

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

April 2007

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA Prepares for Hypoxia Season

Hurricane season is not the only seasonal concern for the summer months in the Gulf of Mexico. June to October is also the season for hypoxia in these same warm waters. *Hypoxia* literally means "deficient in oxygen" and in the environment, hypoxia means a reduced concentration of dissolved oxygen in a water body causing stress and death in living organisms. Also known as a "dead zone", hypoxia is now recognized as one of the most important environmental problems worldwide. Hypoxia can lead to harmful algae blooms which can significantly impact local coastal economies from the closure of commercial fisheries and recreational beaches.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has recognized harmful algal blooms and hypoxic events as some of the most scientifically complex and economically damaging coastal issues challenging our ability to safeguard the health of our Nation's coastal ecosystems. Prior to the 2007 hypoxia season, NOAA's National Coastal Data Development Center (NCDDC) has formed partnerships with other NOAA entities to seek further understanding of this issue and to inform the public of any hypoxic events in the Gulf of Mexico in a real-time format.

From March 26th through 29th, 2007, the NOAA Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, in coordination with the Northern Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Institute and NCDDC, convened the *Ecological Impacts of Hypoxia on Living Resources Meeting*, in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Hypoxia researchers and managers from around the country discussed the effectiveness of existing approaches for evaluating the impacts of hypoxia on ecologically, commercially, and recreationally important fish and shellfish populations between three coastal systems noted for seasonally recurring hypoxic zones: Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, and Lake Erie. A NOAA Technical Report of the workshop will be produced, and a special issue peer-reviewed publication will result from symposium presentations. These publications will provide a framework for guiding research directions and management strategies aimed at assessing and mitigating the effects of hypoxia on living resources. The pre-meeting white paper and post-meeting technical report are posted on the meeting website, www.ngi.msstate.edu/hypoxia.

The Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Watch will begin its 2007 cruise season in June. The Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Watch is a cooperative project among NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, the CoastWatch - Gulf of Mexico Regional Node, and NCDDC. The effort is part of the annual Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program's summer groundfish survey conducted by National Marine Fisheries Service in the Western and North-central Gulf of Mexico aboard the NOAA Ship *OREGON II*. The Hypoxia Watch website (www.ncddc.noaa.gov/ecosystems/hypoxia) provides near-real time map products using shipboard measurements of bottom dissolved oxygen that form the basis for summertime advisories on hypoxic conditions in the North-central Gulf of Mexico. During the 2007 summer groundfish cruise, dissolved oxygen contours of the Gulf of Mexico from Texas to the Mississippi River will be easily viewable on an interactive map via the Internet.

As the hypoxia season begins in the Gulf of Mexico and across the nation, NCDDC is committed to assisting NOAA and its partners in their goal of better understanding the causes and effects of hypoxia. For more information about other NCDDC projects, please visit www.ncddc.noaa.gov.

Post-Katrina Land Cover and Change Maps are Available for the Gulf of Mexico

Post-Hurricane Katrina land cover data can be downloaded from www.csc.noaa.gov/crs/lca/katrina. Additional land cover maps for this region can be downloaded from www.csc.noaa.gov/crs/lca/gulfcoast.html.

These maps are brought to you by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Services Center and will complement existing data in your region. In addition to this 2006 post-Katrina land cover data, land cover maps are available for 1996, 2001, and 2005 for the Northern Gulf of Mexico, as well as 1996-2001 and 2001-2005 change maps. Contact the NOAA Coastal Services Center or visit our Web site (www.csc.noaa.gov/landcover/) to learn more about our land cover mapping program.

Land Cover Data Mailing List

Please contact [Susan Fox](#) to be added to the mailing list for future updates. We would appreciate it if you would also give us some information about your data needs and existing data sources.

About C-CAP

The NOAA Coastal Services Center's Coastal Change Analysis Program (C-CAP) products are part of a nationally standardized database of land cover and change information, developed using remotely sensed imagery, for the coastal regions of the U.S. This data capture land cover on a regional scale and allow users to effectively document changes over time (www.csc.noaa.gov/landcover/). The C-CAP mapping effort is being conducted in coordination with state coastal management agencies, the [Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics \(MRLC\) Consortium](#), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and other federal programs.

Satellite Imagery Products Aid Investigation of an Unusual Mortality Event

Scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science provided satellite imagery products to investigators at the National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Protected Resources to help them understand why dozens of bottlenose dolphins have died in recent weeks. Approximately 60 bottlenose dolphins have washed up along Galveston and Jefferson counties in Texas and western Louisiana over the past two weeks. Once a cause is identified management actions may be taken to lessen the possibility of a recurrence. For more information, contact [Michelle Tomlinson](#) or [Timothy Wynne](#).

NOS Builds Relationship with Liquefied Natural Gas Facility

On April 17, NOS personnel from the [Office of Coast Survey](#) and the [Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services](#) visited a new Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility under construction in Hackberry, Louisiana. The goal of the visit was to promote navigation safety and foster goodwill between NOAA and Cameron LNG as well as with local and state government representatives. Discussions centered on the potential of including a Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System in the construction of the facility, which would benefit the LNG facility, the Lake Charles Pilots Association, and ship traffic through the ship channel. Also discussed was the possibility of charting the new facility on NOAA nautical charts. The estimated arrival of 200-300 vessels per year at the facility and the very

large amount of LNG delivered with each shipment makes this a priority facility for charting; navigation support and development; and the implementation of a system to monitor real-time tides and water levels, currents, and weather. The anticipated start of operations is in the latter part of 2008. For more information contact Tim.Osborn@noaa.gov.

National Geodetic Survey Helps Survey US/Mexico Border

Under the auspices of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) is currently working to precisely position the monuments that define the border between the United States and Mexico from the Pacific Ocean to El Paso, TX. A kickoff ceremony for this effort on the Mexican side of the border was held last week in Tijuana at Monument # 258. Although the actual legal border is defined by the physical location of these monuments, their geographic positions are being determined using the most modern GPS surveying techniques available, and will include the use of NGS's On line Positioning Users Service (OPUS). NGS is working with its Mexican colleagues at the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática* to support this activity and other trans-border positioning issues. For more information, contact [David Minkel](#).

NCCOS Research Confirming Impact of Hypoxia on Shrimp Catch to Inform Resource Management Efforts

In the April issue of the Marine Pollution Bulletin, scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science confirmed a relationship between decreased shrimp catch and hypoxic conditions in the Northern Gulf of Mexico. Previous studies have shown that there is a negative relationship between the size of summer hypoxic zones and the annual brown shrimp catch for the states of Louisiana and Texas (combined) for the study years 1985-1998. The new analysis extended this work to cover the years 1985-2004 and substantiated the relationship between the size of the hypoxic zone and the shrimp landings. Hypoxia is a condition where there is a low level of oxygen in the water that can severely impact aquatic ecosystems, causing loss of plants, animals and habitats. Hypoxia research yields important information for coastal and fisheries managers concerned with the shrimp fishery, habitat loss, and ecosystem changes. For more information, contact Dave Whitall at Dave.Whitall@noaa.gov

Mussel Watch Program Monitoring Data Provides Context for Post Hurricane Assessment

Scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science presented a poster displaying results from over 20 years of contaminant monitoring in U.S. coastal waters that were used to characterize changes that occurred as a result of Hurricane Katrina, and to put the overall multi-agency post hurricane assessment effort into perspective. The poster detailed the importance of long term monitoring data to assessing catastrophic events. Scientists, resource managers and policy makers acknowledged the value of the Mussel Watch data as part of the overall post-hurricane assessment. Entitled "Hurricane Katrina Impact Assessment: Contaminant Levels in Oysters from Coastal Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama", the poster was presented at the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program Symposium April 10, 2007 in Washington, D.C. For more information, please contact Ed Johnson at Ed.Johnson@noaa.gov, or Kimani Kimbrough at Kimani.Kimbrough@noaa.gov.

NCCOS Updates ANS Task Force Regional Panel on Lionfish Research to Address Threats and Harmful Effects

Coastal managers of the Gulf and South Atlantic states and Mexico were informed of recent National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) findings on invasive lionfish during the biannual meeting of the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Task Force's Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) on Aquatic Invasive Species. At the April 17-18, 2007 meeting in Mobile, AL, NCCOS presented a bio-profile of lionfish and discussed future research aimed at understanding potential impacts of lionfish in the Atlantic. The GSARP on Aquatic Invasive Species is one of six regional panels of the ANS Task Force. For more information, visit <http://www.anstaskforce.gov> or contact James Morris at James.Morris@noaa.gov.

Veracruz Aquarium Approved as a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is pleased to announce that the Veracruz Aquarium in Veracruz, Mexico, has been approved by the Principals of the Integrated Committee on Ocean Science and Research Management Integration (ICOSRMI) as a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center (CELC). The designation ceremony is scheduled for June 14, 2007 in Veracruz. The CELC certification and the event present an opportunity to extend technical expertise to Mexico to help address our common problems in the Gulf's waters and ecosystems, and to learn from their experience as well. The Veracruz Aquarium is the first international CELC. For more information, contact Sharon Hayes, EPA, hayes.sharon-e@epa.gov, or Ann Weaver, NOAA, ann.weaver@noaa.gov.

Eight New NOAA Buoys will Provide More Forecasting Data this Hurricane Season

NOAA has deployed the first two of eight new hurricane buoys off Puerto Rico in an effort to fill a gap in important weather data coming from warm, storm-generating waters there. Six more hurricane buoys will be placed in the southwestern Atlantic Ocean before the hurricane season ends in November. These buoys measure wind, wave, barometric pressure and air and sea temperatures to determine hurricane formation or dissipation, extent of wind circulation, maximum intensity and center location. Hurricane buoys provide year-round data for analysis and forecasts of other marine disturbances, but are more robust than other weather buoys because they contain an internal back-up system.

"We are in a period of an active hurricane cycle and this deployment equips our forecasters with an additional tool to track hurricanes and support our mission of saving lives and livelihoods," said retired Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Additionally, this feeds into the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, or GEOSS, which is an international collaboration to share vital weather data and other environmental information critical to our understanding of the Earth's processes."

The first of the eight new hurricane buoys is also the 100th weather buoy maintained by NOAA's [National Data Buoy Center](#), located at Stennis Space Center in Bay St. Louis, Miss., and is part of NOAA's National Weather Service. The center has expanded the number of weather buoys by 54 percent over the last seven years.

“This growth was fueled by the recognition that there is only one way to really know the weather at sea — by being there,” states Paul Moersdorf, director of NOAA’s National Data Buoy Center. “Priority has been placed in areas with serious weather. For example, we deployed 13 buoys in Alaskan waters, which experiences nasty weather all year long. We also have nine buoys that are designed to take a hurricane ‘licking’ and continue providing critical data to the National Hurricane Center and coastal residents of the Caribbean, Central America and southeast U.S.”

Beyond the six forthcoming hurricane buoys, the National Data Buoy Center is funded to deploy another weather buoy for Alaska and 11 new tsunami stations between now and March 2008. In addition to the weather buoys, NOAA’s National Data Buoy Center maintains 56 coastal stations, 28 tsunami warning and detection stations and 55 climate forecasting and research stations. The center also processes, quality controls and distributes data from more than 250 non-National Weather Service sources.

Coastal Programs Division Staff Participate in two Florida NERRS Dock Management Workshops

Staff from OCRM’s Coastal Programs Division (CPD) and the National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science (NCCOS) joined to deliver two training workshops on dock and pier management in Cedar Key, FL (April 24th) and Palmetto, FL (April 26th). Over 80 state regulators, local decision-makers, and contractors attended the workshops sponsored by the Apalachicola and Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserves and Florida SeaGrant to gain a better understanding of impacts from residential docks and the management techniques and best management practices that can be used to minimize these impacts. OCRM and NCCOS developed the [training materials](#) at the request of state coastal managers. The workshops showcase how NOS science and management programs come together to address pressing coastal management issues. For additional information, contact [Allison Castellan](#).

Other NOAA News

Newsletter for Coastal Management Program

The latest issue of the National Coastal Management Program News is now available. The newsletter, produced by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management’s Coastal Programs Division highlights accomplishments and innovative on-going projects of state and territory coastal management programs. In addition, each quarter the newsletter features a different NOAA program that may be of interest to the coastal management community. For additional information, contact [Allison Castellan](#).

NOAA Creates Seafood Marketing Councils

NOAA’s Fisheries Service published a new rule in the *Federal Register* on April 11 to allow the formation of Seafood Marketing Councils designed to help market and promote seafood to the American consumer. Councils can be established as of May 11. “The councils will help the seafood industry market its products and educate the consumer about the benefits of eating seafood,” said [Bill Hogarth](#), director of

NOAA Fisheries Service. The councils, established under the [Fish and Seafood Promotion Act](#), will provide the public with accurate information on the health benefits of eating seafood as well as the environmental and biological sustainability of fish species. The councils will also fulfill a goal in the [President's Ocean Action Plan](#) to enhance the understanding of our oceans.

Over the last decade, seafood consumers have been bombarded with conflicting messages about the health attributes of various seafood products, the sustainability of fish species and the effects of overfishing on the marine ecosystem. This information from different sources, some accurate and some inaccurate, has confused consumers about what is safe to eat and what fish can be eaten that is not harmful to the fish ecosystem or the environment. The confusion among consumers has served to unnecessarily hurt the American seafood industry at a time when it is working under the strongest environmental regulations of any nation. In some cases, consumers have been erroneously warned not to eat certain fish when the fish are being harvested in a sustainable manner by a well regulated industry.

The new seafood promotion councils will be funded entirely by the seafood industry, at no cost to the American taxpayer. However, their plans will be approved by NOAA Fisheries Service in order to ensure they do not conflict with the mission of NOAA to protect and preserve our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. A copy of the [Federal Register](#) notice may be obtained [online](#).

NCCOS Scientists Demonstrate "Spatial Sampling Tool" for Smithsonian Institution

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) scientists recently presented a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool for science planning that improves efficiency by integrating maps at relevant spatial scales into survey designs, while balancing factors such as statistical power, precision, and cost. The "Spatial Sampling Tool", which runs within ArcGIS v9.x, is being used to select reef fish survey sites within the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The tool, which was developed in-house, was demonstrated at the invitation of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History - Vertebrate Zoology Seminar Series. For additional information please contact Eric Finnen at eric.finnen@noaa.gov, or Charlie Menza at charles.menza@noaa.gov.

Handbook on Indicators for Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management Released

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001473/147313e.pdf>

This handbook is intended to serve the needs of those coastal and ocean managers confronted with the daily tasks of measuring the progress of their programs and projects and isolating their ecological and socioeconomic outcomes. The handbook aims to contribute to the sustainable development of coastal and marine areas by promoting a more outcome-oriented, accountable and adaptive approach to ICOM. It provides a step-by-step guide to help users in developing, selecting and applying a common set of governance, ecological and socioeconomic indicators to measure, evaluate and report on the progress and outcomes of ICOM interventions.

Intended as a generic tool with no prescriptive character, the handbook proposes analytical frameworks and indicators that form the basis for the customized design of sets of indicators. The handbook also

includes results, outcomes and lessons learned from eight pilot case studies conducted in several countries. A network of ICOM experts in these countries has also been established. The target audience is wide, and includes coastal and ocean managers, practitioners, evaluators and researchers.

The handbook forms part of an IOC toolkit on indicators. Its preparation is part of an effort to promote the development and use of ICOM indicators led by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

CICEET-Sponsored SPARROW Takes Flight

Data from the water quality models known as New England SPARROW (Spatially Referenced Regressions on Watershed Attributes) is now available to the coastal management community through an interactive website – <http://nh.water.usgs.gov/projects/sparrow/> -- and on CD.

SPARROW estimates nutrient levels in freshwater streams, nutrient loading to coastal waters, and nutrient sources. The data is a resource for regional total maximum daily load (TMDL) studies and nutrient criteria development efforts in New England. The models operate within a geographic information system (GIS) framework that relates total phosphorus and total nitrogen stream loads to contaminant sources and watershed characteristics. These statistical relations are then used to predict nutrient loads in unmonitored streams.

These tools, along with a series of workshops, were developed with support from the Cooperative Institute of Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET), a partnership between NOAA and the University of New Hampshire. The models were developed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC). For more information, contact CICEET's NOAA Co-director [Dwight Trueblood](#).

Publication Provides Guidance on Mitigating Erosion along Sheltered Coasts

Erosion and sea-level rise can lead to land loss in sheltered coastal areas. A new report, [Mitigating Shore Erosion Along Sheltered Coasts](#), recommends coastal planning efforts and permitting policies that will motivate landowners to use erosion-control measures to retain natural features of the coastal shoreline. The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology, NOAA Coastal Services Center, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers helped fund the report. For more information, contact [Jeffrey Adkins](#).

In the Gulf States

Wolf Bay Outstanding

MONTGOMERY – A portion on Wolf Bay has been designated as outstanding. On April 20, the Alabama Environmental Management Commission voted unanimously to add the use classification of “Outstanding Alabama Water” to Wolf Bay from the Intracoastal Waterway to Moccasin Bayou in Baldwin County.

An OAW classification signifies a high-quality water segment that constitutes an exceptional natural resource for recreational or ecological usage. “After years of work by our staff, I am pleased to have a portion of Wolf Bay named as an Outstanding Alabama Water,” said Trey Glenn director of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. “We continue to encourage all Alabamians to use our water resources wisely to help maintain them for future generations.”

5 Rivers' Opening Provides Gateway to Mobile-Tensaw Delta

SPANISH FORT – Unprecedented access to the magnificent Mobile-Tensaw Delta became a reality Friday at the ribbon-cutting ceremony at 5 Rivers – Alabama’s Delta Resource Center. The 5 Rivers Delta Center, an 80-acre site located north of Battleship Parkway, provides a single point of contact for outdoor recreation, conservation education and land stewardship in the Delta. 5 Rivers offers visitors a gateway into this national treasure at Bartram Landing, the terminus of the Bartram Canoe Trail. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources’ State Lands Division facility features educational opportunities at the Appalachian Exhibit Hall, the Tensaw Theatre and the Blakeley Hall classroom facility. Visitors can spend an entire day at 5 Rivers, walking the trails, having a picnic, touring the Delta by boat and viewing the extensive exhibits on site.

The Mobile-Tensaw Delta is one of few areas in the nation designated as a National Natural Landmark, the largest area in the state with that designation. Fortunately for Alabamians, more than 107,000 acres of the approximately 235,000 acres of wetlands in the Delta are public land, thanks in part to the Forever Wild Program. “Alabama has the second largest river delta system in the United States, but I can assure you that nobody has a welcome center like this in the United States,” said Barnett Lawley, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, who unveiled the renaming of one of the center’s buildings as the James Hamlin Griggs Delta Hall in honor of the current State Lands Division Director.

“We’re so proud of this. We started a program four years ago to promote our natural resources, to teach people to enjoy what we have. We want to educate them, especially our kids, and teach them to be good stewards of our natural resources. Everything we try to do through the Department is here at 5 Rivers. You can learn the natural history. You can just sit and look at the beautiful delta. We have classrooms fully equipped with Internet connections. We have great places to have meetings. We have something for everybody. And we’re awfully proud of it.”

The 5 Rivers facilities highlight the fact that Alabama has the fourth highest plant and animal diversity in the U.S. From the American alligator to the rare Alabama red-bellied turtle, much of this animal diversity is found in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. The productive river systems provide a wide array of fish species

for the angling public, while soaring cypress trees draped with tongues of Spanish moss provide homes for nesting bald eagles and osprey, making the Delta and Alabama a true nature-lover's paradise.

"Having an attraction like this so close to the battleship (U.S.S. Alabama) really gives people a great sense of Mobile's location and what water and the bay mean to this area," said Lee Sentell, Director of the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel. "The tourism department is really proud to welcome this spectacular new facility into the state's inventory of tourist destinations."

The 5 Rivers facilities were built with combination of state and federal funds. The federal funds were committed through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). "5 Rivers is truly a gateway to adventure with outdoor recreation, educational and stewardship activities all set within the beautiful backdrop of the Delta and coastal Alabama," said Timothy Keeney, deputy assistant secretary at NOAA. "Through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management has been able to fund more than 600 projects including habitat protection and restoration, land acquisition, and water quality improvement projects. "The work that the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has done, and continues to do, is extraordinary. NOAA is proud to be a part of this venture."

Discovery Day 2007 at Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Despite threatening forecasts for stormy weather, Discovery Day at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab forged ahead and proved to be one of the most successful events ever staged by the facility and its partners. An estimated crowd of 2,500 to 3,000 enjoyed the many children's activities, research exhibits and helpful information given out by regional agencies. This year, the Sea Lab was privileged to host the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's 200th year of programs protecting the coast. To kick-off this celebration, NOAA officials Tim Keeney, Captain Rick Brown and Dr. Rick Spinrad helped break ground on the Richard C. Shelby Center for Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management. Senator Shelby's Legislative Director Ryan Welch was on hand to help inaugurate the building process on this innovative management facility which seeks to help manage all resources as an integrated community, not just on a single species basis.

We are grateful to NOAA for their partnership of Discovery Day 2007. We'd also like to acknowledge Port City Rentals for their generous sponsorship. Photo's are available at http://press.disl.org/4_16_07dday.htm.

Business Leaders form Alabama Working Waterfront Coalition

Thirty-nine representatives of water-dependent businesses from Orange Beach to Bayou La Batre recently formed the Alabama Working Waterfront Coalition (AWWC) to highlight the economic value of their industries and the issues threatening their sustainability. Shrimp and oyster fishermen, shipbuilders, seafood processors, Realtors and other business leaders realize the need to protect water-dependent businesses and keep them afloat as land-use and development pressures threaten their water access and dock space.

The AWWC will help inform elected government officials and agency representatives, especially those who do not live near the coast, about the financial value and other value of the working waterfront, said Brett Dungan, who is a founding member of the coalition. Dungan, president of Master Marine Inc. shipyard in Bayou La Batre, said the company has been building and repairing boats for more than 45

years. It wouldn't exist without water access. "In order to continue providing high-quality fabrication and repair services, it is imperative that we have access to deep water, such as that afforded by the Bayou La Batre Navigational Channel," Dungan said.

Master Marine is just one Alabama business that depends on the water as its lifeline, and similar businesses along the country's coastlines are facing development pressure and land-use changes that are putting them in jeopardy. "The Alabama and Mississippi Gulf Coasts are not alone in this issue," said Jody Thompson, extension agent at the Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center. Working through the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Thompson serves as a facilitator for the Alabama Working Waterfront Coalition. "Areas from Key West, Fla., to North Carolina to Maine are dealing with these issues," she said. "Louisiana is in the unique situation of rebuilding its working waterfronts from the ground up."

In an effort to inventory water-dependent businesses, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium has funded a \$90,000 grant that will catalog businesses and associated infrastructure in Southwest Alabama. Researchers with the Auburn University Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology will create a database of all businesses operating along the coastline from just south of Mobile, Ala., to the Mississippi border. The businesses also will be mapped. This information will serve as a baseline for analyzing change and provide recommendations for sustaining the local community culture and economy while dealing with the realities of coastal development.

Leaders Explore Earth-Observation Needs

MOBILE, Ala. -- Area scientists, business leaders and representatives from state agencies said April 13 that they need higher-resolution satellite images and more accurate information about hurricanes, sea-level change and habitat loss. About 15 people participated in a listening session about data and technology needs at the 5 Rivers Delta Center in Mobile. Richard Spinrad, assistant administrator of the NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, came to the Gulf Coast to find out what current data systems lack. The information he gathered will be used to shape the Global Earth Observation System of Systems project. NOAA is working with federal agency partners, 68 countries, the European Commission and 46 international organizations to develop the GEOSS system.

Earth observation information currently is gathered through satellites, buoys, seismometers and other devices throughout the world and space. The project calls for integrating the environmental data and delivering them to users in usable formats, such as forecasts, maps and other decision support tools.

As an elected official living on a barrier island, Dauphin Island Mayor Jeff Collier said he believes local leaders need straight-forward information on global warming and sea-level change. Through a grant funded by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, the town is working to develop a long-term strategic plan to improve the island's resiliency. If government officials are informed about climate issues and the actions they need to take to protect the island, they can keep important matters at the forefront, Collier said.

Protecting natural habitats is a high priority to Dauphin Island, a noncommercial area. "What we have to sell is that nothingness, naturalness," Collier said. "(Dauphin Island) is a place to get away from civilization." Natural habitats are disappearing, and Leslie Hartman of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Marine Resources Division, would like technology to better monitor how and how quickly. Satellites must have better resolution to determine habitat loss rates, she said.

D. Jay Grimes, provost and vice president for academic affairs at The University of Southern Mississippi, said he would like to see an alternative way to determine when to close oyster reefs. Currently, agencies test waters for fecal coliform to determine if it is safe to harvest oysters. The problem with that method, Grimes said, is that it takes about two days to get the test results. "I suspect we are shutting down a lot of oyster reefs unnecessarily," he said. Closing oyster reefs can have unintended negative effects on restaurants, according to Colette Boehm, special projects director of the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau. Tourists may hear on the local news that an oyster reef has been closed and decide not to eat at seafood restaurants.

Increasing education about marine issues, such as oyster reefs, is important to the economy, she said. Education about hurricane tracking maps also is needed, she said, because people who plan vacations on the Gulf Coast and do not understand the maps may cancel their reservations unnecessarily.

Data important to economic development should be included in maps and other tools, said Patty Howell, director of regional affairs for the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. She suggested NOAA include growth trends and information about movement of goods and systems with other observation systems.

Hurricane prediction is particularly important to power companies, said Bob Bailey, Alabama Power distribution support manager. Power companies gear up for hurricane season months before it begins, and they would be best served by accurate seasonal predictions six months before the storms start blowing, he said.

In addition to accurate seasonal forecasts, knowing the actual effects (such as storm surge) of an approaching hurricane is vital, Bailey said. Hurricane Katrina, which made landfall as a Category 3 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, caused a storm surge that no one had predicted. "You would not have convinced anybody in our industry that that would be the case," Bailey said. Spinrad said NOAA's National Hurricane Center is working on creating a new scale that will identify the overall intensity of hurricanes, not just wind speed.

As a storm looms in the Gulf, more accurate predictions can help industries in many ways, meeting participants told Spinrad. Shrimpers, aquaculturists and other businesses can sell their products before they lose them if they know what is coming. Better forecasts also would allow cities around the nation to stockpile natural gas and other resources that may not be available for days or weeks after the storm.

Executive Director George Crozier, of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, said researchers need easier ways to share data. Sharing information within the two Alabama coastal counties can be difficult, he said, and he would like observation systems to integrate data and offer easy access. Right now, scientists usually pick up the phone and ask a colleague to send data files when they need them.

Navigators, especially barge operators, are screaming for wave-height information, said James Lyons, director and CEO of the Alabama State Port Authority, said. Current observation systems do not offer that information, which would benefit inland and marine boat operators.

Steve Perry, executive director of The Forum, said industries could benefit from improved climate scale forecasts (such as drought predictions) and pipeline monitoring systems that would identify pipeline leaks and power upsets. Spinrad said the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has information on terrestrial pipelines, but a dilemma exists about how much information to make public. Another hurdle in gathering data is determining what public entities should gather and what the private sector should gather, Spinrad said. Glade Woods, co-director of the Northern Gulf Institute, said integrating federal agencies, state agencies and private industry could improve data needs. The private-industry element often is missing, he said.

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium organized the listening session. For more information about the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, go to <http://usgeo.gov> or <http://www.earthobservations.org>.

Florida Celebrates Oceans Day

TALLAHASSEE –State agencies joined public and private partners to celebrate Oceans Day at the Capitol and promote stewardship of Florida’s oceans. The theme of this year’s celebration is “Florida Oceans and Coasts: The Impacts of Climate Change on Florida.”

“Clean water and responsible stewardship are the foundation for Florida’s quality of life and ocean-based economy,” said Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole. “While we can not predict future impacts, Florida has chosen to be a leader in managing ocean and coastal resources, which will be critical to the state’s preparation for the anticipated changes to our environment and our weather patterns here in Florida.”

With the longest coastline in the contiguous United States, Florida is home to 41 aquatic preserves, three of the nation’s National Estuarine Research Reserves and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, one of the largest underwater protected areas in the world. Drawing more than 29 million visitors each year, Florida’s clear waters, world-class beaches and stunning coral reefs support a \$402 billion ocean and coastal economy which includes a \$53 billion tourism industry, a \$14 billion marine industry and a fishing industry that injects more than \$8.5 billion a year into Florida’s communities.

As part of the state’s ongoing oceans protections efforts, the Florida Oceans and Coastal Resources Council has produced its Annual Science Research Plan for 2007 which proposes a comprehensive program of research to better understand and protect Florida’s coastal resources. The plan is currently under consideration by the Legislature. Included in the plan is an advanced state-of-the-art coastal observation system that will automatically monitor and report the condition of coastal and ocean waters. Governor Crist recommended more than \$8 million in this year’s budget request to implement the recommendations of the Council.

Florida is also a leader in forming the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, a partnership of the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. The states have developed and are implementing a plan that increases regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has rewarded Florida’s outstanding efforts by selecting various state agencies and universities to receive grants to implement water quality improvement, habitat characterization, and education activities.

Florida’s scientists and resource managers are monitoring water quality, restoring coral reefs along the Southeast coast, and mapping and restoring seagrass beds across the state, participating in a global partnership to improve coral reef resilience. Florida is also boosting education and recreational programs with a focus on marine and ocean science. Just last weekend, the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve hosted ‘Dive Into Ocean Careers,’ which allowed Collier County middle students to learn about marine life and underwater careers, practice scuba diving in a 15,000 gallon dive tank and explore a mock up research submarine. For more information about Florida’s Ocean Alliance, visit www.floridaoceanalliance.org

DEP Florida Park Service Hosts Nature-Based Tourism Seminars

TALLAHASSEE – The Department of Environmental Protection’s Florida Park Service in partnership with VISIT FLORIDA, the state’s official source for travel planning, is hosting three one-day entrepreneurial workshops this week. The seminars were designed by industry leaders to provide tools to develop and effectively market nature-based tourism businesses.

“Nature-based tourism in Florida is booming and many people tour the state primarily to view and recreate in Florida’s natural resources,” said Florida State Park Director Mike Bullock. “Lessons learned in these workshops will contribute to the estimated \$7.8 billion impact that outdoors-oriented activities have on the state’s economy.”

The workshops are taking place in Panama City, Homosassa and Fort Myers this week. Sessions offered guidance on setting up and designing a marketing plan, partnering with VISIT FLORIDA and local destination marketing organization and stewardship and sustainability of nature-based tourism businesses.

The state’s official source for travel planning, VISIT FLORIDA was created by the Florida Legislature in 1996 as the operating company for the Florida Commission on Tourism, a private/public partnership. VISIT FLORIDA markets Florida tourism worldwide, managing advertising, sales, promotions, public relations and visitor services programs both domestically and internationally. It works with the world’s major travel writers and broadcasters and produces print and broadcast promotions for consumers and travel influencers. VISIT FLORIDA also works with global travel trade groups such as tour operators, meeting and event planners and travel agents.

The first two-time Gold Medal winner honoring the nation’s best state park service, Florida’s state park system is one of the largest in the country with 160 parks spanning more than 700,000 acres and 100 miles of sandy white beach. From swimming and diving in Florida’s rivers and springs to birding and fishing or hiking and riding on natural scenic trails, Florida’s state parks offer year-round outdoor activities for all ages. Battle reenactments and Native American festivals celebrate Florida’s unique history, while art shows, museums and lighthouses offer a window into Florida’s cultural heritage. For more information about Florida’s State Parks, visit www.FloridaStateParks.org.

Florida Outlines 2007 Drought Action Plan

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist and U.S. Senator Bill Nelson today joined Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) Commissioner Charles Bronson, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole, Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) Director Craig Fugate and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District Commander Colonel Paul Grosskruger to discuss the current drought conditions and water conservation measures in Florida.

“Every drop of water makes a difference, and water conservation needs to be part of everyone’s daily routine,” said Governor Crist. “Through proactive planning and taking steps now to conserve, we are both protecting and stretching the regional water supply for South Florida.”

Governor Crist urged leaders to continue water restrictions already in place, while taking additional measures as conditions change. To educate Floridians on steps to help conserve water resources, Governor Crist announced a new water conservation Web site that contains water conservation tips and information about the drought conditions.

As a result of the current drought conditions and water conservation measures, Governor Crist also commended Secretary Sole for his efforts to bring together the Drought Working Group. The Working Group, which includes representatives from DEP, DACS, DEM, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), will review and update the 2007 State of Florida Drought Action Plan.

"The drought we're experiencing is severe as it is, not only significantly increasing the wildfire threat, but imperiling our crops," Commissioner Charles Bronson said. "Agriculture is Florida's second largest industry, and 40 percent of our cash receipts come from farms in the South Florida Water Management District. With many farms facing the most severe water restrictions, agriculture already is seeing significant economic impact, and a continued drought could result in hundreds of millions of dollars in losses."

The 2007 State of Florida Drought Action Plan provides background on the current drought being experienced in Florida, discusses the recent history of drought management in the state, describes the current institutional structure for addressing water shortages, and sets out specific steps to respond to the current drought. It also identifies short-term and medium-term action steps to improve water conservation, manage the current conditions and develop alternative water supplies.

"Times like this remind us of the importance of protecting and conserving our water resources as well as developing alternative supplies," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "Through implementation of this Drought Action Plan, state and federal partners are taking steps to conserve water, implement restrictions where necessary and develop long-term solutions to prepare for future drought conditions."

State and local emergency managers are urging residents across the region to observe conservation orders to help preserve critical water supplies during this drought event. "Water is a vital resource that all Floridians need to conserve and use wisely," said DEM Director Craig Fugate. "Everyone can play a key role in this Drought Action Plan by heeding local water restrictions in their communities."

Statewide, Florida receives an average of 54 inches of rainfall a year, with an average of almost 10 inches during the first three months of the year. For January 1 – March 31, 2007, Florida has received only 5.88 inches of rainfall, resulting in a shortage of water in South Florida. Further, seasonal weather forecasts predict that conditions likely will not improve in the months ahead, prompting state officials to prepare for the possibility that drought conditions will remain or possibly worsen during the next several months.

Lake Okeechobee, the source of water for the Florida Everglades and the primary back-up water supply for most agricultural users and residents of the SFWMD, is currently at 10.08 feet, the lowest elevation ever recorded in the month of April and more than four feet below its historical average for this time of year. At this low level, water from the lake cannot be used to replenish the regional supply. To address the water shortage, the SFWMD is encouraging conservation and issued restrictions to limit both residential and agricultural use.

For more information on the Drought Action plan and to see "50 Tips for Water Conservation," please visit www.dep.state.fl.us/drought. For additional information on water restrictions currently in place in South Florida, residents are encouraged to call the SFWMD's toll-free Water Shortage Hotline at 1-800-662-8876 or visit www.sfwmd.gov/conserve. [View Florida's Drought Action Plan](#).

Florida Celebrates Grand Opening of Paddling Trail Segment

MIAMI – The Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT) today joined the City of Miami, the South Florida Water Management District, The Trust for Public Land and the Miami Green Commission to celebrate the grand opening of the Biscayne Bay segment of the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail. Following the dedication event, participants enjoyed a brief excursion along the Biscayne Bay trail segment.

“We are pleased to dedicate another segment of the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail, the state’s longest and most ambitious sea kayaking trail,” said Jena Brooks, Director of the Office of Greenways & Trails “Once complete, the 26-segments of this trail will create recreational blueways for sea kayaking—one of the country’s fastest growing outdoor sports.”

The trail begins at Big Lagoon State Park near Pensacola, extends around the Florida peninsula and Keys, and ends at Fort Clinch State Park near the Georgia border. It has been divided into twenty-six unique segments, ranging from the remote Big Bend Coast and Everglades/Florida Bay wilderness to the more urbanized coastlines of Pinellas County and Fort Lauderdale. The trail encompasses every Florida coastal habitat type, from barrier island dune systems to salt marsh to mangroves.

The Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail will serve to educate paddlers about Florida’s rich history and fragile coastal environment as it highlights Florida’s 37 aquatic preserves. In addition, paddlers will have access to nearly all of Florida’s coastal state parks, recreation areas and historic sites. The National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, businesses, private citizens, local leaders and community organizations contributed to the project.

The DEP’s Office of Greenways & Trails manages eight state trails, in addition to the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. The Greenway is Florida’s longest green corridor stretching 110 miles from the St. Johns River near Palatka to the Gulf of Mexico near Inglis. Of the eight state trails, six are rail-trails, which are railroad corridors converted to recreational trails for hiking, biking, skating and equestrian activities. Through Florida Forever, the state’s premier land acquisition program, \$4.5 million is allocated annually to purchase and preserve land for Florida’s greenways and trails. For more information or maps of the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail visit www.FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com.

Legacy Sites Rules Adopted by Louisiana Legislature

Rules for the required hearings and submission of plans for the environmental remediation of exploration and production (E and P) sites under the provisions of Act 312 of 2006, have recently been adopted, announced Louisiana Commissioner of Conservation James Welsh today.

According to Commissioner Welsh, the new “Legacy Site Rules” were published in the State Register on April 20, 2007, within the framework of Statewide Order No. 29-B, which outlines oil and gas regulations for Louisiana.

The responsible party of an E and P site that requires clean-up through litigation will be subject to providing a feasible plan of action submitted to the Office of Conservation for review. Once a plan is provided to the Court(s) by the Commissioner of Conservation, and then approved by the Court, the responsible party would deposit the remediation costs into the registry of the court. The Office of

Conservation would oversee and monitor the clean-up process and would act timely in reporting progress to the Court.

Commissioner Welsh said that an Ad hoc Committee and the Department of Natural Resources' legal staff, along with his office's technical staff worked through a number of tough issues over the past several months in drafting the rules to comply with Act 312.

Act 312 was authored last year by state Senator Robert Adley of Benton and supported by the Blanco Administration. DNR Secretary Scott Angelle and Commissioner Welsh were instrumental in presenting justification for passage of the law before members of the legislature. To read the rule (LAC 43: XIX. Chapter 6) online as presented in the Louisiana Register:

<http://www.doa.louisiana.gov/osr/reg/regs2007.htm>, April 2007, pages 660 - 664.

Comprehensive Coastal Plan Submitted to Louisiana's Legislature

BATON ROUGE -- The [Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana](#) (CPRA) submitted the state's comprehensive master plan for coastal restoration and hurricane protection and the Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Plan to the Louisiana Legislature today for consideration during the current legislative session. "This is a great day in Louisiana," said CPRA Chair Sidney Coffee. "It marks the first time our legislature has had before it a plan that brings together both hurricane protection and coastal restoration efforts in a comprehensive way. This master plan will serve as the overarching vision for how we ultimately restore our coastal environment and rebuild and protect our communities and some of our nation's most critical assets."

Copies of these final plans are being submitted to the House Committee on Natural Resources, the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, the House Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works and the Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works for approval, pursuant to La R.S. 49:213.6. The full legislature will consider the final plans after they have been approved by the committees. The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority approved the final draft of the plan at its meeting April 12.

Entitled, "Integrated Ecosystem Restoration and Hurricane Protection: Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast," the plan represents more than 18 months of extensive research, writing, planning and public discussion and is designed to be the guide for all coastal protection and wetland restoration projects in Louisiana over the next several decades. More than 30 meetings with civic groups, coastal scientists, concerned citizens and various stakeholders were conducted since the summer of 2006 to gather input and introduce the public to some of the concepts and potential projects in the plan. A complete draft of the plan is available at: www.lacpra.org/masterplanfinal. A copy of the FY 2008 Annual plan is available at www.lacpra.org/2008annualplan.

St. Bernard Parish Approves Adoption of Flood Elevation Guidelines

BATON ROUGE, La. (April 3, 2007) - The St. Bernard Parish Council today 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 \$61.2 million to the parish for rebuilding and recovery efforts.

Now that the parish has adopted the new guidelines, it is eligible to receive \$11.2 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. "It wasn't easy, but Chairman DiFatta and the council did the right thing for the future of our community," said LRA Board Member Walter Leger. "This was a difficult decision and we thank them for their hard work on it."

St. Bernard will also be able to access up to \$26 million for building recovery projects in the parish and affected municipalities from the LRA's Long Term Community Recovery program. An additional estimated \$24 million 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.

Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan Calls for Sweeping Proposals to Manage Coastal Risk, Reinvest in Communities, and Create Regional Transit

BATON ROUGE, La.- The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan, which was announced today by members of the Louisiana Recovery Authority and citizen leaders, includes more than 100 recommended strategies and actions aimed at comprehensively managing future risk, reinvesting in existing communities, and creating a regional transit system.

"Katrina and Rita are not the last hurricanes to ever hit Louisiana, but we can take steps to make them the last storms to devastate us like they did," said Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco. "The people of Louisiana recognize that we live in a coastal environment and must continue working to limit our exposure to damages from future storms. They have called for this plan and formed these ideas. And now, if we can work together - citizens, businesses, elected officials, and community and faith-based leaders-to begin implementing the recommendations proposed in this Regional Plan, we can, and we will, realize our vision for a safer, stronger, smarter Louisiana."

The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan, which has been developed over the last 18 months using scenario planning, world-class computer modeling and technical analysis, and extensive public input from tens of thousands of citizens and stakeholders, will be unveiled at the first of a series of public meetings that will be held across South Louisiana to present the Plan throughout the month of May. Visit www.louisianaspeaks.org to download an online copy of the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan or [click here](#) to check for upcoming events in your area.

Highlights of the Regional Plan

Key proposals include recommendations to:

Manage Storm and Flood Risk-The Plan proposes a multi-pronged risk management strategy which includes recommendations to support the restoration of our wetlands, construction of strategic levees, investment in systems of secondary defense, enforcement of building codes, implementation of coastal zoning ordinances, efforts to focus new development in low-risk areas, management of watersheds and the acquisition of high-risk environmentally sensitive land.

Reinvest in Existing Communities-Because many of our communities have seen decades of declining populations and employment, we now face an urgent need for reinvestment. As a solution, the Plan proposes specific recommendations to immediately focus infrastructure and development in existing communities, reduce financial and regulatory barriers to infill development, and create local capacity for spurring reinvestment.

Build the Transportation Network of the Future-The Plan also calls for the development of a cutting-edge transportation network, including a rail line between Baton Rouge and New Orleans along the I-10 corridor, which will support communities and robust goods movement across the region.

The LRA is also supporting the implementation of strategic local recovery projects by setting aside \$200 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds that are currently available to local and parish municipalities. The LRA has also stated its goal of expanding this pool of funds by \$550 million to support implementation of local plans for Louisiana's long-term recovery if Congress appropriates additional funds or waives the 10 percent FEMA match requirement. The LRA will also take up a resolution in support of the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan at its upcoming Board Meeting, on May 10, 2007, at Baton Rouge Community College. Visit www.lra.louisiana.gov for event details.

Mississippi Establishes Wind Pool

House Bill 1500 deals with the “wind pool,” an insurer of last resort for homes and businesses on the Coast that is funded through customer premiums and assessments from every insurance company in Mississippi. Today there are about 32,000 policies in the wind pool, up from 16,000 policies at the time of Hurricane Katrina. One of the main purposes of the bill - known as The Mississippi Growth and Redevelopment Act of 2007 -is to mitigate the increase of insurance premium costs across the entire state.

The bill, unanimously approved by both houses of the Legislature, also creates the Mississippi Windstorm Underwriting Association Reinsurance Assistance Fund. Monies in the special fund may be used by the Department of Insurance, with approval from the Legislature, to defray the cost for reinsurance, lowering the risk for insurance companies writing policies in Mississippi.

This legislation provides \$80 million over the next four years from the insurance premium tax to buy reinsurance, which will result in lower premiums for wind pool policyholders. The bill encourages companies to write plans in the wind pool by providing an annual credit against state insurance premium taxes for domestic and foreign insurance companies for new wind and hail policies written in the coastal area of the state.

Governor Barbour recently announced that the wind pool will also receive \$30 million in Community Development Block Grant funds. These two measures will allow the state’s insurer of last resort to slash commercial rates from 268% to 142%, resulting in millions of dollars in savings to policyholders. “This new infusion of money into the wind pool, coupled with the many other steps that are being taken, offers renewed confidence that we will rebuild bigger and better than ever,” Governor Barbour said. “The ultimate goal is to re-create the private insurance market so that the wind pool isn’t even necessary. I see this as a step toward that goal.”

DMR to Restore 580 Acres of Mississippi’s Oyster Reefs

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will distribute 57,668 cubic yards of cultch material (oyster shells and limestone), restoring 580 acres of oyster reefs—including Kittiwake, Pass Marianne and Telegraph reefs—beginning April 21, 2007. The cultch plant will cost \$3 million, ranking it as one of Mississippi’s largest cultch plants and one of the largest in the nation. “It has been said that Hurricane Katrina confronted us with insurmountable opportunities,” said DMR

Shellfish Bureau Director Scott Gordon. “The rebuilding of our oyster reefs, which so many hard working people of the Coast look to for their livelihoods, initially seemed to be one of those. I have confidence that we will be able to meet the great challenges of rebuilding Mississippi’s oyster reefs so decimated by Hurricane Katrina. This is an essential step in the recovery of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.”

The DMR has awarded competitive bids to Mississippi Marine Services of Pass Christian for the distribution of 20,168 cubic yards of oyster shell and to Alabama Seafood Producers Inc. of Bayou LaBatre, Ala. for the distribution of 37,500 cubic yards of suitable cultch material (#57 Limestone)—more than 80 barge loads of cultch material.

Cultch plants consist of spreading oyster shell, crushed limestone or concrete rubble over the water bottom using high-pressure hoses, giving oyster larvae a clean surface on which to attach and grow. These cultch plants are intended to restore oyster productivity and increase fishing opportunities in south Mississippi through the continued rebuilding of existing reefs. In Mississippi waters it usually takes an oyster 18 to 24 months to reach a marketable size. The cultch plant is being funded through the Mississippi Hurricane Katrina Disaster Restoration, Enhancement and Monitoring Program to Study the Recovery of Gulf Fisheries.

“On behalf of the DMR, I would like to thank Senators Thad Cochran and Trent Lott, Congressman Gene Taylor and Gov. Haley Barbour for their tireless efforts in getting Congress to approve these disaster funds for Gulf fisheries,” said Dale Diaz, DMR Office of Marine Fisheries Director. “Restoration projects like this are important to the state’s economy, the health of the coastal environment and for the livelihood and recreation of numerous Coast fishermen.”

MS DMR Partners with The Nature Conservancy to Restore Inshore Oyster Reef

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources’ (MDMR) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) recently received a federal grant from the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program for inshore oyster reef restoration in the Biloxi Bay. The \$82,000 grant will fund an approximate 10- to 14-acre oyster shell plant in Biloxi Bay to rebuild reefs damaged by Hurricane Katrina. This will be the fourth joint program in three years to re-establish oyster reefs in inshore state waters.

The other three joint programs include:

- 2005: Biloxi Bay 5-acre shell plant NOAA Community-based Restoration Program Grant;
- 2006: Grand Bay Intertidal Oyster Reef Restoration NOAA Community-based Restoration Program Grant; and
- 2007: Bay St. Louis 2-acre shell plant National Fish and Wildlife Foundation North Gulf Coast Initiative Program Grant.

“We hope to bring more grants like this to DMR and we are excited about the success we’ve had so far,” TNC’s Nicole Vickey said. “We have seen successful recruitment of oysters in our Grand Bay and Biloxi Bay reef enhancement projects.”

The duration of the new project will take place over the next two years. The actual shell plant should occur in the fall of 2007. “This represents a great joint effort between the MDMR and TNC to enhance our marine resources,” said DMR Staff Officer Joe Jewell. The TNC program is designed to enhance the inshore marine ecosystem by providing fish habitat and better water quality. Filter-feeding oysters remove

contaminants in the water as part of their normal functioning. The programs are not designed for the harvesting of food oysters.

Gov. Haley Barbour to Speak at the Eighth Annual Smart Growth Conference for Southern Mississippi to Be Held May 9-10

BILOXI, Miss. – Gov. Haley Barbour will be one of the speakers at the eighth annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference (Smart Growth) on May 9-10 at the IP Casino Resort Spa. Gov. Barbour will talk about coastal restoration on the second day of the conference. “We are excited to have Gov. Barbour at this year’s conference,” said Tina Shumate, CRMP director. “We have been working closely with the Governor’s Office of Recovery over the past several months to rebuild our coast for the future.”

All over the United States, communities are using principles of smart growth to protect and enhance their natural environment while local economies grow and prosper. Attendees of the conference will have the opportunity to dialogue, learn from each other and cooperate on selected issues to promote smart growth across the coastal region and into our rural areas.

The conference is hosted by the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) in association with the CRMP stakeholders and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce. CRMP is a program within the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR). CRMP’s mission is to develop a plan to sustain Mississippi’s coastal resources while providing a healthy economy in the region.

“Having the Governor attend the conference illustrates the need and importance of it,” said Kimberly Nastasi, CEO of Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber. “We are proud to have Governor Barbour’s support and look forward to his remarks.”

Mississippi Oyster Relief Effort Program Newsletter

Mississippi publishes [Rebuilding Mississippi’s Oyster Reefs](#) to improve communications with oyster harvesters and highlight oyster restoration efforts. The newsletter is produced by the Mississippi Oyster Relief Effort (MORE) program, a stewardship program created to better inform and promote the active involvement of oyster harvesters and the industry in harvest practices and other techniques that can be used to assist resource managers in the judicious utilization of oyster resources of the state. For more information about the DMR’s Oyster Stewardship Program, contact the Shellfish Bureau at (228) 374-5000. The publication is funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Hurricane Katrina Fisheries Disaster Grant.

Patterson Resolves Dispute Over Conn Brown Harbor

AUSTIN — After 62 years of legal limbo, the City of Aransas Pass will finally have legal claim to ownership of Conn Brown Harbor. Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today approved a transaction that sells the land to the City of Aransas Pass. This marks the second time the land has been transferred to the city. “This settles a long-standing dispute between the people and their government,” Patterson said. “In my mind, that’s what I’m here for. That’s the reason I sought office to begin with. I’m glad to see this case finally resolved in everyone’s best interest.”

On May 22, 1944, Bascom Giles, 20th Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, gave 9,644 acres to the City of Aransas Pass with Special Award No.1. The trouble was, Giles — the first elected state official ever to serve prison time for crimes committed while in office — wasn't constitutionally able to simply give away state property.

Over the years, city officials developed the property, built an airport and leased out the land. But in 1999, Texas Attorney General John Cornyn, now a U.S. Senator, ruled the harbor still belonged to the state. Still, city officials continued to lease the property and little changed, other than city officials and land commissioners. The unsettled ownership of Conn Brown Harbor hindered commercial development of the harbor.

After years of negotiations, former State Rep. Gene Seaman authored legislation to facilitate a land trade between four state-owned tracts and one city-owned tract in 2005. Negotiations that followed between city officials and Patterson began in 2006 and culminated with the deal tentatively reached in January.

Terms of that agreement call for the City of Aransas Pass to pay the Land Office \$6 million and trade 65.7 acres of city-owned land for four tracts of land totaling 98.9 acres in Conn Brown Harbor, including the old airport site. The Land Office recognized the value of extensive work done to build a concrete bulkhead around the perimeter of the harbor and credited the city for the value of the bulkhead. Staff also negotiated a credit toward environmental cleanup with the understanding that the Land Office would receive full indemnification for any environmental liability.

TCEQ Launches 'Take Care of Texas' Campaign

Program Highlights Simple Environmental Steps All Texans Can Take at Home

Something as simple as turning off the lights when they're not in use can help reduce a household's impact on the environment. That's the message highlighted in Take Care of Texas, a new campaign launched by the TCEQ. The campaign provides important information to Texans about simple steps they can take in each area of their home to reduce their impact on the environment. Each of those steps will be highlighted in the Take Care of Texas Green Dream Home at this year's Environmental Trade Fair at the Austin Convention Center starting May 1.

Among the various strategies promoted by Take Care of Texas, the TCEQ encourages Texans to take steps to conserve water, improve their households energy efficiency, reduce the amount of waste they generate, and increase their vehicle's fuel economy saving money in the process. The goal is to get all Texans to do their part by following some simple tips that will go far toward improving air and water quality, conserving water and energy, and keeping Texas clean and beautiful.

"We've made a lot of progress recently in our efforts to address some of the environmental issues facing our state," said TCEQ Chairman Kathleen Hartnett White. "But it's going to take all of us working together to do our part to build on this progress to take care of Texas."

Along with the interactive home at the Environmental Trade Fair, the TCEQ is also launching the [Take Care of Texas](#) web site. This site will provide Texans with additional information about the steps they can take around the house, in the kitchen, in the bathroom, in the yard, and when they're out and about.

Along with the Take Care of Texas Green Dream Home, the TCEQ is also hosting the 2007 Innovative Vehicle Expo at this year's Environmental Trade Fair. In addition to highlighting innovative heavy-duty

hybrid vehicles, this year's event includes some of the latest hybrid and hydrogen passenger vehicles as well as demonstrating new ways Texans can do their part to reduce emissions. The Take Care of Texas Home Showcase, which can be toured Tuesday, May 1, through Thursday, May 3, is a part of the TCEQ Environmental Trade Fair, and is free to the public. For more information about the Take Care of Texas campaign, or the Environmental Trade Fair, contact the TCEQ Small Business and Environmental Assistance Division at 512-239-3100 or go to the [TCEQ Web site](#).

Texas Tarpon Research Gets Shot in the Fin

AUSTIN, Texas — Tarpon reign as the supreme nearshore gamefish from Florida to Panama; that's been the case at least since Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt did battle with "silver kings" in Port Aransas, Texas, in 1937. Despite the longstanding — and fervent — interest anglers have exhibited in the species, surprisingly little is known about tarpon life history and their suspected migrations throughout the Gulf of Mexico. A partnership announced this month between the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Saltwater-Fisheries Enhancement Association, the University of Texas Marine Science Institute and the University of Miami could help change that.

Together, TPWD and SEA are contributing nearly \$100,000 to a study by researchers Scott Holt of UTMSI and Jerry Ault of the University of Miami. This summer Holt and Ault will undertake the most ambitious Texas tarpon tracking study to date. Using pop-up archival tags, or PATs, these researchers hope to enlist recreational and tournament anglers to tag a total of 20 mature (60-inch or longer) Texas Tarpon.

This research builds on similar studies undertaken by Ault in Florida and Mexico. "We are trying to establish the migratory routes of the fish; that's the primary objective," Holt said. "Fish we catch in Texas, we expect go back to Mexico in the winter. Jerry has tagged seven or eight fish in the spring, in Mexico, that have come up here in the summer. Our expectation is that they will return to Mexico in the winter. As an ancillary benefit we get information about daily activity — diving depth, temperatures they prefer."

The PATs collect and archive minute-by-minute data on depth of the animal, water temperature and light level (used to determine the daily location of the tagged fish). The tags are pre-programmed to release from the tagged fish at a specified time and date, usually 3 to 6 months after deployment, and they pop-up to the ocean surface where they transmit their stored data to an ARGOS satellite network passing overhead. The data retrieved by the satellites are then forwarded to research labs for analysis.

"This is a great opportunity to advance our understanding of tarpon along the Texas coast," said Larry McKinney, Ph.D., director of Coastal Fisheries at TPWD. "This effort will generate the type of information we need to manage the fishery for these magnificent fish and help assure their future in our coastal waters."

The TPWD Coastal Fisheries Division also is in the initial stages of developing a web-based Tarpon Observation Network that will reside on the TPWD website. A Beta version of the site should be up-and-running before the end of June, with a full version coming online within 12 months. The design is simple. Anglers who land, hook, observe or otherwise come into contact with tarpon will be asked to enter various aspects of the observation into the TPWD website input device. Known information (e.g. time, date, location, length, weight, water temperature, etc) will be gathered and entered into the website. After the data has been verified, the information will be graphically displayed in various formats, such as a map

with that particular observation indicated by an icon along with past observations in an easy to use design. Participants will be able to see their observations alongside previous entries.

Morris said he got the idea for the web-based, volunteer system after seeing a presentation about eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/>). “We are very excited about this program, if successful, the program could be expanded to include other states, Mexico or additional species,” said Morris. “Ultimately, the program will help researchers and anglers alike in understanding this unique and popular species.”

TPWD Sets Regional Management Plan for Spotted Seatrout

AUSTIN, Texas — The world-famous spotted seatrout fishery in the Lower Laguna Madre will get an extra measure of protection beginning in September after the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission voted April 5 to lower the bag and possession limit for the species there from 10 to five. The change, which was approved along with other suggested changes to the 2007-08 Statewide Hunting and Fishing Proclamation, would mark the first time the department has attempted a regional approach to managing a saltwater fishery.

The reduction in the daily bag limit addresses a downward trend in the spawning stock biomass of spotted seatrout in the Lower Laguna Madre — a trend that runs counter to steadily increasing populations elsewhere on the coast. Of particular concern to TPWD biologists is that spotted seatrout spawning stock biomass currently is about half what it was at the time of the 1983-1984 freeze, which resulted in a major kill of spotted seatrout and other species along the lower coast.

A greater number of reproducing fish can help stocks recover faster after such a catastrophic event.

“As we moved into this year, for the first time our spotted seatrout catch rate for the LLM has fallen below the statewide average,” TPWD Coastal Fisheries Director Larry McKinney, Ph.D., told commissioners. “Spawning stock biomass continues to go down and we don’t see that trend turning around unless we do something.”

McKinney acknowledged that the proposal engendered considerable debate in scoping meetings and public hearings up and down the coast. Public comments ran 2,256 for the lower regional bag limits, and 1,137 against.

“There were a number of concerns about regionalization,” he told commissioners. “What we’re proposing is a considerable change. We can take a small step now, or somewhere down the road we take a much more severe step. We do not want to get in the situation where we have to close seasons, as Florida has done. We’re in a fortunate position in Texas in that we can try to address things before they become crisis situations.”

The new regulation applies to the entire Lower Laguna Madre, from Marker 21 in the Landcut, to South Bay and including the Brownsville Ship Channel and Arroyo Colorado. In a change from the proposal presented to commissioners in January, the area affected by the new regulation does not extend to the tips of the jetties at Gulf passes (the East Cut near Port Mansfield and Brazos Santiago Pass at South Padre Island), but stops at the base of the jetties. The Gulf beaches are not included in the area, but any boats fishing in Gulf waters and landing their catches within the boundaries would be subject to the lower bag limits.

Other News

New Publication: The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation

Does land conservation protect the bottom line? Leading experts in the field assert that it does. The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation presents quantitative and authoritative research on the economic benefits land conservation can bring to communities. Writers include scientists, economists, and researchers from academia, government, nonprofits, and industry. The report summarizes the best current studies, offers original research, and suggests topics for further inquiry. Available by free download.

[Download The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation](#)
[More on the Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space](#)
[TPL's Center for Conservation Finance](#)

Applications for Gulf Guardian Awards being Accepted

The Gulf of Mexico Program is pleased to announce that we are now accepting applications for the Gulf Guardian Awards 2007! This is the eighth year for the awards program which was started to honor the businesses, organizations, agencies, individuals and partnerships who are striving to make an environmental difference in the Gulf of Mexico. The Deadline for Submission is July 31, 2007. Please forward this message along to your colleagues and contacts around the Gulf!

As in the past, we have seven (7) winning categories, with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners being selected in each category. They are: 1) Individual, 2) Business, 3) Youth/Education, 4) Civic/Nonprofit Organizations, 5) Government, 6) Partnerships, and 7) Bi-National Efforts. The application in English and Spanish is located on our web site at www.epa.gov/gmpo, along with instructions and additional information. Please submit your application EARLY to gulf.guardian@epa.gov.

New Water Alliance Announced

April 27, 2007-- A new alliance was formed this week to serve as an advocacy group uniting Alabama, Georgia and Florida in support of water-related issues in the area. The Southeast Water Alliance (SWA) will address issues ranging from a lack of waterway maintenance to the interstate water wars that pose a threat to the economy and quality of life in region, according to Tri Rivers Waterway Development Association president Billy Houston. The mission of the Southeast Water Alliance "is to educate the area's elected officials, media and public about the vital role rivers, lakes and tributaries play in promoting commerce, recreation and job creation in the Southeast."

"It is important that we work together to protect the area's waterways and educate the region about the impact that water resources have on the livelihood of our states," said Jerry Sailors, president of the Coosa Alabama River Improvement Association (CARIA) and co-chair of the Southeast Water Alliance. "While each state is working to address water-related issues in a way that benefits its own citizens, the underlying need to properly operate and maintain the region's waterways is a common challenge among all the states that unites our organization."

Sailors and Houston will serve as co-chairs of the SWA. The group's membership will include public

officials, business leaders and concerned citizens in Alabama, Georgia and Florida who wish to educate and address issues impacting their water resources. "Our region is blessed with thousands of miles of waterways, which are the lifeblood of our states," said Houston. "Water flow in the region's rivers supports navigation, power generation, recreation, flood control, municipal and industrial water supply and environmental quality. Any significant decrease in water availability and flow will have a detrimental effect on the region's overall well-being, which is why we must educate the public about the importance of proper maintenance of our waterways."

For more information about the Southeast Water Alliance and the challenges which threaten the region, visit SWA's Web site at www.southeastwateralliance.org.

New, Improved Water Quality Modeling Tool

Contact Information: Jim Carleton - 202 566-0445 / carleton.jim@epa.gov

(Washington, DC – April 23, 2007) The Environmental Protection Agency has released a new version of its acclaimed watershed management program, making it easier to use and more readily available. "Better Assessment Science Integrating Point and Nonpoint Sources" (BASINS) is a multipurpose system that integrates environmental data, analytical tools, and modeling programs. BASINS will help regions, states, and local agencies develop cost-effective approaches to watershed management and environmental protection. BASINS 4.0 is a valuable tool for watershed and water quality-based analyses, including developing total maximum daily load (TMDL) allocations.

Unlike earlier releases, BASINS 4.0 runs on non-proprietary, open source, free geographic information system (GIS) software, making the tool universally available to anyone interested in the system. Prior versions required users to purchase costly GIS software to run the BASINS system. Once installed on a personal computer, BASINS 4.0 gives users access to large amounts of point and non-point source data, which they can use to assess or predict flow and water quality for selected streams or entire watersheds. More information about BASINS 4.0: www.epa.gov/waterscience/basins

Report on Coastal Barrier Resources System Development

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has released a report entitled Coastal Barrier Resources System: Status of Development that Has Occurred and Financial Assistance Provided by Federal Agencies <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07356.pdf>.

The Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) designates 585 units of undeveloped coastal lands and aquatic habitat as the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS). CBRA prohibits most federal expenditures and assistance within the system that could encourage development, but it allows federal agencies to provide some types of assistance and issue certain regulatory permits. In 1992, GAO reported that development was occurring in the CBRS despite restrictions on federal assistance. This report updates the 1992 report and reviews the extent to which (1) development has occurred in CBRS units since their inclusion in the system and (2) federal financial assistance and permits have been provided to entities in CBRS units.

Grant Opportunities

Oceans and Human Health Initiative Launches Funding Opportunity for Consortia for Graduate Traineeships (OHHI)

The Oceans and Human Health Initiative has announced its first funding opportunity to establish Consortia for Graduate Traineeships in Oceans and Human Health (OHHI). Proposals are due May 18, 2007. The Consortia will serve to help develop a community of oceans and human health experts trained to work across the scientific disciplines and institutions necessary to understand the linkages between the oceans, human health, and well being; and to convey the importance of these linkages to resource and public health decision makers. For more information, visit <http://www.eol.ucar.edu/projects/ohhi/> or contact [Juli Trtanj](#).

RFP Announced for National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued a request for proposals (RFP) under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program for FY 2008. Grants are available for the acquisition and/or restoration of coastal wetlands in states that border the Atlantic (with the exception of Louisiana) and Pacific Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes. An estimated \$16 million is available in FY 2008.

To date, an estimated \$183 million in grant funds have been awarded to 25 coastal states and one U.S. territory to acquire, protect, and restore over 250,000 acres of coastal wetland ecosystems through this program. Funding for the program comes from excise taxes on fishing equipment as well as motorboat and small engine fuels. Grant proposals are due to the Service's Regional Federal Assistance offices by June 29, 2007, and awards will be announced in December 2007 or January 2008. For more information on this program, please visit the [USFWS website](#).

Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Program

The Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Program is a project of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in cooperation with the NOAA Marine Debris Program. The Program seeks to support projects that have a strong likelihood of reducing marine debris caused by derelict fishing gear (both commercial and recreational); to increase our understanding of the impacts, location, and best methods for removal; and projects that engage marinas, ports, and the fishing industry. The deadline for pre-proposals is May 18, 2007. For more information, visit <http://www.nfwf.org/marinedebris/>.

Mia J. Tegner Memorial Research Grants in Marine Historical Ecology and Environmental History

Marine Conservation Biology Institute offers the Mia J. Tegner Memorial Research Grants in Marine Environmental History and Historical Ecology. The program focuses on projects from both natural and social scientists that seek to uncover interactions between natural and human history in the marine and estuarine environments worldwide. MCBI is particularly interested in studies that seek to describe

systems prior to large-scale human impacts and industrialization. The deadline for application is June 1, 2007. For more information, visit http://www.mcbi.org/what/tegnr_app_07.htm.

EPA Announces new RFP on “Smart Growth Streets and Emergency Response”

A new grant RFP issued by EPA’s Development, Community, and Environment Division seeks to bring together emergency response officials, local government officials, transportation experts, and developers to engage in a problem-solving process around the issue of simultaneously meeting the needs for emergency response with the design of smart growth streets. The goal is to create a solution or set of solutions that have the endorsement of these multiple interests and will be applicable nationally across the U.S. and/or in significant regions of the country. The RFP will also support outreach efforts to educate relevant stakeholders nationally.

EPA expects to award \$150,000 for Phase 1 (years 1 and 2) with the possibility of additional, incremental funding of up to \$500,000 in total over a five year project period. Funding for future years is dependent on funding availability, agency priorities and applicant performance. EPA may award up to three assistance agreements. Proposals are due by 5PM, East Coast Time on June 15, 2007. View the RFP at: <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/grants/opei0701.htm>

Training and Conferences

Colored Dissolved Organic Matter (CDOM) Workshop

Tuesday to Thursday, May 29 to 31, 2007; Isles Yacht Club in Punta Gorda, Florida
Hosted by Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

[Call for Posters \(due May 16\)](#) ~ [Request for sponsors](#) ~ [Register](#) ~ [Hotel/Directions](#) ~ [Agenda](#)

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (Charlotte Harbor NEP) is hosting a Colored Dissolved Organic Matter (CDOM) Workshop. It is expected to be a three-day, technical exchange workshop is an opportunity for scientists and resource managers to network; explore research and technologies; share ideas and gain a better understanding on CDOM dynamics in the Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor and Estero Bay watersheds.

Recent research has shown that dissolved organic matter in aquatic systems is the largest reservoir for organic carbon in the aquatic environment. Colored DOM (or CDOM) contributes to light absorption, and may also fuel bacterial respiration while carrying large quantities of carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorous to estuaries, which may contribute to eutrophication. In Charlotte Harbor, Florida, CDOM can account for 13-66% of light attenuation in the water column. Changes in CDOM concentrations in the Peace River seem to be linked to landuse changes. Also, there has been a trend toward higher CDOM concentrations in the Caloosatchee River in recent years. Therefore, understanding the sources, sinks, and processes that affect CDOM is important for aquatic resource management. Numeric water quality targets for chlorophyll a, turbidity and CDOM were recently established for the Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor and Estero Bay region. This workshop on colored dissolved organic matter is an imperative first step in the implementation of these water quality targets.

Please register at <http://www.chnep.org/Events/CDOM/CDOM.asp>: While CHNEP anticipates that a registration fee will not be charged, we do require that participants register by using this online form.

Firewise Awareness Workshop

May 22, 2007

**East Jackson County/Orange Grove Community Center, Moss Point, Mississippi
8 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. (Includes lunch!)**

This is a **FREE** workshop designed to provide participants with tools to assess community vulnerability to wildland fire and to encourage sound land-use planning, creative mitigation, and supportive community infrastructure to reduce the occurrence of fire losses. Leslie Blackwell and Todd Matthews with the Mississippi Forestry Commission will teach the workshop. Participants should expect to learn how to conduct fire risk and hazard assessments for their communities, acquire information about fire-resistant landscaping and building design, and participate in field inspections of managed and unmanaged areas to better understand how and why forested areas are maintained to prevent wildfires.

Target audiences for this event include building inspectors, developers, elected and appointed officials, emergency managers, insurance agents, fire service representatives, natural resource managers, planners, and realtors. To register for the class, please contact Patty Rogers (601-528-5133; patty.rogers@ms.usda.gov) or Marian Dicas (228-475-7047; marian.dicas@dmr.ms.gov).

The deadline for registration is Wednesday, May 16, 2007. The class is limited to 20 participants - **EARLY REGISTRATION is recommended!** Feel free to pass this announcement along to others who may be interested in this event. For more information about this and other Coastal Training Program events, please visit the program's website: www.grandbaynerr.org/education/ctp.

Corals to Classrooms - Texas

The Corals to Classrooms educator workshop, June 19-20, 2007 in Galveston, Texas, is sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Foundation and hosted by the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. The workshop focuses on coral reef biology and ecology and includes information, resources, hands-on activities, and a field trip. The deadline for application is May 31, 2007. For more information, visit <http://flowergarden.noaa.gov/education/workshops.html>

Natural History and Conservation of Florida Turtles

The Natural History and Conservation of Florida Turtles, a four-day workshop, June 4-7, 2007 in St. Petersburg, Florida, introduces teachers, environmental educators, and conservationists to the diversity, natural history, status, conservation, and management of Florida turtles. Participants learn basic identification techniques, causes of decline, conservation measures, and educational activities/resources. Highlights include field trips to upland, riverine, and coastal habitats to experience and study several species in the wild. A significant portion of the workshop involves hiking, canoeing, swimming, and snorkeling. The goal is to provide educators with both a solid introduction to the ecology and conservation of Florida turtles and first-hand field experiences. The workshop is limited to twelve

participants; the deadline for registration is May 28, 2007. For more information, visit <http://www.heinrichecologicalservices.com/programs.html>

Environmental Education Network- Education & Outreach Council Meeting

June 18-20, 2007 at the Five Rivers Delta Resource Center; Spanish Fort, Alabama

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network is joining forces with the Gulf Coast Ocean Observing System Education and Outreach Council to hold a meeting June 18 -20, 2007. We are taking advantage of our shared membership to look for ways to partner and compliment the respective organizations. To register: http://ocean.tamu.edu/GCOOS/Office/meetings/2007_Jun/2007_June.htm

You may register for all or portions of the three day meeting. If you will be attending the Environmental Education Network portion of the meeting there will be a non-refundable \$30 registration fee. Make checks out to the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Mail to: Dauphin Island Sea Lab, c/o GOMA EEN Meeting, 101 Bienville Blvd., Dauphin Island, AL 36528. A block of rooms is being held at the Hampton Inn in Daphne, AL. (251) 626-2220. Please call and make your own reservations. Reference the GCOOS/GOMA block of rooms for \$99/night plus 8% tax rate. Hotel reservations need to be made before June 3, 2007.

Remote Sensing Workshop

[Remote Sensing for Spatial Analysts July 17-18, 2007](#)

The NOAA Coastal Services Center is offering a GIS Workshop at Texas A&M, Corpus Christi. This two-day introductory technical training course offers GIS users in the field of coastal resource management an opportunity to understand remote sensing techniques by providing hands-on computer training. Familiarity with ArcGIS is required. This course is from the training curriculum developed by the NOAA Coastal Services Center. For more information or to register, go to: <http://landinfo.tamu.edu/noaa>. Limited seating so register early! \$85/person

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

