

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

March 2007

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NOAA Honors Coastal Cleanup Volunteers at Louisiana Coastal Conservation State Convention

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will honor and recognize the outstanding work of the volunteers, leadership, and collaboration of the Louisiana Coastal Conservation Association, Louisiana Sea Grant, and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources in the planning and implementation of the Calcasieu Lake Marine Debris Surveying, Marking, Mapping, and Removal Project. On March 3, the awardees will be presented plaques at a formal ceremony during the annual state convention of the Louisiana Coastal Conservation Association in Baton Rouge. The presentation is recognition of the collaboration and cooperation and the first-of-a-kind effort to see the efforts of volunteers from a greatly affected coastal community lead to the removal of debris and hazards from a nationally significant coastal estuary by a state agency.

"Having partners at the local levels helps make our work easier and more effective," said [John H. Dunnigan](#), director of NOAA's National Ocean Service. "It is through the cooperative efforts like those demonstrated in Louisiana that NOAA finds its mission most successfully carried out."

The Calcasieu Lake Marine Debris Surveying, Marking, Mapping and Removal Project was initiated through a partnership with NOAA's Office of Coast Survey. The project identified hazards, developed a website and received and post reports and map graphics of hazards from the project, coordinated with the state's DNR in providing coordinates and information to facilitate removal of the hurricane debris and hazards today. With the aid from NOAA's Office of Coast Survey and a tremendous volunteer effort, the collective endeavor identified and is facilitating the removal of nearly 100 pieces of marine debris in Calcasieu Lake, La., a vital shipping channel and significant estuary for the southwestern Louisiana economy.

Two main events were organized on Calcasieu Lake to engage volunteers in the location, marking, and reporting of hazards and debris positions to NOAA and Louisiana Sea Grant. The Louisiana Coastal Conservation Association Lake Charles chapter provided large numbers of volunteers and support for the events as well as continued to encourage their membership to report any locations of debris and hazards to NOAA and Sea Grant even today. The start of this year saw the beginning of the debris removal work coordinated by Louisiana DNR.

NOAA Releases Five-Year Coral Reef Research Plan

New Plan to Further Benefit Coral Reef Ecosystem Research

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released the NOAA Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Plan today, identifying priority research needs and guidance for coral reef research through 2011. The plan looks at key research objectives and long-term needs to enhance NOAA's understanding of coral reef ecosystems and provide guidance to coastal and ocean managers on regional research priorities to help preserve, sustain and restore coral reef ecosystems.

"NOAA has developed this research plan to guide the full suite of NOAA's coral reef ecosystem research capabilities, as well guiding management-driven research across U.S. coral reef regions," said [Timothy](#)

[Keeney](#), deputy assistant secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and co-chair of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. “By providing researchers and coastal and ocean managers with high-priority scientific information, they will be better equipped in their efforts to conserve, protect, restore and sustain coral reef ecosystems.” Read the full press release [on-line](#).

On the Web:

Coral Reef Conservation Program: <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>.

Study Promotes Accurate Elevations of Louisiana Wetlands through Height Modernization Techniques

From March 9-23, the National Geodetic Survey (NGS), in cooperation with the University of New Orleans and the U.S. Geological Survey, measured coastal wetland elevations in southeastern Louisiana. The study promotes the integration of ecosystem observations through Height Modernization techniques. It will provide baseline data to help researchers differentiate between the many potential causes of relative sea-level change in coastal areas, including subsidence, accretion, erosion, and local sea-level rise. Measurements will be made using survey-grade global positioning system receivers and NGS’s latest geodetic surveying techniques. For more information, contact [Charles Geoghegan](#).

Mississippi Senatorial Aide Observes NOAA Survey Work and Debris Removal

An aide from U.S. Senator Thad Cochran's (R-MS) office took a tour of ongoing marine-debris cleanup efforts aboard a NOAA survey boat in Biloxi's Back Bay. While observing hazards and debris in the water, the aide was briefed by a Navigation Manager from the Office of Coast Survey on the challenges of navigation under such conditions and on the charting and navigation resources that NOAA is giving to the project. The Senator's office will be kept posted on the progress of the survey work, debris removal, and salvage operations. For more information, contact [Tim Osborn](#).

Novel Gene Regulatory Mechanism Identified in Florida Red Tide Dinoflagellate Will Help Guide Development of Biomarkers

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researchers have discovered an unusual gene regulatory mechanism in the Florida red tide dinoflagellate, *Karenia brevis*, which may convey a competitive advantage to this harmful algal bloom species by allowing it to rapidly respond to changing conditions. The mechanism, termed RNA *trans*-splicing, allows an organism to alter its proteins without changing levels of its gene activity. This discovery is part of an ongoing NCCOS project to understand cellular mechanisms that control Florida red tide formation. *Trans*-splicing will guide selection of biomarkers for determining bloom status, needed to enhance current capabilities to forecast bloom development and termination. Florida red tides occur annually in the Gulf of Mexico and cause significant economic and health impacts in coastal communities due to their toxicity. For more information, contact [Fran Van Dolah](#).

CSCOR Introduces Interactive HAB Fact Sheet Online

In order to demonstrate the economic impacts of harmful algal bloom (HAB) events nationwide, the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) web development team from Aster Engineering has implemented a web technology-enhanced fact sheet for the Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research's Harmful Algal Bloom team. The new online [fact sheet](#) features an interactive map that details the dollar costs of HAB events in specific U.S. states and provides a strong visual representation of those costs to the public. For more information, contact [Mary Mahling](#).

Ecological Impacts of Hypoxia on Living Resources Meeting Seeks to Provide Answers to the "So What" Question

The Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research and Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, in coordination with the Northern Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Institute, are convening the [Ecological Impacts of Hypoxia on Living Resources Meeting](#), in Bay St. Louis, MS. The current poor understanding of the quantitative relationship between hypoxic ("dead") zones and populations of commercially and recreationally important living resources (the "So What" question) is the single most significant scientific barrier to informed management of this problem nationally. The effectiveness of existing approaches for evaluating the impacts of hypoxia on ecologically, commercially, and recreationally important fish and shellfish populations will be compared between three coastal systems noted for seasonally recurring hypoxic zones: Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, and Lake Erie. The meeting will consist of an open symposium (March 26-27, 2007) and a workshop involving invited researchers and managers (March 28-29, 2007). Outcomes of the workshop will include a "white paper," technical report, and peer-reviewed journal issue that summarize historical information on hypoxia effects on fish and shellfish, management tools and science needs. The pre-meeting white paper and post-meeting technical report will be posted on the meeting website, www.ngi.msstate.edu/hypoxia. For more information, contact [Alan Lewitus](#).

Abstracts Sought for Session on 'Modeling Hypoxia: Approaches and Application to Management'

Abstracts are being sought for the Estuarine Research Federation (ERF) 2007 Conference Session titled Modeling Hypoxia: Approaches and Application to Management, to be held in Providence, RI from November 4-8, 2007. The deadline for abstracts is May 23, 2007. The session, co-sponsored by the Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research and the Environmental Protection Agency, will provide a forum for communication between modelers working on the problem of hypoxia in coastal ecosystems, scientists investigating ecosystem processes related to hypoxia, and managers who will ultimately base policy decisions in part on the results of model forecasts. The session will explore recent and newly developing modeling efforts that address limitations and uncertainties of past efforts (e.g., multiple nutrient limitation; spatial dynamics; seasonality; physical processes; sediment transport; recycling, transport, and fate of nutrients; benthic primary production; sediment-water nutrient exchange; and organic matter diagenesis), and their application to coastal resource management. Technical issues associated with data assimilation, nested models, and the challenges associated with the open boundary conditions will be addressed as well. Detailed meeting and session information, including the abstract submittal process, are available online at <http://www.erf.org/erf2007/>. For more information, contact [Alan Lewitus](#).

Manta Ray Acoustic Tagging Study in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is conducting a manta ray acoustic tagging study in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. Last year, six animals were tagged with acoustic pingers. Acoustic receivers documented use of all three banks within the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary by one animal. This is the first definitive connectivity of the three major banks in the sanctuary by large pelagic animals. The sanctuary is also working with the WCS to catalog the local population of manta rays, using collected photographs and video. This information will be made available on the Internet and to divers visiting the sanctuary. For more information contact [Kelly Drinnen](#).

New Web Site Reveals Underwater Debris in Gulf Coast Waters

A new NOAA web site provides online maps of debris-laden areas in the Northern Gulf of Mexico. The maps indicate nautical position and other physical properties of each piece of submerged debris found during the NOAA Office of Coast Survey and Office of Response and Restoration's surveying efforts. The work began last September in the waters of Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Gulf Coast waters may look calm on the surface but the debris poses a hazard to vessel traffic and commercial fishing gear. The maps help fishermen avoid debris and keep them updated on the status of debris removal in fishing grounds. The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium is working with NOAA to promote the new marine debris web site. [NOAA Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project](#)

LA Sea Grant Agents Honored for Outstanding Hurricane Response/Recovery

For their outstanding response and continuing recovery work following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, three Louisiana Sea Grant marine extension agents have received the 2006 Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea Grant Extension Network's Outstanding Group Achievement Award. Congratulations to Albert "Rusty" Gaude, Kevin Savoie and Mark Schexnayder. Mark also received the 2006 Conservation Educator of the Year Award in the 43rd Annual Governor's Conversation Achievement Recognition Program conducted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation. Despite being displaced themselves during the 2005 hurricane season, the three agents adeptly became critical points of contact, providing ongoing assistance to local governments, fishermen and other constituents. One testimonial stated, "They saw what others didn't see and drove a direct path to what needed to be done." Many of their efforts are chronicled in a short documentary entitled, [Sister Storms: A Louisiana Sea Grant Response](#).

Benthic Habitat Maps May Reduce Future Coral Reef Impacts in Southeast Florida

Scientists at the National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI) at Nova Southeastern University, sponsored by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Research (NCCOS), have created detailed benthic habitat maps of the coastal reef system in southeast Florida to help boaters and ship operators avoid these underwater resources. Maps were developed through visual interpretation of high resolution bathymetry and acoustic ground discrimination. In collaboration with NOAA's Office of Coast Survey, the coral reef delineations

from this effort have been incorporated into the latest NOAA nautical charts to show the location of the reefs, which were previously not identified on the charts. The NCRI is a Congressionally-directed program that is funded through a grant by NCCOS, and is a core component of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program. For more information, visit <http://chartmaker.ncd.noaa.gov/> or contact [David Hilmer](#).

Planning, Prioritizing, and Implementing Gulf of Mexico Regional Marine Research and Information Needs: 2006-2011

The Gulf of Mexico Research Planning Project is one of eight Sea Grant funded, region-based research planning efforts under way in the United States. The four GOM Sea Grant college programs (Florida Sea Grant, Louisiana Sea Grant, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and Texas Sea Grant) are working with state and federal agencies, universities, non-profit organizations, and private industry along the GOM to prioritize research and information needs and to develop a strategic research plan. The Gulf of Mexico Research Plan (GMRP), which highlights the stakeholder-defined research priorities for the region, will be completed in early 2008. An implementation plan, which will help interested research organizations determine how their research agendas can complement the GMRP, will be completed by fall 2008.

Initially, the current research priorities in the Gulf will be identified through a review of existing strategic and implementation plans developed by organizations that sponsor or conduct scientific research. A matrix will be developed from the synthesis of existing plans and used as a starting point for obtaining broad-based stakeholder input through a variety of methods including focus group meetings, interviews, and Web-based surveys. This input will be used to identify research needs not currently addressed and to prioritize the final set of research needs.

The current list of plans identified is now available at <http://masgc.org/gmrp/plans.htm>. Please contact [Steve Sempier](#) with any additional information about strategic and implementation plans. As stakeholder input is collected and analyzed, research priorities and information needs will be incorporated into the GMRP. The GMRP will be examined by the Planning and Review Council (PRC) and the public.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Other NOAA News

High Resolution Bathymetric Data Set Released

The first high resolution gridded bathymetric data set from the Hydrographic Surveys Division is being loaded into the newly developed hydrographic database operated by the Coast Survey Development Lab. The data is being submitted as a Bathymetric Attributed Grid (BAG), which is a non-proprietary, open source data exchange format that was created to facilitate the processing and storage of large volume multibeam sonar data. The gridded format and data density of 5-10 meter resolution will be easier to

access and much more useful than the previous product, which typically had soundings spaced 50-200 meters apart. The database containing the gridded data will be mirrored to the National Geophysical Data Center, which will make the high resolution grids available to the general public, academia, and other government agencies. For more information, contact [Jerry Mills](#).

Powerful New Tool to Track Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide by Source

Scientists from NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory announced today a new tool to monitor changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by region and source. The tool, called CarbonTracker, will enable its users to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts to reduce or store carbon emissions. The online data framework distinguishes between changes in the natural carbon cycle and those occurring in human-produced fossil fuel emissions. It also provides verification for scientists using computer models to project future climate change. Potential users include corporations, cities, states and nations assessing their efforts to reduce or store fossil fuel emissions around the world.

CarbonTracker distills an accurate assessment of greenhouse-gas increases or decreases. The resolution will increase to observe differences in concentration on finer geographical scales over time as data become available. Using the limited data that currently exist, the model can characterize emissions each month among U.S. regions, such as the West or the Southeast. As the observation network becomes denser, however, policymakers will be able to check the CarbonTracker Web site to compare emissions from urban centers. For instance, the resolution will be fine enough to determine the difference in net emissions from Sacramento as compared to San Francisco.

CarbonTracker's initial applications are primarily for scientists, and to attract new partners in NOAA's efforts to expand greenhouse gas observations in the United States and globally. NOAA and its partners are encouraging the addition of new monitoring sites around the United States and around the world to increase the resolution of point sources. Ultimately the site will provide easy-to-use information on local scales for policymakers, business leaders, teachers, and the public.

NOAA collaborates with partners in France, Australia, Brazil and other nations to measure greenhouse gases globally. Through a longstanding collaboration, Environment Canada has provided a quarter of the data for North America. However, the global network is still sparse. Using today's data, the system can distinguish surface emissions on a broad scale, but plans are underway to refine observations and modeling of carbon sources on much smaller scales. Read the [full story](#) online.

On the Web:

Carbon Tracker: <http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/carbontracker/>

Carbon Cycle Science: <http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/research/themes/carbon/>

Oceanic and Atmospheric Research: <http://www.research.noaa.gov/>

NOAA Releases Report on National Coordination of Ocean and Coastal Water Quality Monitoring

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has released a new report addressing the need for a national water quality monitoring network. "Linking Elements of the Integrated Ocean Observing System with the Planned National Water Quality Monitoring Network" is a summary of a Rutgers University workshop that brought together key government agencies, academic institutions, and scientific

organizations to discuss the network. Coordinated water quality monitoring is needed due to the many problems facing coastal water bodies, including nutrient over-enrichment, inputs of toxic contaminants and pathogens, and habitat alteration. A national water quality monitoring network was called for in both the [U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's](#) 2004 final report and in the [U.S. Ocean Action Plan](#).

In April 2006, the Advisory Committee on Water Information and the National Water Quality Monitoring Council completed a design for the network that will be part of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, the U.S. system for collecting data and information about the oceans and a part of global observation systems. Participants of the workshop found that any future management arrangement linking the council to IOOS would require a centralized effort to integrate current monitoring and research programs. Participants identified the Delaware Bay ecosystem as a possible location for a regional pilot project to measure physical, biological and chemical aspects of water quality. The region has a large forested upper watershed, undeveloped estuarine wetlands, and a wide variety of aquatic, marine, and upland species. It also supports many human uses, and there are a number of water quality research and management efforts underway in this area.

Other key workshop results detailed in the report include a description of overarching water quality management issues, an analysis of existing monitoring programs, an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing management of data, and assessments of current regional procedures and technologies for addressing water quality issues. "Effective water quality monitoring requires routine access to integrated scientific information in formats that are useful to decision-makers," said Zdenka Willis, director of NOAA's IOOS program office. "Workshops that bring together multiple stakeholders are critical to helping the U.S. IOOS program understand what information is needed, how this information should be provided, and formulating next-steps for accomplishing this important work."

On the Web:

Workshop Report : <http://www.ccma.nos.noaa.gov/publications/IOOSTechMemo.pdf>

National Water Quality Monitoring Council: <http://acwi.gov/monitoring/>

NOAA Promotes Science Literacy Among Hispanic Youth

Approximately 40 elementary and middle school teachers from Washington, DC, attended the *Celebre la Ciencia* ("Celebrate Science") 2nd Annual Teacher Open House, held in the District on February 21. *Celebre la Ciencia* works to increase science literacy among Hispanic youth, especially through informal science opportunities. Staff from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service, and NOAA's National Weather Service joined the celebration, providing a host of resources to enhance the efficacy of classroom efforts with many materials in Spanish. This event is part of a greater effort to increase public environmental literacy and to promote careers in NOAA sciences. For more information, contact [Susan Baker](#).

Estuaries Science Guide Showcased for Teachers

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System partnered with the National Ocean Service and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) to produce an "Estuaries SciGuide" that was showcased at the NSTA national conference in March. A SciGuide is a valuable classroom resource to help science teachers integrate the web into the classroom. Each guide consists of approximately 100 Web sites that have been aligned to National Science Education Standards and vetted across eight educational rubrics, such as inquiry, interactivity, communication and collaboration, and how scientists learn. The Estuaries

SciGuide partnership makes NERRS science education activities directly accessible by members of the largest professional organization of science teachers in the United States, says Atziri Ibañez, national education coordinator at the Estuarine Reserves Division. To learn more about the SciGuides please visit <http://sciguides.nsta.org/default.aspx>.

Journal Explores Topic of Coastal Inundation (CSC)

The winter 2006/2007 issue of Marine Technology Society Journal, an internationally recognized and peer-reviewed quarterly publication, features the theme “Stemming the Tide of Coastal Disasters.” Margaret Davidson, director of the NOAA Coastal Services Center, served as a guest editor. The issue examines the history of coastal inundation in the Nation and describes the risks that occur in the interplay between people and the changing coastal zone. Contributors also address ways to improve prediction, management, and mitigation of risks. Because the response to the call for papers was so great, the topic will also be covered in the spring 2007 issue. To obtain a copy of the journal, visit www.mtsociety.org/publications/journal.cfm.

In the Gulf States

Alabama Undisputed Crawfish King

Last month, according to the Mobile Register, nationally recognized crawfish scientists identified the state of Alabama as the "most biologically diverse" in the number of crawfish species in the country. Here are some of the findings:

- Alabama has 83 species of crawfish, six (6) more than Tennessee, the next most diverse state.
- Some creeks in Alabama have more than twice as many species of crawfish as are known in all of Europe.
- 2/3 of the world's species of crawfish are found in the U.S. and 95% of those are in the Southeast.
- Alabama has 46 more species of crawfish than mudbug farming Louisiana.

Interest in crawfish diversity, especially in Alabama, has grown since 2004 when Press Register reporters captured a thought to be extinct crawfish species called the "rusty gravedigger". Steve Rider, aquatic resources coordinator with the Department of Conservation has also been instrumental for securing funding to do a crawfish survey in the state. According to Rider, there may be an additional 10-12 species of crawfish that have never been identified.

Alabama Signs Statewide Safe Harbor Agreement for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) and the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) (USFWS) today announced the initiation of a statewide conservation program for the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). The Safe Harbor program kick-off was held at Sehoj Plantation near Hurtsboro, AL. The event was hosted by Campbell “Cam” Lanier, the program’s first enrollee. The Safe Harbor Program provides a mechanism through which private landowners can agree to

manage their lands in a manner that benefits a protected species. In return, they receive an assurance that they will not suffer from increased regulatory requirements should more of the protected species occupy their land.

“This program is a good example of partnerships between government agencies and private landowners,” said M. Barnett Lawley, commissioner of conservation for the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. “By working together, both landowners and endangered species like the red-cockaded woodpecker will benefit from the Safe Harbor program.”

ADCNR signed the agreement with USFWS in January 2007. Since then, officials from the two agencies have been finalizing details and working with landowners to prepare to enroll participants. Campbell Lanier III signed on as the first enrollee in the Alabama program. Lanier’s property includes Sehoy Plantation, where the ceremony was held, and Enon Plantation, also near Hurtsboro.

Lanier has been active in protecting wildlife habitat for many years, and was named Conservationist of the Year by the Alabama Wildlife Federation in 2004. More than 18,000 acres of the two plantations are currently protected under conservation easements. The rolling hills of Sehoy and Enon Plantations, expertly managed for bobwhite quail, also contain more than 12,000 acres of suitable RCW habitat. “Enrolling in Safe Harbor was an easy decision for me once I had all the facts,” Cam Lanier said. “In a landscape managed for quail, aesthetics, and timber, managing for woodpeckers is something I was already doing. After researching the program, I realized that managing for an endangered species was not something to fear, but something I was already doing.”

“It’s a win-win situation,” said Sam Hamilton, regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “Private landowners are integral partners in fish and wildlife conservation. RCW recovery goals cannot be met without commitments from private landowners. Safe Harbor is a prime example of how collaborative conservation can benefit our trust resources.”

During the ceremony, ADCNR provided opportunities for landowners to sign “Declarations of Intent,” a non-binding agreement signifying an interest in becoming a part of the program at a later date. Landowners signing Declarations of Intent can be enrolled in the program following a baseline survey for existing RCW clusters and completion of the necessary paperwork.

Alabama is the eighth state to implement a statewide agreement for the red-cockaded woodpecker. Across the Southeast, Safe Harbor agreements have provided opportunities for 268 private landowners to enroll 621,035 acres in the program. Acreage enrolled in the program accounts for 613 RCW groups, including 57 new Safe Harbor RCW groups that have been created. “Landowners receive regulatory certainty, and retain management flexibility and complete control over their land, while protected species benefit from high quality habitats maintained on private land,” said Eric Spadgenske, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service private lands biologist.

The program is strictly voluntary. Landowners can enroll their property if they have currently occupied, suitable, or potentially suitable RCW habitat, provided they agree to provide a net conservation benefit to the species. Net conservation benefits can be provided through activities such as prescribed burning and managing pine timber on longer rotations.

Before a property is enrolled, a baseline survey is done to determine how many clusters of RCWs exist. The landowner then agrees to manage the property to make it more conducive to hosting the species. In return, the wildlife agencies agree to not hold them responsible for any additional RCWs that result from the improved habitat, should the landowner eventually choose to use the property in another way in the future.

“Enrollment in the program doesn’t prevent the land from being used for other things,” said Gary Moody, the Department of Conservation’s wildlife section chief. “Other uses fit well with the management practices needed for RCW habitat, such as limited timber harvesting, hunting, cattle production or pine straw harvesting. Quail management is often recognized as a compatible use but many wildlife species benefit from the management for RCWs.”

For further information about the statewide Safe Harbor Program for red-cockaded woodpeckers in Alabama, contact Bob Hastings, Alabama Natural Heritage Program, at (334) 833-4064, or Mark Sasser, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, at (334) 242-3469.

Dauphin Island Hosts Discovery Day to Celebrate NOAA’s 200th Anniversary

Discovery Day at Dauphin Island Sea Lab - Come celebrate Discovery Day - Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Annual Open House - and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's 200th year of programs on April 14th, 9:00 AM at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, North Campus. For information about the day's activities visit, <http://www.disl.org> or call 251/861-2141.

Discovery Day, the Sea Lab’s Annual Open House, has always been a fun-filled and educational event for the whole family. This year, the Sea Lab is partnering with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to celebrate NOAA’s 200th year of programs. So in celebration of the coast, our history with it, and all of its treasures - join us for Discovery Day at the DISL. We’ll begin with a ground-breaking of the newest facility at the Sea Lab, the Richard C. Shelby Center for Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management, a National Marine Fisheries Service building, at Saturday, April 14, from 9:30am to 10am. This will kick-off Discovery Day, from 10am to 2pm.

Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program Removes 154 Traps

Crab traps are used extensively in our local waters to harvest blue crabs, but each year 20-40% of these traps are lost due to storms, broken lines, or neglect. These “derelict traps” continue to fish, causing crabs and fish to be trapped and die needlessly. They also damage boats and motors, cause personal injury, and detract from the natural beauty of the waters.

On Saturday, March 24, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – Marine Resources Division and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program hosted an effort to remove derelict crab traps from shallow Bay waters. To facilitate this project, ADCNR Commissioner M. Barnett Lawley closed "the season" for that single day in an area north of a line beginning at the northern edge of Arlington Channel east to the Mobile Ship Channel Marker #78 and southeasterly to the Mayday Pier in Daphne. Volunteers met at 7 AM at Meaher State Park and the Chocolatta Boat Launch on the Causeway and worked throughout the morning. One airboat from Wildlife and Freshwater Fish Division and several volunteers’ boats were used to successfully remove 154 traps from the designated area within 500 yards of the shore.

ADCNR-MRD and Mobile Bay NEP would like to express gratitude to the community for pitching in to decrease by-catch, increase vessel safety, and improve aesthetics in our Bay. Thanks to [Holcim, Inc.](#) for providing financial support and volunteers, the [Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center](#) for personnel, and the [Coastal Conservation Association](#), [Alabama Coastal Foundation](#), and the [Mobile](#)

County Wildlife and Conservation Association for boats, volunteers, and financial contributions. Thanks also to Mobile Gas who fed the crew when the recovery work was completed. All of us living on the Alabama coast benefit from good efforts like this.

Coastal Wetlands Mapping: A First and Critical Step Toward Understanding Habitat Change Over Time

The National Wetlands Research Center (NWRC) of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) recently completed the first comprehensive, baseline habitat mapping project describing wetland and upland habitats for Mobile and Baldwin Counties. The project was accomplished under contract to the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program acting for a partnership that included the ADCNR-State Lands Coastal Section, Gulf of Mexico Program, the Baldwin County Commission, the Mobile County Commission, EPA, and NOAA. These habitat maps were generated from digital color-infrared, geo-referenced photography acquired by the USGS, again under contract to the MBNEP on behalf of the several partners, for Mobile County in 2002. Digital Color, infrared photography from 2001 of the same resolution was provided by the Baldwin County Commission. These habitat and wetland maps will provide information for conservation, restoration, protection, and enhancement of Alabama's coastal habitats. This project also provides the most recent update to the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) for Baldwin and Mobile Counties.

Digital habitat maps were derived and generated from interpretation of aerial photography that was scanned and rectified into 70 digital ortho-photo quarter quads at 1:24,000 scale. Field checking was accomplished by USGS NWRC personnel in 2004 and 2005 and further NWI review and verification was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Wetlands were classified using the wetland classification scheme of Cowardin, et. al. Uplands were classified according to an NWRC customized classification scheme which can be cross referenced to that of Anderson, et. al. The maps provide exceptional resolution and include all habitats that exceed one square meter in area.

As a follow-on to this comprehensive baseline habitat and wetland mapping project, these data will be compared to previously collected data from 1955, 1979, and 1988 (where such data is available for the two counties) to better characterize status and trends of habitats in coastal Alabama. An accuracy assessment and status and trends report will result from this comparison.

Products from this mapping project provide long needed geographic information system layers for Alabama's coastal counties. Mobile County shape files and polygon data are contained in two CD-ROMs titled ""Mobile County 2002 NWI Habitat Data"". The first CD - Mobile_2002 coverage – contains the Mobile County data as a single complete coverage of clipped quads and a merged data set for ease of use. The second- Mobile 01_Clipped 24K – contains data for each of the individual quads. Color, infrared photographic images in Digital Ortho quarter quad format for Mobile County are also available from the MBNEP. Baldwin County data (including images) were included in one DVD titled "Baldwin County NWI Mapping Basemaps" and one CD Rom titled "Baldwin County 2001 National Wetlands Inventory Habitat Data". All of this data has been condensed into a single DVD, which the Mobile Bay NEP will provide for public use upon request.

As part of Gulf Alliance deliberations, resource managers throughout the five Gulf states have recognized a critical need for baseline data regarding coastal habitat type and extent. This mapping project provides the first step towards filling that need for Alabama's coastal counties and a powerful tool for resource managers, engineers, and developers.

As Hal Borland astutely said in 1964, “The most unhappy thing about conservation is that it is never permanent. Save a priceless woodland or an irreplaceable mountain today, and tomorrow it is threatened from another quarter.” Along the Gulf coast we face many threats to our invaluable wetland habitats. Whether changes arise through natural forces like hurricanes or through population growth and migration and resultant coastal development, these maps will provide resource managers, local governments and the community at large with the information necessary for managing these habitats in a sustainable way.

Florida Celebration of NOAA's 200th Anniversary

There are numerous events scheduled nationwide throughout the year to celebrate NOAA’s 200th birthday. The goal is to inform the public of the wide variety of diverse scientific and operational accomplishments of the dedicated men and women of NOAA.

There will be only one event taking place in all of Florida. The Propeller Club of Tampa is very proud to be hosting a “Salute to NOAA” on Tuesday evening, April 17th at the Davis Islands Garden Club. For those of you from Florida, you have become very familiar with NOAA in the past few years due to the intense hurricanes in our state and in the Gulf of Mexico. Whether it is through their weather forecasts, hurricane warnings, nautical charting, PORTS[®] information, fisheries data, marine sanctuaries, habitat restoration, or any of the other dozens of products, NOAA is and will continue to be a vital part of our state and our region. Very few people are aware that there are almost 1000 NOAA employees in the various facilities around Florida.

The mission of the Propeller Club is to support the U.S. Merchant Marine and the Maritime Industry in general. The Propeller Club in Tampa has over 425 members, which represent a cross section of the maritime industry and maritime interests in the Tampa Bay region. ***The Tampa Propeller Club is the single largest and most active Propeller Club chapter in the world.*** The work of NOAA is integral to our success and how we live in the region. To honor them during our annual “Steak and Corn” Night is a real privilege. For more information or to register, contact: Nancy Simms, Club Administrator, Propeller Club of the U.S. (813) 225-7227 or propellerclub@ij.net

Florida Oceans Day

Florida legislators are joining scientists, researchers and maritime interests to celebrate Florida Oceans Day on April 18, 2007 in Tallahassee, Florida, and promote awareness and stewardship of the state's ocean resources. Healthy coasts and oceans are critical to the state’s economy and provide sustainable resources for all Floridians.

The event is sponsored by the Florida Ocean Alliance, Mote Marine Laboratory, and the Florida Institute of Oceanography and includes a reception and ocean exhibits in the Capitol Rotunda and Courtyard for the public, legislators and agency staff.

The Florida Ocean Alliance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public-private partnership of government, academic, and private sector organizations. Formed in 1999, the Alliance promotes awareness and understanding of the ocean’s importance to the ecology and economy of Florida. More information on the Alliance is available at its website: www.floridaoceanalliance.org

Florida Indicators Network Grows

CUES and Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. hosted the fifth meeting of the Florida Indicators Network (FIN) on March 7, 2007 in Jacksonville, FL in conjunction with the Fifth International Conference of the Community Indicators Consortium. It was the largest FIN meeting yet with over 25 participants representing 17 different organizations. Since its inception the network has grown to include almost 50 people from over 20 organizations around the state, and continues to expand its reach. There are representatives from South Florida, Central Florida, Tampa Bay, Southwest Florida, Northeast Florida, and Northwest Florida, along with state agencies such as the Florida Department of Transportation and the Florida Chamber Foundation.

Since 2006 CUES has tried to coordinate its FIN network with the needs of the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida to implement the use of indicators to measure progress at the state, regional and local levels. The recent meeting provided a wealth of new ideas and fresh perspectives from new members and Steve Siebert, Executive Director of the Century Commission, affirmed the Commission's commitment to using indicators to measure Florida's progress toward sustainability. The Network has developed a working list of common indicators along with data resources and it has identified critical issues for which data is not available, but the highly informative discussion in March reinforced the fact we must engage even more practitioners and stakeholders throughout the state before indicators can be implemented at the state level. The organization is always seeking new members interested in how regional indicators can mark progress in the Sunshine State. For more information, visit www.floridaindicators.org. If you would like to participate, please contact Lindsay Walker at 954.762.5656 or lowalker@fau.edu.

CUES Staff Use Regional Indicators Report in Youth Leadership Summit

On March 15th, CUES staff Lindsay Walker and Fabio A. Naranjo presented and facilitated at the Leadership Broward Foundation's (LBF) Youth Leadership Summit. This intense, weekend-long program engages high school juniors and introduces them to the issues and resources of Broward County and seeks to empower them to take responsibility for shaping the future of their community.

CUES' most recent indicators report, *Charting the Course: Where is South Florida Heading?*, was used as the Summit's "primary textbook and guiding curriculum." Thus, it was distributed prior to the session, which allowed Lindsay and Fabio an opportunity to engage the nearly 40 participants in a discussion of regional issue/indicator identification and to facilitate a SWOT analysis of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as observed through their young eyes.

As designed by LBF staff, participants were expected to chart their own course for South Florida over the weekend as they learned about challenges and opportunities in the region. Using CUES' indicators report, students discussed and examined sustainability and social issues using the themes in *Charting the Course: People – Place – Prosperity*. On March 16th, CUES staff George Gadson also addressed the Youth Summit participants. He led a session titled: *The Light from Within* (Culture Arts and Recreation). In addition, George developed the curriculum for a Saturday session titled: *Educating Our Community*, which was led by LBF staff.

Florida Completes Purchase to Protect St. Vincent Sound and St. Joseph Bay

--Acquisition of more than 2,800 acres around Lake Wimico will protect important estuarine systems--

TALLAHASSEE – The State of Florida today took ownership of 2,844 acres in the St. Joe Timberland Florida Forever project. A partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the purchase from St. Joe Timberland Company will protect and preserve two significant and productive estuarine systems along Florida’s panhandle. “With this purchase we are protecting St. Vincent Sound and St. Joseph Bay, two important estuarine systems and habitats near Lake Wimico,” said Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Michael W. Sole. “Through this project, we are ensuring the preservation of water quality within the estuaries and protecting the plants and animals of the Florida panhandle.”

Part of the Northwest Florida Greenway, the purchase of the Lake Wimico Preserve parcels will conserve nearly two miles of waterfront property along the south shore of the lake and protect both St. Joseph Bay and St. Vincent Sound. Protecting the land and waters of this project will preserve the water quality, water quantity and seasonal freshwater flows that support the diverse communities of these two estuaries. In addition, protection of Lake Wimico and the remainder of the area will provide a buffer to the coastal waters of Apalachicola Bay as well as the Jackson River.

The St. Joe Timberland Florida Forever project spans more than 170,000 acres throughout the Florida panhandle, with more than 49,500 acres already in state ownership. Stretching from Walton and Bay Counties near Camp Helen State Park across the region to Jefferson and Taylor Counties near the Aucilla Wildlife Management Area, the project preserves large undeveloped tracts of land for native wildlife and provides a variety of public recreational opportunities throughout north Florida.

To strengthen national security and protect natural resources, the State of Florida is preserving land around military installations. Florida has invested more than \$800 million to conserve wildlife habitat and buffer military facilities, acquiring more than one-half million acres around military bases. An additional 630,000 acres are slated for purchase through the Florida Forever program. The 10-year, \$3 billion Florida Forever program established by the Florida Legislature conserves environmentally sensitive land, restores waterways and preserves important cultural and historical resources. For more information, visit www.FloridaForever.org.

Research Reserve Hosts the Northeast Florida Symposium on Underwater Archaeology

--Event features lectures, presentations and research projects--

ST. AUGUSTINE – The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR), in partnership with the St. Augustine Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program Inc., National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Florida Public Archaeology Network, Florida Division of Historical Resources, St. Johns County and the St. Augustine Archaeological Association, today hosted the inaugural Northeast Florida Symposium on Underwater Archaeology. Continuing through Thursday, March 22, the event features lectures from statewide marine experts about Florida’s coastal history and aquatic artifacts.

“GTMNERR strives to enhance Florida’s marine research through new ideas and initiatives,” said GTMNERR Manager Mike Shirley. “By bringing together experts from across the state, the reserve is fostering an environment for communication that continues to develop Florida’s aquatic research efforts.”

A part of the reserve's Coastal Training Program, the event covered topics including pre-historic underwater archaeology, the archaeology of several shipwreck sites in Florida, agency jurisdictions of submerged cultural resources, international shipwreck projects and graduate student archaeological research projects. Lectures include keynote speaker Florida State University Professor Emeritus George R. Fischer and presenters Dr. John Gifford of the University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, Dr. Barbra Purdy of the University of Florida Museum of Natural History, Dr. John Bratten of the University of West Florida Archaeological Institute and Dr. Filipe Castro of the Texas A&M Nautical Archaeology Program.

GTMNERR was established 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 and one of three in the State. The Department's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) manages GTMNERR along with 45 other sites that include aquatic preserves 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 more information about GTMNERR, visit www.floridacoasts.org/gtm.

Governor Crist Celebrates Value of Florida's Seagrasses

-- Governor recognizes March as Seagrass Awareness Month --

TALLAHASSEE - Recognizing the importance of seagrasses to Florida's marine environment, the commercial and recreational fishing industry and the economy, Governor Charlie Crist acknowledged March 2007 as Seagrass Awareness Month. "With more than 2.6 million acres, Florida is home to one of the largest expanses of seagrass beds in the world," said Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole. "Florida's seagrasses sustain recreational and commercial marine industries as well as critical wildlife habitat."

Seagrasses are flowering underwater grasses found in estuaries, lagoons and shallow, open shelves off Florida's coast. Florida is home to seven species of seagrasses, located throughout the state. A critical marine habitat, seagrasses provide a nursery ground for marine life and maintain water quality and clarity by stabilizing bottom sediments and filtering nutrients from stormwater run-off.

In 2006, seagrass communities in Florida supported an estimated harvest of \$71.4 million for six seagrass-dependant, commercial species of fish and shellfish. The state's multi-million dollar fishing industry depends on healthy seagrasses to protect young fish and shellfish, coral reefs and other marine life, including sea turtles, manatees and wading birds. Recreational divers, snorkelers and fishing enthusiasts from around the world visit underwater Florida to experience the state's world-class marine resources.

While affecting habitat, boating in seagrass beds can also damage vessel engines, hulls and propellers. Groundings that damage seagrass habitats are offenses subject to both federal and state fines, including civil penalties, damage assessment and habitat restoration costs and long-term monitoring of the restored site. The following tips provide seagrass-friendly practices for boaters:

- Familiarize yourself with the local waters where you plan to boat.
- Always use up-to-date nautical charts of the area.
- Use marked channels where they exist and stay in deep water.
- When in doubt about the depth, slow down and idle. Make sure the bow of the boat is down and the motor is trimmed or tilted up.

- Keep track of the tides. The greatest range of tides occurs during a full-moon and new-moon. Use extra caution when boating on a low tide.
- If you do run into a seagrass flat, you will be leaving a sediment trail behind your boat, making the water murky and probably cutting seagrass roots. Stop immediately and tilt your engine.

For more information on Florida's seagrasses, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/habitats/seagrass/. To view the Governor's proclamation for Seagrass Awareness Month, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2007/proc/seagrass.pdf>.

State Releases 2007 South Florida Environmental Report

--Annual report highlights progress to restore Everglades, Lake Okeechobee, South Florida ecosystem--

WEST PALM BEACH – The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today released the 2007 South Florida Environmental Report detailing a year of scientific, engineering and restoration work to improve the environmental quality of America's Everglades and the entire South Florida ecosystem. "Florida is an international leader in environmental restoration," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "Our state is committed to sound science, engineering excellence and common-sense resource management—all supported by dedicated funding that will ensure continued progress."

Key findings in the 2007 South Florida Environmental Report include:

- Florida's 41,000 acres of treatment wetlands captured and treated nearly 1.5 million acre-feet or 488 billion gallons of water during Water Year 2006 – improving the quality of water flowing into the Everglades and reducing phosphorus loads by close to 70 percent.
- Best farming practices in the Everglades Agricultural Area prevented 118 metric tons of phosphorus from entering the River of Grass.
- Since their implementation, best farming practices and stormwater treatment areas have prevented 2,500 metric tons of phosphorus – the equivalent weight of more than 2,000 average sized cars -- from entering America's Everglades.
- In a single year and ahead of schedule, Florida expanded and enhanced three Stormwater Treatment Areas, increasing available treatment area by 5,336 acres.
- Closing on a final 13,000 acres in 2006, Florida completed the 102,064-acre land acquisition needed for the restoration of the Kissimmee River. The \$578 million program to rescue the river is demonstrating environmental returns. Wading birds and waterfowl are returning to the restored floodplain with an estimated 657 nests observed in 2006.
- For the first time in history, publicly issued revenue bonds called Certificates of Participation are being used for natural resource restoration. Their sale successfully raised \$572 million for Everglades restoration projects.

"The 2007 South Florida Environmental Report provides a comprehensive update on our scientific research, restoration projects and environmental returns," said Carol Wehle, Executive Director of the SFWMD. "This report is documenting the world-class work taking place in South Florida and demonstrating Florida's commitment to restoration."

The result of a pilot project authorized by the Florida Legislature in 2004, the two-volume annual South Florida Environmental Report consolidates more than 50 individual reports documenting the State's work to improve the Everglades, Kissimmee Basin, Lake Okeechobee, estuaries and coastal areas. The report

provides extensive research summaries, data analyses, financial updates and a searchable database of environmental projects throughout the South Florida ecosystem.

The State of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District has invested more than \$2 billion toward the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, an additional \$1.8 billion for Everglades water quality improvements and \$200 million toward the Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan. The 2007 South Florida Environmental Report, including a 52-page executive summary, is available online at <http://www.sfwmd.gov/sfer/>

Comprehensive New Study Examines Impact of Katrina and Rita on Louisiana Businesses

BATON ROUGE, La. (March 8, 2006) - A comprehensive new report that examines the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on Louisiana businesses shows the first indication of business rebound from the first and third most catastrophic disasters in American history. The groundbreaking report also confirms the tremendous devastation businesses suffered as a result of the storms, particularly in the parishes of St. Bernard, Orleans and Cameron. Known as the Louisiana Business Recovery Report, the report shows that the number of businesses open across the entire state declined immediately after the storms and continued to decline through the first quarter of 2006. There was a slight increase in the second quarter of 2006; however, at the end of the second quarter 2006, there were still 2,270 fewer firms open than before the storms.

The report, which is the first of its kind, was conducted by Louisiana State University (LSU) researchers on behalf of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), Louisiana Economic Development (LED) and Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL). The complete report, which is available online at www.lra.louisiana.gov or by [clicking here](#), tracks the number of firms, employment and wages in Louisiana based on Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data from the third quarter of 2005 through the second quarter of 2006. QCEW data from the second quarter of 2005, prior to the storms, is also used to benchmark pre-hurricane levels.

LouisianaSpeaks.Org Ranked in Top 10 Planning Websites for 2007

Editors of the online planning network, Planetizen.com, today released their annual list of the best planning, design and development websites in the country, ranking www.louisianaspeaks.org in the top ten. Louisiana Speaks is a long-term planning initiative of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) that is supported with private funds provided through the LRA Support Foundation. The website is managed by the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) and powered by KnowledgePlex due to a generous grant from the Fannie Mae Foundation. In the announcement, Planetizen editors wrote, "The authority's website serves as a central repository for information regarding the (Louisiana Speaks) effort -- which is simultaneously managing planning efforts aimed at the building, neighborhood, parish, and regional levels." To view the complete article, visit <http://www.planetizen.com/node/23220>.

In the wake of the destruction caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Louisiana Speaks initiative works toward the development of a sustainable, long-term vision for South Louisiana. This work combines the efforts of local, state and federal partners along with many experts, stakeholders and citizens into a comprehensive approach. CPEX, which was created to serve as a resource for residents, community organizations, developers and elected officials to provide information on best practices for planning and urban design, provides primary support and management for the Louisiana Speaks website.

The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency's ESF #14 Long Term Planning Division has also made major contributions to Louisiana Speaks, including development of a dynamic and interactive web-based planning tool which is available online at www.louisianaspeaks-parishplans.org. Planetizen is an online planning and development network which serves as a one-stop source for urban planning news, commentary, interviews, event coverage, book reviews, announcements, jobs, consultant listings, training, and more. Planetizen evaluates websites based on their ability to serve as online resources for those interested in planning, design, and development. The top ten list was based on nominations by Planetizen readers and staff, and judged against a common set of criteria, including standards of web accessibility.

LRA Announces Plans to Push Additional \$68 Million to Small Businesses and Approves \$20 Million in Aid for Fisheries

The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) board of directors today approved a plan to push an additional \$68 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funds to small businesses trying to recover from hurricanes Katrina and Rita. More than 81,000 businesses were initially affected by the storms, while more than 18,000 are still out of business. Before the morning session concluded, the board voted for final approval on a program to allocate \$20 million in CDBG funds to help restore the fishing industry by investing in fisheries infrastructure and providing aid directly to fishermen. The aid package, developed with input from the fishing industry, will be available for repairing, improving, acquiring, and/or constructing infrastructure, returning fishing boats to service and providing funds for loans and grants to fishermen.

The plan recommends allocating \$15 million to improve and expand infrastructure critical to the commercial and recreational fisheries industries, including docks, icehouses, boat launches, processing and shipping facilities, boats and other infrastructure. It also recommends \$5 million to provide direct aid to fishermen through the existing Small Firm Loan and Grant program. "We are going to cover the fishing industry," said LRA Board Member Rene Cross. "Its unique place in our culture and its role in our economy cannot be denied. It is our hope that this program will take care of the problems that exist there."

It is estimated that the fishing industry lost \$582 million in damage and lost revenues following the hurricanes. The vast majority of that damage was sustained by privately-owned equipment and infrastructure, which are not eligible for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance. The measure now moves to the Louisiana Legislature and HUD for final approval. During the afternoon session, the board heard an update from the state's Office of Community Development (OCD) and the state's contractor, ICF International, on the Road Home homeowner assistance program. Board resolutions and presentations for the board meeting are available on the LRA website at www.lra.louisiana.gov.

Regional Poll Reveals Citizens Want More Transit, Housing Options and Greater Investments in Coastal Protection, Education

Ninety-three percent of citizens participating in the Louisiana Speaks Regional Vision Poll support funding and implementation of the state's proposed coastal protection and restoration plan. The poll also found, 81% of respondents want to focus future development in existing cities and towns and modify current development patterns to create new housing choices and new transit options.

"A tremendous degree of consensus exists in the planning region around key planning strategies," said Robin Rather, CEO of Collective Strength, the research consulting firm that collected and analyzed the survey results. "While the region is highly diverse in many ways-geographically, culturally and politically-in terms of long term recovery and growth planning, there is a mandate for key goals." The poll also found that most citizens want to consider new options for risk management in unprotected flood-prone areas, with only 11% of respondents reporting their preference for emphasizing individual property rights over community risk. Complete survey results are available online at www.louisianaspeaks.org.

A team of national experts and local planners are now using this data, along with previous citizen input to create a consensus-based vision for South Louisiana that will be released in May 2007. Spanning parishes from the Texas to Mississippi border (including the Houma/ Thibodaux, New Orleans, North Shore, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Lake Charles metro areas), the Louisiana Speaks Regional Vision will provide the framework for local and parish plans to thrive in and serve as a guide for South Louisiana's long-term recovery and future growth.

Lafourche Parish Approves Adoption of Flood Elevation Guidelines

Vote Clears Way for Close to \$5 Million in Recovery Funding

The Lafourche Parish Council this week voted 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 almost \$5 million to the parish for rebuilding and recovery efforts. Now that the parish has adopted the new guidelines, it is eligible to receive \$3 million to help get flood-prone homes out of harm's way and to make critical infrastructure, like hospitals, police stations and emergency operations centers, more resistant to future storms by installing shutters, raising generators and fuel tanks, and using other storm-proofing techniques.

"Lafourche now joins dozens of other communities in South Louisiana that have taken another big step toward rebuilding safer, stronger and smarter," said LRA Board Member Donald "Boysie" Bollinger. Lafourche will also be able to access up to \$948,000 for building recovery projects in the parish and affected municipalities from the LRA's Long Term Community Recovery program. An additional estimated \$930,000 will be available to the parish to cover their ten percent match for FEMA's Public Assistance program. Parishes that choose not 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: Plaquemines, Calcasieu, Lake Charles, Sulphur, Vinton, Westlake, Cameron, Iberia, Jeanerette, New Iberia, Jefferson, Grand Isle, Gretna, Harahan, Jean Lafitte, Kenner, Westwego, Golden Meadow, Lockport, Thibodaux, Orleans, St. Charles, St. Mary, Baldwin, Franklin, Morgan City, St. Tammany, Madisonville, Slidell, Tangipahoa, Ponchatoula, Terrebonne, Vermilion, Abbeville and Delcambre.

The NEW "Spirit of the Estuary" Curriculum NOW Available

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) is pleased to present the "Spirit of the Estuary: Using Art to Understand Ecology" curriculum. This is a multi-disciplinary series that addresses wetland environmental issues through the integration of fine art, language art, science, and social studies.

Research indicates that students retain thinking skills, processes and attitudes about subjects, studies and

themselves when they are actively engaged in learning. This enjoyable estuary-learning curriculum provides teachers and students with dynamic lessons that emphasize personal connection and commitment to protect and preserve the delicate Louisiana estuary. This curriculum is designed to educate middle school and high school art, science, language arts and social studies students. It is also being used by gifted and talented students. The curriculum is aligned with Louisiana GLEs.

The Spirit of the Estuary can be accessed online at <http://educators.btnep.org/default.asp?id=76>. BTNEP is currently offering to host free teacher workshops to schools or districts. This educational curriculum was produced by: Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program www.BTNEP.org or 1-800-259-0869

LA DNR Coastal Restoration Annual Project Book (2006) Available

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Office of Coastal Restoration and Management has just published and distributed the 2006 Coastal Restoration Annual Project Reviews. The book is a review of the state's coastal restoration projects under the direction of DNR. The 116-page report gives an overview and status of coastal efforts to protect, conserve, restore, and improve the state's coastal wetlands. The Barrier Island Status Report is included in the report as mandated by the 2006 Regular Legislative Session. The report is subdivided into four primary sections by region and also includes information on project location, features, acreage, costs, and funding sources. DNR's Coastal Restoration Technology section completed the report and has made it available online at www.dnr.louisiana.gov in downloadable format. For inquiries and copies, contact Mandy Green at (225) 342-1357 or mandy.green@la.gov

Wild Wing River and Nature Festival

Various locations in Coastal Mississippi, see brochure below for details

Come and see a place that left time behind... the Pascagoula River, the largest wild river in the Lower 48. Join us for Wild Wing River and Nature Festival April 13 - 22, 2007 and visit a river system with more diversity than a tropical rainforest.

Homepage: <http://www.wildwingfestival.com/>

Registration: <http://www.wildwingfestival.com/Registration%20Information.pdf>

[Wild Wing Announcement \(PDF\)](#)

Governor Barbour Announces Grants for Hancock and Harrison Counties Projects

(Jackson, Mississippi) – Governor Haley Barbour announced today that a \$271,929 grant to the Hancock County Utility Authority and a \$568,500 grant to the Harrison County Utility Authority have been approved by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. The funds to Hancock County will be used for final plans of a Regional Water Supply Well and Storage Facility in Kiln, Mississippi. Total funds of up to \$5.5 million will be available for construction of these projects upon approval of the initial planning and design phase.

The funds for Harrison County will be used for planning and design costs of a Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) in Saucier; a WWTP in Robinwood and Riverbend Developments; and a WWTP and

Transmission Mains in the South Woolmarket area of Biloxi. Total funds of up to \$9.8 million will be available for construction of these projects upon approval of the initial planning and design phase.

“The need for improving our water and sewer systems in the Gulf Coast region was made apparent in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, when tens of thousands of citizens were without basic services. Approving these funds for the construction of new, improved infrastructure is a positive step towards better preparedness for our Coastal communities,” Governor Barbour said.

These projects are part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan that produced recommendations for the use of \$630 million in disaster recovery funds to develop and enhance water and wastewater infrastructure. Governor Barbour and Mississippi’s Congressional Delegation obtained appropriations of more than \$5 billion through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in hurricane recovery. Following a recommendation by the Governor’s Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal, the Legislature passed the Mississippi Gulf Region Utility Act which created county utility authorities to help provide delivery of water, wastewater, and storm water services to citizens of the Gulf Region.

Out of this money, the Mississippi Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan was prepared under a contract between the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and Mississippi Engineering Group, Inc., for improvements intended to support existing and future growth patterns, as realized through new housing construction, and to promote economic development.

Digital Aerial Data to Aid South Mississippi Recovery

(JACKSON, Miss.) – Mississippi’s post-Katrina redevelopment reached another milestone recently as the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and its contractor EarthData completed digital aerial data collection over the six Coastal counties most ravaged by the 2005 hurricane. The project, known as the Gulf Region Base Mapping Program, is funded as part of the \$5.05 billion in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that Governor Haley Barbour and Mississippi’s Congressional delegation secured through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Mississippi Development Authority was selected by Governor Barbour to oversee the funds’ disbursement.

The Gulf Region Base Mapping Program will be used to develop high-resolution orthoimagery in support of transportation, infrastructure, and land-use planning projects, including the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan administered by MDEQ. The high-resolution orthoimagery will enable local officials to develop efficient and effective water and wastewater systems for the Coastal counties. “The mapping data currently being developed is critically needed for the long-range planning work that is necessary for rebuilding and renewing our Gulf Coast,” said Trudy Fisher, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. “It will enable the public and private sector engineering, construction, and economic development people to make wiser and faster decisions,” she added.

The first digital maps should be available for public officials this spring with the final products expected in the fall. It will be invaluable to City and County officials as they plan and implement projects to sustain long-term growth. (JACKSON, Miss.) – Mississippi’s post-Katrina redevelopment reached another milestone recently as the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and its contractor EarthData completed digital aerial data collection over the six Coastal counties most ravaged by the 2005 hurricane. The project, known as the Gulf Region Base Mapping Program, is funded as part of the \$5.05 billion in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that Governor Haley Barbour and

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Post-Katrina Derelict Crab Trap Gear Removal Program Recycles Over 9,800 Traps

BILOXI, Miss. – From February 11 through 16 the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) contracted with 45 Mississippi resident commercial crab trap fishermen to remove a total of 9,862 derelict crab traps from Mississippi's marine waters. "This was our most successful trap cleanup ever," said DMR Fisheries Scientist Bill Richardson. "We had excellent cooperation from the fishermen."

Mississippi's closed season for crab traps began February 5 at 6 a.m. and reopened February 17 at 6 a.m. Mississippi licensed crab trap fishermen were allowed to remove their traps from the water during the first seven days of the closure. After February 11, any traps remaining in public waters were considered abandoned and subject to removal. Eligibility for the program required Mississippi crab trap fishermen to have been licensed commercially in the year 2005 (license years 2004-2005 or 2005-2006), hold a current crab trap license and show proof of residency.

"Crab traps may become derelict in many ways but are primarily lost by storms, which can break the buoy lines," said Richardson. "Although crab fishermen brought their traps in from the water to keep them safe as Hurricane Katrina approached, the storm surge consumed the traps anyway."

Three drop-off sites were set up to receive the derelict traps: Bayou Caddy in Bay St. Louis, the Point in Pascagoula and Ocean Springs Harbor in Ocean Springs. DMR and GCRL staff manned the sites and loaded the traps into dumpsters. The dumpsters were taken to David Motor & Scrap where the traps were recycled. Since the program's inception, Nov. 4, 1999, over 15,000 abandoned and derelict traps have been removed from Mississippi marine waters through the Mississippi Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program.

The project was funded through the Mississippi Hurricane Katrina Disaster Restoration, Enhancement and Monitoring Program to Study the Recovery of Gulf Fisheries. A joint effort of the DMR and GCRL, the program was funded by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission through the Katrina Disaster Relief Grant. The grant was created by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to restore the marine environment and give the fishing industry assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Increased Public Involvement in Monitoring for Harmful Algal Blooms

When South Texas experienced a major red tide bloom in late 2005, Texas Sea Grant Extension Agent Tony Reisinger coordinated and organized a South Padre Island volunteer group, the Texas Red Tide Rangers. Trained by biologists from Texas Cooperative Extension, The University of Texas-Pan American and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Rangers collected water samples, prepared slides and identified red tide cells under the microscope, alleviating many of the problems encountered because the impacted area has too few biologists available to do the sampling. The Rangers' data were incorporated into daily red tide updates posted on the web and recorded for a toll-free red tide information hotline. Over the two-month duration of the bloom, the Rangers collected and analyzed 376 samples and provided Texans with accurate and timely information on the extent of the bloom.

Two Texas Sea Grant Extension staff members worked with the Texas Harmful Algal Bloom (TexHAB) Work Group, a subcommittee of the Texas Toxic Substances Coordinating Committee (TSCC) with representation from many different agencies, universities and other organizations. The committee meets quarterly to discuss HAB issues in Texas. The purpose of the TSCC is to coordinate communication among member agencies concerning each agency's efforts to regulate toxic substances and harmful physical agents.

Texas Sea Grant volunteered their graphic design staff to design and help provide appropriate text on a red tide information card that lists the top 10 red tide facts, including health and seafood safety tips and how to recognize and report a red tide. The cards were designed for general distribution to coastal tourists and others and include phone numbers to call for more information. The initial printing was 100,000 cards.

Texas Gains in Race to Build Nation's First Offshore Wind Farm

Wind measuring platform headed to Gulf

AUSTIN — The first wind measuring platform for the nation's first offshore wind farm will be on the docks in Galveston on Wednesday, March 7, ready to ship out to the Gulf of Mexico. "The dream of developing offshore wind power in Texas is becoming a reality," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "While developers in other states struggle with bureaucratic hurdles, Texas is pulling ahead."

Galveston-Offshore Wind, LLC, has built and is ready to install the first of two offshore platforms to test wind velocities and conduct avian research off the coast of Galveston. The wind-testing platform was built with the recycled deck, platform and pilings from an offshore oil and gas platform. The platform, pilings, deck, tower and instrument house will be on display aboard a cargo barge docked at the Gulf Copper Shipyard. Access to the dock is limited to members of the press. Galveston-Offshore Wind, LLC, is wholly owned by Louisiana-based Wind Energy Systems Technologies (W.E.S.T., LLC), which in October 2005 signed the nation's first lease for the development of an offshore wind farm.

The meteorological towers will help gather data to determine exactly where the 150 MW wind energy development will be built on an 11,355-acre lease about seven miles off the coast of Galveston Island. Revenue from the agreement — expected to be at least \$26.5 million, but possibly much more — will be collected by the Land Office for the state's Permanent School Fund, which helps pay for public education.

Houses Begin Moving Off Public Beach in Surfside

Cooperative approach is key to progress, Patterson says

AUSTIN — The first of 14 Surfside homes obstructing the public beach will be moved with the state's help Thursday, announced Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "This was a hard decision for these homeowners to make, but they are doing the right thing," Patterson said. "It's important to me we offer them whatever help we can."

Contractors will begin Thursday to move a house at 515 Beach Drive in Surfside to a new location off the public beach. The property is owned by one of 13 property owners in Surfside who have accepted Patterson's offer of \$50,000 per structure in state aid to help reimburse them for the cost of the move. The 13 remaining homes eligible for public assistance will be removed over the next several weeks. Patterson made state aid available to help move the houses through Cycle Four of the state's Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Program, which was funded by the 79th Texas Legislature.

"I'd much rather work with homeowners than fight with them in court," Patterson said. "Working together, we can ensure a fair deal for the homeowners and keep Texas beaches open to the public." The relocation expense reimbursement program is an attempt to balance the right of public access to Texas beaches with the interests of property owners whose houses wind up in the public beach easement due to erosion, Patterson said.

Relocating these homes wouldn't be necessary, Patterson said, if Texas had put more money into coastal management. "Texas is behind the curve on fighting erosion," Patterson said. "Our funding efforts at the Land Office will help prevent this type of problem in the future. Texas must step up to protect private property and public infrastructure from coastal erosion."

Patterson's Plan for Texas Open Beaches, released last summer, seeks to avoid costly and time-consuming litigation by offering help to property owners to remove their structures from the public beach. Patterson made \$1.3 million in state money immediately available on an expense reimbursement basis to remove qualified houses from the public beach. He will also seek additional funding for this effort. Patterson's Plan for Texas Open Beaches presents eight proposals, some of which include legislative measures for the upcoming 2007 session. For more information on Patterson's Texas Open Beaches Enforcement Policy or Plan for Texas Open Beaches, visit <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/beachdune/openbeaches.html>.

Adopt-A-Beach Spring Cleanup Set for April 28

25 cleanup sites along the Texas coast

AUSTIN — The 21st annual Adopt-A-Beach Spring Cleanup will take place Saturday, April 28th at 25 sites along the Texas coast. The all-volunteer event is coordinated through the Adopt-A-Beach Program of the Texas General Land Office. "It's time for a little spring cleaning on the Texas coast," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "Join us for a great day at the beach with thousands of other Texans who care enough to show it with their deeds."

Volunteers can register at any of 24 check-in sites between 8:30 a.m. and 9 a.m. on April 28th. Volunteers must pre-register for the St. Jo Island location in advance, as reservations are required due to limited access. Volunteers for St. Jo Island will check in on April 28th at 8 a.m. at Fisherman's Wharf, 900 Tarpon St., in Port Aransas. Each volunteer will be given data cards, gloves, pencils and trash bags. All

volunteers are advised to wear closed-toe shoes and bring sunscreen and plenty of drinking water. The all-volunteer event is coordinated through the Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Program. Statewide coastal cleanups are held every spring and fall.

Texas beaches receive large amounts of marine debris due to a convergence of currents in the Gulf of Mexico. Since 1986, more than 349,000 Texas Adopt-A-Beach volunteers have picked up more than 6,600 tons of trash along the Texas coast. Volunteers record data on the trash to learn more about the causes of marine debris and to help mitigate pollution along Texas' 367 miles of coastline.

For a complete listing of cleanup sites for the upcoming Spring Cleanup, to learn how you can participate, or for additional information on the Adopt-A-Beach Program, please visit www.texasadoptabeach.org or contact the GLO at 1-877-TX COAST.

Energy

MMS Publishes OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Program Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Public Hearings Scheduled for April and May 2007

WASHINGTON, DC -- The Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) is accepting public comments on the draft programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Alternative Energy and Alternate Use (AEAU) program. The Notice of Availability for the AEAU draft programmatic EIS is listed in the *Federal Register* reading room today. The draft EIS is available for review online at ocsenergy.anl.gov. Written comments will be accepted through May 21, 2007, and MMS will also hold public hearings on the document in April and May of 2007.

"The draft environmental impact statement is a crucial step in developing the Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Program, and public feedback and participation at this stage of the process is vitally important," said MMS Director Johnnie Burton. "The public has a unique opportunity to influence the creation of new and promising uses of our nation's considerable ocean resources, through submission of written comments on the draft EIS or live input at upcoming hearings."

MMS received authority for the OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Program [under Section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005](#). Under this authority, MMS will regulate alternative energy projects and alternate use of facilities on the OCS. Examples of the general types of alternative energy project activities that MMS has the discretion to authorize include, but are not limited to, wind energy, wave energy, ocean current energy, solar energy, and hydrogen production. Alternate uses of existing facilities may include, but are not limited to, offshore aquaculture, research, education, recreation, and support for offshore operations and facilities.

The Draft Programmatic EIS focuses on potential alternative energy development that may be initiated in the next 5-7 years as well as potential alternate uses of offshore facilities in the same time frame. The programmatic EIS assesses generic impacts from development, operations and decommissioning of alternative energy or alternate use facilities and identifies key issues and mitigation measures that should be considered in subsequent site-specific reviews. MMS expects to file a Final EIS in August 2007 and

publish a Record of Decision in September 2007. Target dates for the draft proposed rule are: publish Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at the end of June 2007 and publish the Final Rule in December 2007/January 2008.

The public may obtain an electronic copy of the draft programmatic EIS at: ocsenergy.anl.gov. A single printed or CD-ROM copy of the draft programmatic EIS can be requested by writing to the Minerals Management Service, Environmental Assessment Branch Office (MS 4042), 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia, 20170. MMS is also accepting written comments on the draft programmatic EIS for the next 60 days electronically, using the online comment form at www.ocsenergy.anl.gov, or by mail to: MMS OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Programmatic EIS, Argonne National Laboratory, 9700 S. Cass Avenue, Argonne, IL 60439. Comments must be received by May 21, 2007.

Interior Department Seeks Nominations for a Committee on Wildlife Impacts of Wind Turbines

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne announced today the formation of a Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee. The Secretary is currently seeking nominations for the group which will advise him on effective measures to avoid or minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitats related to land-based wind energy facilities. By some estimates, wind power could provide clean and renewable electricity to meet up to 20 percent of the nation's energy needs.

"We know that wind power may be key to providing a vital new source of clean, renewable energy for America," said Secretary Kempthorne. "But we also know that wind turbines can cause bird and bat mortality and may have other ecological impacts. This committee will help us examine issues such as site selection and turbine design so that we can develop wind resources while protecting wildlife."

The Committee will function in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act and report to the Secretary of the Interior through the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It will function solely as an advisory body and provide recommendations on effective measures to protect wildlife resources and coordinate review and evaluation of facilities by state, tribal, local, and federal agencies. In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed the "Interim Voluntary Wind Turbine Guidelines" and advertised their availability for a 2-year public comment period in the *Federal Register*. The guidelines were to assist the wind energy industry in avoiding or minimizing impacts to wildlife and their habitats when developing wind energy facilities. The comment period closed in July 2005. After reviewing the comments received and evaluating advances in the science behind wind turbine siting and design, the Department of the Interior believes that additional input would be valuable in developing a revised product, which will also be made available for public review and comment.

Members of the Committee will be expected to effectively represent the varied interests associated with wind energy development and the management of wildlife species and their habitats. They will represent stakeholders, Federal and State agencies, and Tribes; be senior representatives of their respective constituent groups; and have knowledge of wind energy facility location, design, operation, transmission requirements, wildlife species potentially affected, wildlife survey techniques, applicable laws and regulations, and wind/wildlife interactions. The Committee may also include independent experts in wind energy/wildlife interactions, appointed as special government employees, to provide technical advice.

The Committee is expected to meet approximately four times per year. The Service will provide necessary support services to the Committee. All meetings will be open to the public and a notice announcing each Committee meeting will be published in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days prior to

the date. The public will have an opportunity to provide input at all meetings. Interested parties should send resumes and explanations of interest by April 12, 2007, to Susan L. Goodwin, Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1801 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 500, Washington DC 20006; by e-mail to susan_goodwin@ios.doi.gov; or by fax to 202/327-5390.

To learn more about the Interior Department's wind initiatives, please see <http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/wind.html>. To see the Service's Interim Guidelines on Avoiding and Minimizing Wildlife Impacts from Wind Turbines as well as links to the Energy Department's National Renewable Energy Laboratory, please see <http://www.fws.gov/habitatconservation/wind.htm>.

Other News

Open Comment Period for Draft National Coastal Condition Report III

The draft National Coastal Condition Report III was released on March 9, 2007 for a 60-day comment period. The Report describes the ecological and environmental conditions in U.S. coastal waters. It summarizes the condition of ecological resources in the estuaries of the United States and highlights several exemplary Federal, State, Tribal, and local programs that assess coastal ecological and water quality conditions. EPA expects to release the final report in the March, 2008.

The draft Report presents three main types of data: 1) coastal monitoring data, 2) offshore fisheries data, and 3) assessment advisory data. For the first time, an analysis of changes over time in estuarine condition from 1990-2002 are presented for the nation's estuaries and by region.

Submit your comments to EPA Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2007-0019 by May 8, 2006. For more information visit: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/oceans/nccr3/index.html>.

Grant Opportunities

EPA Accepting Proposals to Estimate Monetary Benefits of Nutrient Reductions

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is accepting proposals from eligible applicants to conduct projects that will improve the economic valuation of the benefits from reducing nutrient levels in the nation's waterbodies. The goal of this solicitation is to aid States in their attempts to estimate monetary benefits associated with nutrient reductions as they strive to adopt numeric nutrient criteria into their State water quality standards. This goal is tied to Goal 2 of EPA's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan, Clean and Safe Water: Objective 2.2: Protect Water Quality, Sub-objective 2.2.1: Improve Water Quality on a Watershed Basis, which is to use pollution prevention and restoration approaches to protect the quality of rivers, lakes, and streams on a watershed basis.

The announcement describes the selection and award process for eligible applicants interested in applying for the FY 2007 Nutrient Benefits Valuation funding opportunity. The total amount of funding available under this announcement is approximately \$500,000, depending on Agency funding levels and other applicable considerations. It is anticipated that approximately one to two awards will be made. The project period for agreements awarded under this announcement may be up to two years. States and local governments, federally recognized Indian Tribes, territories and possessions of the U.S. (including the District of Columbia), interstate agencies or intertribal consortia, public or private non-profit, non-governmental institutions, and individuals are eligible to apply. Funds will be awarded pursuant to Section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act (CWA), 33 U.S.C 1251 et seq.

Due Date for Applications: Hard copy proposals must be received by EPA by 5:30 P.M. EDT, Tuesday, May 1st, 2007. Proposals submitted electronically must be received through Grants.gov by 11:59 P.M. EDT, Tuesday, May 1st, 2007. Late proposals will not be considered for funding.

Link to Full Announcement:

<http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/criteria/nutrient/grants/>

If you have difficulty accessing the full announcement electronically, please contact: Todd Doley, phone 202-566-1160, e-mail doley.todd@epa.gov.

FY07 NOAA Preserve America Initiative Grant Program

NOAA Preserve America Initiative is proud to announce the FY07 request for proposals for NOAA's Preserve America Initiative Grant Program (PAIG). This mini-grant program is designed to stimulate efforts within NOAA to preserve, protect and promote the agency's heritage assets.

Projects in FY05 and FY06 have varied in scope from interpreting historic and cultural resources in NOAA's care to capturing oral histories of NOAA stakeholder groups, including fishermen and Native Americans. Current projects include: *Wet Weather: Using Oral Histories to Preserve the Heritage of NOAA's Marine Weather Forecasting*, *The 100-Year Sardine Legacy: Preserving NOAA's Success*, *Promoting NOAA's Future* and *Locked in Time: Live Broadcast from the Schooners Frank A. Palmer and Louise B. Crary*. Please visit the NOAA Preserve America website to learn more about these and other projects that were funded in the past.

FY07 NOAA Preserve America Initiative Grants will be awarded only to NOAA offices, although other federal, state, tribal, Native Hawaiian, academic and non-profit organizations can act as partners.

Proposals are due by April 27, 2007. For additional information, including proposal criteria and format, please visit the "Grant Information" section of the NOAA Preserve America website (<http://preserveamerica.noaa.gov>), or contact Heidi Lovett (Heidi.Lovett@noaa.gov).

NOAA Marine Debris Program Accepting Proposals

The NOAA Marine Debris Program just released a new funding opportunity, focusing on ports, marinas, fishing communities, and ways to reduce impacts from derelict fishing gear. Pre-proposals are due May 18, 2007. An overview of the call for proposals is below, and full information can be found [online](#).

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, commercial organizations, and state (including Commissions), local, and tribal governments whose projects have the potential to benefit

NOAA trust resources through marine debris research and prevention projects. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, national service clubs or youth corps organizations and others that are eligible to apply.

Programmatic Focus Areas

Ports, Marinas and Fishing Communities – Projects that look to create or improve best management practices of ports, marinas, and fishing communities to decrease the threat of marine debris to marine life and/or navigation safety.

Gear Technology – Projects that work with the fishing industry and/or fisheries councils and organizations to develop better solutions to reduce derelict fishing gear in the marine environment.

Marine Debris Research and Assessment – Projects that improve understanding of the sources and impacts of marine debris on marine mammals, sensitive habitats and tourist and fishing industries.

How to Apply Submit a pre-proposal via the Foundation's [on-line pre-proposal application](#) by **May 18, 2007**.

Training and Conferences

Mitigating Storm Surge with Vegetation Symposium Agenda

Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center Hotel
April 13, 2007, 8:00 AM-3:00 PM

Following the Hurricane season of 2005, intense interest has been focused on the role of coastal wetlands in mitigating storm surge. The focus of this one-day symposium/workshop is to examine the latest information on the physics of water movement through wetland vegetation and to identify approaches for quantifying frictional resistance and wave dampening effects in different coastal wetland habitats. Applications of this information to storm surge mitigation and freshwater diversions will be presented and discussed. Location: Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center Hotel, April 13, 2007, 8:00 AM-3:00 PM A block of rooms has been reserved at the hotel for \$139 Registration: Free, but you must register prior at www.lwrri.lsu.edu/apply.htm.

Mississippi Coastal Wetland Plant Identification Class

April 16-19, 2007

Stennis Space Center, Natural Resource Management Building
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Monday-Wednesday), 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (Thursday)

Sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Coastal Preserves Program, the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's Coastal Training Program (CTP), and the Stennis Space Center Natural Resource Management Team.

This is a FREE 3.5 day field-intensive plant identification class taught by Dr. Robert Mohlenbrock, renowned botanist from Southern Illinois University, author of 58 books, and monthly columnist for the

periodical, Natural History. Dr. Mohlenbrock travels across the country studying plants and teaching plant identification techniques to various environmental agencies and organizations. To date he has taught more than 204 plant identification classes in 29 states!

Participants in Mississippi Coastal Wetland Plant Identification Class will visit a number of coastal habitats (including bottomland hardwood forests, freshwater marshes, pine flatwoods, pine savannas, salt marshes, and salt flats) across Mississippi's coastal counties. Students will learn to identify the key plant species of each habitat type based on visual characteristics. An extensive plant list and plant identification keys will be provided. To register for the class, please contact Marian Dicas (228-475-7047; marian.dicas@dmr.ms.gov). The deadline for registration is Friday, April 6, 2007. The class is limited to 20 participants - EARLY REGISTRATION is recommended! For more information about this and other Coastal Training Program events, please visit the program's website: www.grandbaynerr.org/education/ctp.

Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting 2007

The University of Texas Marine Science Institute (UTMSI) is pleased to announce the annual Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting (TBEM) for 2007. The meeting will occur in Port Aransas, Texas and will occur immediately after a special workshop on *Karenia brevis* (red tide) health effects sponsored by the National Institutes for Environmental Health (NIEH) center at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. This workshop is co-sponsored by UTMSI and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

April 17, 2007; NIEH Red Tide Workshop

The 1-day workshop will present a review of Florida red tide brevetoxin inhalation and its human health effects. The presentations will summarize results obtained over a 5-year period, and relate to susceptible populations, drug discovery and therapies, animal and human toxicology, and ecosystem-based environmental testing. This highly integrated team supports the activities of four research projects and two facility cores. Each area will present a 30-40 minute talk. Subjects will include aerosols, animal models, respiratory mechanisms, studies on human subjects, toxins, and field studies. All interested researchers in Texas are invited to attend to develop collaborations and hear about the state-of-the-art in this rapidly developing field.

April 18-19, 2007; Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting

The meeting will focus on work being done in the watersheds, bays, estuaries and nearshore Gulf of Mexico. It provides an opportunity for Texas scientists working in the coastal zone to share information, results and insights into our diverse coastal environment. Both natural and social science research is welcome. The meeting is informal and student-friendly. In keeping with past years, there will be awards for best student presentations.

Registration:

There is a \$35.00 registration fee for the Bays and Estuaries meeting, which ends on April 2, 2007. Late registration and registration at the door will be \$50.00. There is no registration fee for the Red Tide Workshop. To attend the Red Tide Workshop you must complete the registration form. A registration form is posted on the UTMSI website: www.utmsi.utexas.edu/ITS/TBEMRT2007

Small Dock and Pier Management Workshop

Date: Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Time: 8:45 AM - 4:30 PM (EASTERN TIME)

Location: Senator George G. Kirkpatrick Marine Laboratory (FFWCC), Cedar Key, FL

Cost: \$20

This science based workshop is designed to provide coastal decision-makers with information, skills, and tools to evaluate and manage the environmental, visual, navigational, and public access impacts associated with construction and maintenance of residential docks and piers.

Agenda Highlights:

- Overview of the science related to managing impacts
- Environmental impacts
- Visual and Aesthetic Considerations
- Navigation and public access issues
- Regulations and New DEP self permitting website
- Techniques for Small Dock Construction and Siting
- Best management practices
- Resources and technical assistance options

For more information contact Rosalyn (850) 653-8063 or Rosalyn.Kilcollins@dep.state.fl.us.

Wetland Identification & Delineation Training Course

May 7 - 11, 2007 Fairhope, Baldwin Co., Alabama

Registration Deadline: April 15, 2007 Course Fee: \$995.00

WETLAND RESOURCES Environmental Consulting will be presenting a 5-day Wetland Identification & Delineation Training Course May 7-11, 2007. This comprehensive course provides training in the three-parameter approach (hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology) to identifying and delineating wetlands, using the Corps of Engineers 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual.

Field Exercises each afternoon give students training in local wetlands and field experience in applying the routine wetland delineation methods. Course material includes a copy of the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual and related information, the Region 2 Plant List, and a copy of all material presented in the course.

Please contact Gena Todia of WETLAND RESOURCES at (251) 928-6157 or jaget@zebra.net to register or for additional 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 for more information on the conference <http://www.ces.fau.edu/cc/index.php>. For sponsorship and exhibit opportunities see: <http://www.ces.fau.edu/cc/sponsors.php>. For hotel

accommodations, go to <http://www.ces.fau.edu/ccc/accommodations.php>. Visit <https://secure.ces.fau.edu/?pg=ccc> to register for this event today.

2007 National Marine Educators Conference

Registration is now open for Downeast 2007, July 23-27, 2007, in Portland, Maine.

Full conference fee of \$375 covers all costs (except field trips), including keynote presentations, concurrent sessions, breakfasts, lunches, coffee breaks and snacks, cocktail parties, Auction, dance party, Downeast lobster bake, sunset cruise on Casco Bay, and entertainment including a concert by Schooner Fare, stand-up comedy by Maine humorist Tim Sample, visual travelogue by underwater photographer Bill Curtsinger, and inspirational performance by actress Kaiulani Lee as Rachel Carson.

- To get the discounted, early-bird conference rate, register by May 15th. After that, registration rises to \$425.
- The deadline for applying to NMEA for scholarship assistance to support your attendance is May 1st. FMI, go to <http://www.marine-ed.org/> and click on Scholarships.

Go to <http://gommea.org/downeast2007/> to register for the conference, reserve your field trip, and find the phone numbers of recommended accommodations. We have reserved blocks of rooms for NMEA participants at Fairfield Inn. Email us at downeast2007@gommea.org if you have any questions.

Did you find this edition useful? Please send suggestions, comments, and new items for publication to Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov

