [Tina.Shumate@dmr.ms.gov](mailto:Tina.Shumate@dmr.ms.gov) Marcia Garcia (228) 523-4124 [Marcia.Garcia@dmr.ms.gov](mailto:Marcia.Garcia@dmr.ms.gov) Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce Katie Sandoz (228) 604-0014 [KatieS@mscoastchamber.com](mailto:KatieS@mscoastchamber.com)

Registration forms available at: [www.@dmr.state.ms.gov](http://www.@dmr.state.ms.gov) and [www.mscoastchamber.com](http://www.mscoastchamber.com)

## ***Call for Abstracts, Center for Natural Resource Economics & Policy***

May 20-23, 2007

The Center for Natural Resource Economics and Policy (CNREP) is announcing a Call for Abstracts for CNREP 2007: Challenges of Natural Resource Economics & Policy, the 2nd National Forum on Socioeconomic Research in Coastal Systems. The conference is scheduled for May 20-23, 2007, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference focus will include opportunities and challenges of socioeconomic research in developing coastal zone management policy. Potential session topics include, but are not limited to, market and nonmarket valuation of coastal resources, environmental benefit-cost analyses, economic linkage/impact assessment, input-output modeling, and comparative assessments of resource management and restoration policy. Basic and applied research, extension-oriented, and policy discussion submissions are all welcome. Keynote speakers will be announced at a later date. The deadline for abstract submission is February 15, 2007. For more information, go to:

<http://www.cnrep.lsu.edu/2007/abstracts.htm> [www.CNREP.lsu.edu](http://www.CNREP.lsu.edu)

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