

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

May 2007

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA Predicts Above Normal 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season: 13 to 17 Named Storms Predicted

Experts at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center are projecting a 75 percent chance that the Atlantic Hurricane Season will be above normal this year — showing the ongoing active hurricane era remains strong. With the start of the hurricane season upon us, NOAA recommends those in hurricane-prone regions to begin their preparation plans.

“For the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season, NOAA scientists predict 13 to 17 named storms, with seven to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which three to five could become major hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher,” said retired Navy Vice Adm. [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. An average Atlantic hurricane season brings 11 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes, including two major hurricanes.

Climate patterns responsible for the expected above normal 2007 hurricane activity continue to be the ongoing multi-decadal signal (the set of ocean and atmospheric conditions that spawn increased Atlantic hurricane activity), warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean and the [El Niño/La Niña](#) cycle. Last year, seasonal hurricane predictions proved to be too high when an unexpected El Niño rapidly developed and created a hostile environment for Atlantic storms to form and strengthen. When storms did develop, steering currents kept most of them over the open water and away from land.

“There is some uncertainty this year as to whether or not La Niña will form, and if it does how strong it will be,” said Gerry Bell, Ph.D., lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center. “The Climate Prediction Center is indicating that La Niña could form in the next one to three months. If La Niña develops, storm activity will likely be in the upper end of the predicted range, or perhaps even higher depending on how strong La Niña becomes. Even if La Niña does not develop, the conditions associated with the ongoing active hurricane era still favor an above-normal season.”

Bell also noted that pre-season storms, such as Subtropical Storm Andrea in early May, are not an indicator of the hurricane season ahead. “With or without Andrea, NOAA’s forecast is for an above normal season.” “With expectations for an active season, it is critically important that people who live in East and Gulf coastal areas as well as the Caribbean be prepared,” said Bill Proenza, [National Hurricane Center](#) director. “Now is the time to update your hurricane plan, not when the storm is bearing down on you.”

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30, with peak activity occurring August through October. NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center will issue an updated seasonal forecast in August just prior to the historical peak of the season. The Atlantic Hurricane Seasonal Outlook is an official forecast product of the NOAA Climate Prediction Center. Instituted in 1998, this outlook is produced in collaboration with NOAA scientists at the Climate Prediction Center, National Hurricane Center, [Hurricane Research Division](#) and the [Hydrometeorological Prediction Center](#). The National Hurricane Center has hurricane forecasting responsibilities for the Atlantic as well as the East Pacific basins. The Climate Prediction Center, National Hurricane Center and Hydrometeorological Prediction Center are three of the National Weather Service’s nine [National Centers for Environmental Prediction](#), which provides the United States with first alerts of weather, climate, ocean and space weather events.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems ([GEOSS](#)), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

Atlantic Seasonal Hurricane Outlook (Technical Product):

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/outlooks/hurricane.shtml>

National Hurricane Center: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov>

Storm Size, Intensity, Key to Evaluating Potential Hurricane Damage

NOAA hurricane researchers investigating the destructive potential of land-falling hurricanes indicated recently that the overall size of the storm, as well as the area reached by its winds should be considered when assessing its possible damage. The April issue of the [Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society](#) published a study by Mark Powell, a research meteorologist at NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory in Miami, describing what he calls a new Hurricane Destructive Potential classification. This metric associates a numerical value similar to the Saffir-Simpson scale to each storm, and reflects potential damage due to wind, storm surge, and waves. OAA has not proposed modifying the current [Saffir-Simpson](#) hurricane scale.

Powell's goal is to provide a better measure of the threat posed by a hurricane. He suggests revising classification of hurricanes to include other physical characteristics of the hurricane such as the overall size of the storm and the area affected by winds exceeding certain threshold values. "By incorporating both size and intensity, I see this system as a better way to allow people to assess the true potential impact of an approaching storm," Powell said. "If people knew that Katrina had a much higher damage potential than Camille, the Mississippi residents who chose to stay might have evacuated."

Powell and his co-author, Timothy Reinhold, a scientist and engineer with the Institute for Business & Home Safety, acknowledge that people who decide to leave or stay in response to a hurricane warning make decisions based on perceived vulnerability. Past hurricane experience is one of several influences on this perception. The authors propose that many coastal Mississippi residents may have decided to stay during Hurricane Katrina, a category 5 hurricane 24 hours before landfall, because their location had not flooded during a previous category 5 storm, Hurricane Camille in 1969. This decision was made despite skillful forecasts from the National Weather Service. While Hurricane Camille's winds were stronger at landfall, Hurricane Katrina's wind field was much larger, resulting in significantly greater coastal flooding and damage.

"The Saffir-Simpson scale has been a very valuable tool in warning people about hurricanes but we have known for some time that the level of surge and surge-related damage is not well correlated with the maximum wind speeds at landfall," said Reinhold. "The proposed methods may well lead to more consistent warnings of damage potential both for wind and surge. It could follow in the footsteps of NOAA's recent adoption of the 'Enhanced Fujita Scale' for classifying tornadoes and provide the foundation for an enhanced Saffir-Simpson Scale."

To develop a scale that incorporates destructive potential due to storm surge and wind, Powell used kinetic energy calculations to classify small and large storms, ranging from Tropical Storm strength to Category 5 using data from NOAA's H*Wind experimental product that effectively describes the variations in the size and shape of the wind field of a given storm. H*Wind is currently the best tool available to evaluate the extent of damaging winds based on all available observations. Powell will test-run their Hurricane Destructive Potential classification during the 2007 hurricane season as part of NOAA's H*Wind experimental products. Hurricane season begins June 1 and ends November 30. NOAA will release its official outlook for the 2007 season on May 22.

Rip Currents: Break The Grip of The Rip!® ***Awareness Week: June 3-9, 2007***

Check this site for rip current [overview](#), [safety tips](#), [forecasts](#), [photos](#), [headlines/saving lives](#), [survivor stories](#), [links](#), [statistics](#), [animation](#) and [glossary](#). Also available are printed copies of our full color brochure in English and Spanish from your local forecast office or [download the brochures on rip current safety](#). Feel free to download a template for a [safety sign in English and Spanish](#).

Rip currents are powerful, channeled currents of water flowing away from shore. They typically extend from the shoreline, through the surf zone, and past the line of breaking waves. Rip currents can occur at any beach with breaking waves, including the Great Lakes. Rip currents can be killers. The United States Lifesaving Association estimates that the annual number of deaths due to rip currents on our nation's beaches exceeds 100. Rip currents account for over 80% of rescues performed by surf beach lifeguards.

The greatest safety precaution that can be taken is to recognize the danger of rip currents and always remember to swim at beaches with lifeguards. The United States Lifesaving Association has calculated the chance that a person will drown while attending a beach protected by USLA affiliated lifeguards at 1 in 18 million. If caught in a rip current at an unguarded beach, [how you respond could make the difference between life and death](#).

NOAA's National Weather Service and [National Sea Grant](#) Program, in partnership with the [United States Lifesaving Association](#), are working together to raise awareness about the dangers of rip currents. Research is also being conducted in order to develop and improve the ability to predict the occurrence and strength of rip currents. The goal of the awareness campaign and research is to reduce the number of rip current related fatalities. A daily rip current outlook is included in the [Surf Zone Forecast](#), which is issued by many National Weather Service offices. A three-tiered structure of low, moderate, high is used to describe the rip current risk. This outlook is communicated to lifeguards, emergency management, media and the general public. With increasing coastal populations, rip currents will continue to be a serious hazard at surf beaches. This web site is designed to provide educational material as well as real time information about the rip current risk. The time you take to understand rip currents can help you protect yourself and your loved ones when visiting the beaches.

Gulf Alliance Restoration Team Holds Workshops

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance's Regional Restoration Coordination Team (RRCT) completed two very productive workshops this spring. They were the second and third in a "round-robin" series of four workshops to be hosted by the Gulf of Mexico states and supported by the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, NOAA, and the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, with participation from numerous additional federal

agencies and NGOs, for the purpose of discussing issues associated with implementation of coastal habitat conservation and restoration projects and developing recommendations to facilitate these efforts.

The series of workshops was initiated last fall by the State of Louisiana, with a meeting in New Orleans, and continued March 6-9 with a meeting hosted by the States of Alabama and Mississippi at the 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center in Spanish Fort, AL. The State of Texas and representatives from Mexico hosted the most recent meeting in Galveston, TX, from May 21-24, presenting issues facing their respective western and southern regions of the Gulf of Mexico, as well as current and developing opportunities for international cooperation in conservation and restoration efforts.

By providing a forum for discussion of the individual and mutual conservation and restoration concerns and priorities of the Gulf States, the workshops have laid the groundwork for advancement of the wetland and coastal habitat conservation and restoration actions identified in the Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts (GAP). These include review of existing regulatory, funding, and policy frameworks and identification of mechanisms that facilitate or impede conservation and restoration efforts, development of a workshop on the importance of freshwater inflows to maintaining estuarine health, improved coordination of federal granting or other funding mechanisms, improvement of public-private partnerships to advance conservation and restoration efforts, and development of a Gulf Regional Sediment Management Plan to enable more effective management of sediment resources to protect and restore important and vulnerable coastal habitats.

The RRCT will meet next at the Gulf of Mexico Alliance "All-Hands" workshop scheduled for July 10-12 in St. Petersburg, FL. Discussion at this meeting will focus on implementation of action items in the GAP, and particularly those actions associated with increasing the safety and resiliency of Gulf communities by improved understanding of the risks of localized sea level rise, storm surge, and subsidence. The fourth "round-robin" workshop, to be hosted by the State of Florida and US Caribbean Territories, will be held August 20-23, also in the Tampa Bay area. Materials developed by the team or presented at these workshops can be found online at the RRCT's [working website](#), or for more information contact [Kristopher Benson](#).

Gulf Council to Meet in New Orleans, Louisiana

Tampa, Florida – May 15, 2007 - The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will meet June 4-7, 2007 at the W Hotel, 333 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA. During the weeklong meeting, the Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp Management Committee will review comments and recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), the Socioeconomic Panel, and the Red Snapper Advisory Panel related to Joint Reef Fish Amendment 27/Shrimp Amendment 14. Public hearing comments on the amendment will also be considered. The Council is expected to take final action on the Amendment after hearing public testimony. The joint amendment proposes to reduce directed and incidental fishing mortality on the red snapper stock and manage effort in the shrimp fishery to prevent excessive bycatch of juvenile red snapper. Under consideration are alternatives to reduce total allowable catch (TAC) for red snapper, as well as other regulatory changes designed to keep the red snapper stock on track with its rebuilding plan.

The Reef Fish Management Committee will discuss bag limits for vermilion snapper, as well as a public hearing draft of Reef Fish Amendment 30A for gray triggerfish and greater amberjack, along with a draft Reef Fish Amendment 30B for gag and red grouper. Both amendments propose new rebuilding plans for those stocks. Additionally, Council staff will present an update on the amendment addressing the grouper allocations issue.

A proposed public hearing draft of an Aquaculture Amendment will be discussed by the Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel/Red Drum Management Committee. The Committee will also consider comments from the Ad Hoc Aquaculture Advisory Panel before taking any action. The Data Collection Committee will hear a presentation from Dr. John Boreman, Director, NMFS Office of Science and Technology, regarding the actions of the National Committee on Recreational Data Surveys. Finally, the Mackerel Management Committee will meet to consider actions recommended by the Joint Special Mackerel Group, and the Budget/Personnel Committee will meet to consider the issue of increasing the liaison grant to the states.

Tuesday evening, from 6:00 – 8:00 pm, NOAA Fisheries Service and Gulf Council staff will hold an open public forum/question and answer session on Gulf Reef Fish. This forum, while not a public hearing, will provide the public an opportunity to ask questions and discuss Gulf Reef Fish science and management issues in a less formal setting. The forum is intended to increase dialogue between constituents and fishery managers.

Public testimony is scheduled for Wednesday, June 6, 2007, from 11:45 am to noon, and from 1:30 pm – 5:30 pm and will be accepted on Exempted Fishing Permits (if any), final Reef Fish Amendment 27/Shrimp Amendment 14, and final Vermilion Snapper Regulatory Amendment. The Council will also hold an open public comment session for citizens to address the Council on fishery issues that may not be on the agenda. Those comments will begin immediately following public testimony. Read the full press release at: <http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Beta/GMFMCWeb/prrel/pr%202007-19.pdf>.

NOAA Helps Crack Seafood Smuggling Case

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) scientists worked with Special Agents from the NOAA Office for Law Enforcement over a two-year period to help uncover a multi-year scheme that involved smuggling and distributing catfish labeled and sold as grouper to avoid anti-dumping tariffs imposed by the U.S. Department of Commerce. NCCOS scientists analyzed fish tissue samples using molecular genetic techniques to reveal that the samples were in fact catfish and not grouper. As a result of this collaboration, a Florida seafood importer received 51 months in federal prison terms, multiple years of probation, \$1.13 million in fines, and forfeiture of two Florida businesses. Successful enforcement initiatives, inclusive of laboratory confirmation of fish species, help to ensure truth in labeling of seafood and may deter future efforts to mislead seafood consumers. For more information, contact [Ron Lundstrom](#) or [Trey Knott](#).

Partnership is Building Community Resilience in Grand Bayou

In an effort to develop methodologies for assessing community resilience, staff members from the NOAA Coastal Services Center traveled to Grand Bayou, LA, an area hit hard by Hurricane Katrina, to learn about the community's history and culture and engage residents in a participatory mapping exercise. The resulting brochure tells the community's story and documents its physical and societal challenges. In addition, the Center is currently working with the University of New Orleans Center for Hazards Assessment Response and Technology (CHART) on a post-disaster resilience case study in Grand Bayou. For more information, contact [Sandy Eslinger](#).

Study Shows Big Economic Benefits of NOAA Ports® Ocean Observing System in Houston/Galveston

The Galveston Bay area receives an estimated annual economic benefit of \$14.1 to \$15.6 million in savings and direct income from the operation of the Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System®, according to a NOAA sponsored study released this week. The report details the economic benefits of the navigational decision support system, which is in operation at 13 major seaports across the United States. Four additional systems are slated to be added this year in ports along the Gulf of Mexico. Economic benefits result from greater draft allowance, reduced transit delays, reduced risk of groundings, improved environmental/ecological planning, and improved recreational opportunities. The report also documents a correlation between a significant decrease in vessel groundings, 50 percent for ships and 60 percent for tug/tows, since PORTS® was established in Houston/Galveston in 1996. PORTS® is operated by NOAA's Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services in cooperation with local ports.

“This study validated what we have been hearing for some time,” said retired Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr.](#), Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. “It quantified the benefits as being far greater than the cost of the system and demonstrates that the system provides valuable support for the safe and efficient movement of maritime commerce. Just as weather observations enable the smooth movement of goods in flight, this example highlights the benefits of an operational ocean observing system to the health of our economy. Whether in the air, on the ground or on the sea, our nation's commerce moves faster and safer with NOAA products.”

Knowledge of the currents, water levels, winds, and density of the water can increase the amount of cargo moved through a port and harbor by enabling mariners to safely utilize every inch of dredged channel depth. One additional foot of draft may account for between \$36,000 and \$288,000 of increased profit per transit depending on the type of cargo transported.

The single largest benefit is associated with the reduced risk of commercial ship groundings. Combining the U.S. Coast Guard's 1991 Ports Needs Study approach to estimate the cost of groundings with the average number of ship transits, the reduction in grounding risk due to PORTS® data availability results in an avoided cost of \$10.5 million annually. PORTS® real-time data are also used to decide whether it is necessary to offload oil tankers to reduce their draft before entering the port. Eliminating three such oil transfer, or “lightering,” operations a year can result in an estimated savings of approximately \$250,000. “Houston/Galveston PORTS® has become one of the most important tools available to our mariners,” said Tom Kornegay, executive director of the [Port of Houston Authority](#). “Our community relies on PORTS® information to safely transport cargo within the Houston/Galveston system, particularly during less than ideal weather.”

PORTS® data are used to enhance area weather and coastal marine forecasts, particularly coastal flooding. The Galveston Bay area's large coastal population is vulnerable to storm surge damage because of its low-lying geography. The estimated annual benefit from improved weather forecasting is between \$1.5 and \$3 million. Recreational boaters, using better real-time information available through PORTS®, may make more excursions, bringing an estimated \$624,000 additional to the economy each year. The value of water temperature and tidal data used by fisherman to improve their catch is estimated to be \$30,000 per year. The report was authored by Hauke Kite-Powell, Ph.D., of the [Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute Marine Policy Center](#), who designed the method of identifying as well as collecting and quantifying the data. Dr. Kite-Powell worked extensively with the local user community to gather the required data. The methodology was first applied to Tampa Bay. In that study PORTS® showed that the Tampa Bay economy receives more than \$7 million a year in savings and direct income from the NOAA system.

“One-NOAA” Workshop Addresses Coastal Inundation

NOAA’s Coastal Services Center, National Geodetic Survey, and National Weather Service held a workshop on coastal inundation at a meeting on Gulf Coast mitigation hosted by the Association of State Floodplain Managers in New Orleans, LA. NOAA officials highlighted coastal inundation products and real-time forecast products, as well as the importance of vertical datums and height modernization in inundation mapping. For more information, contact [Heather Landry](#).

200th National Water Level Station Dedicated

Last Monday NOAA dedicated the 200th National Water Level Observation Network Station, a tool to provide mariners, first responders and the public with real-time tide and water-level information. NOAA installed the station last month at the Port of Alabama State Docks where it will become a key component of the Mobile Bay NOAA Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS®) also being installed this year. With today’s vessels often exceeding the average depths of many ports and harbor channels, real-time access to accurate water-level information is more important than ever. Water-level data also is needed to improve storm surge forecasts, nautical charts, response to hazardous material spills, search and rescue efforts, and the monitoring of long term sea-level trends, among other uses. Installing the new station makes the real-time information just a phone call or click away. As the 11th largest port in the U.S., the Port of Mobile moves many major commodities each year. In 2006, it handled 24.3 million tons of cargo, accounting for \$89.5 million in revenue. Over 110,000 jobs in Alabama are export-supported.

During last week’s ceremony, officials unveiled a bench mark in Mobile's Cooper Riverside Park commemorating 200 years of science, service and stewardship by NOAA and our predecessor agencies. Along with other station bench marks in the area, this bench mark is tied into the National Spatial Reference System, which provides the foundation for accurate positioning in the nation. Many NOAA partners, including the Port of Mobile, the City of Mobile, the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Mobile, and of course our own staff made the ceremonies in Mobile productive and enjoyable. For more information go to <http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/>.

NOAA Honors MSU for 125 Years of Weather Observations

NOAA’s National Weather Service recently presented its Honored Institution Award to the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station of Mississippi State University. This prestigious award recognized MSU for 125 years of weather observations. Volunteers at MSU first began providing weather observations on May 1, 1882. Presented at 25-year intervals, Honored Institution Awards are given to institutions or industrial organizations in which several people have taken observations over a period of years. The NWS Cooperative Weather Observer Program has given scientists and researchers continuous observational data since the program's inception more than a century ago. Today more than 11,000 volunteer observers participate in the nationwide program. Cooperative observers are the bedrock of weather data collection and analysis. While satellites, high-speed computers, mathematical models, and other technological breakthroughs have brought great benefits in terms of better forecasts and warnings, scientists could not begin to adequately describe the climate of the U.S. without the century-long accumulation of accurate weather observations taken by volunteer observers.

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/coop/>

NCCOS Applied Research and Coordination to Advance NOAA Goals in Northern Gulf of Mexico

National Centers for Coastal Ocean (NCCOS) scientists described improvements in NOAA CoastWatch satellite imagery that permit their application to research efforts by the Northern Gulf Institute (NGI), including NCCOS hurricane eco-forecasting, at the Annual Meeting on May 16,17 2007 in Biloxi, MS. The NGI is a NOAA Cooperative Institute with Mississippi State University, Southern Mississippi University, Florida State University and the Dauphine Island Sea Laboratory that coordinates the development and application of research to address the missions and goals of NOAA. The institute will establish and maintain an applied research and development program integrating watersheds, coastal waters, habitats, resources and hazards to increase awareness, understanding and decision support for coastal populations and managers. The NGI mission specifically supports NOAA contributions to the Presidents Ocean plan, a successful Gulf of Mexico Alliance, and strengthening the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System. For more information contact Erik Davenport at Eric.Davenport@noaa.gov, or Randy Ferguson at Randy.Ferguson@noaa.gov.

NCCOS Advances Florida's Knowledge Base to Integrate Climate Change Issues and Coastal Management

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) staff joined economists, scientists, policymakers, and members of the business community to discuss the societal effects of climate change in Florida, and develop recommendations for addressing the most pressing concerns at the first Florida Climate Change Conference held in Tampa, Florida on May 9-11, 2007. The purpose of the conference was to provide recommendations to the Florida Century Commission and decision makers in the State on how to best integrate the dynamic of climate change into the environment, economy, and social fabric of the State. The Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida, established by the Florida legislature, will compile the recommendations and deliver a final report to decision makers later this year. For more information about the conference, contact Carol Auer at Carol.Auer@noaa.gov.

NOAA Research Provides Clues to Mass Mortality of Bottlenose Dolphins

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science has detected low concentrations of the neurotoxin domoic acid in tissue samples from a bottlenose dolphin mortality event occurring in Texas and Louisiana waters earlier this year. These data will aid stranding networks and the Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Event Working Group in determining causes of the dolphin die-off. Analyses for marine algal toxins in these samples were negative for brevetoxin, ciguatoxin and saxitoxin, but domoic acid was confirmed in dolphin stomachs. The low levels detected were indicative of toxin exposure, but not necessarily confirmatory as cause of death. A high abundance of the sometimes-toxic diatom *Pseudo-nitzschia pseudodelicatissima* was confirmed in water samples from Terrebonne Bay and Atchafalaya Bay, LA. For more information, contact [Spencer Fire](mailto:Spencer.Fire).

Other NOAA News

CICEET Spring 2007 Progress Reports Online

Interested in coastal technology projects that CICEET is sponsoring near you? Spring 2007 progress reports for active projects, and final reports for completed projects, have been posted online. Read more at <http://ciceet.unh.edu/news/releases/springReports07/reportRelease.html>

CICEET Technology to Address Nutrient Pollutants

Effective strategies to address nutrient pollutants in coastal waters must account for all major sources of nutrients. In many coastal areas, groundwater is a major pathway for pollution transport that, until recently, has been hard to measure. A CICEET-sponsored technology that uses naturally occurring radon as a proxy for groundwater is being used all over the world to help track the flow of groundwater into estuaries and coastal waters. Read more at: http://ciceet.unh.edu/briefs/burnett_brief/index.html.

NCCOS Scientists Release “Spatial Sampling Tool” to the Public to Improve Coastal Management

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) scientists recently released 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 as a script within ArcGIS v9.x, is being used by NCCOS scientists to select reef fish survey sites within the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The tool was developed by NCCOS staff and is currently available at (<http://arcscrips.esri.com/details.asp?dbid=15080>). For additional information contact Eric Finnen at eric.finnen@noaa.gov, or Charlie Menza at charles.menza@noaa.gov.

New Ocean Currents Tutorial Now Online

The NOS Communication and Education Division has launched an online tutorial, roadmap to data resources, and lesson plans on ocean currents. Developed with the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, the tutorial identifies the major factors that cause coastal and open ocean currents. The two lesson plans (Motion in the Ocean and Ready, Set, Drift!) focus on the causes of ocean currents and navigating in coastal ocean currents. For more information, visit <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/kits/currents>, or contact [Bruce Moravchik](mailto:Bruce.Moravchik@noaa.gov)

Scientists Discuss Marsh Birds in NERRS Workshop

A number of scientists participated in a three-day workshop on marsh birds at the North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in Georgetown, SC. The workshop, co-sponsored by the Grand Bay, Ace Basin, North Inlet-Winyah Bay NERRs, and the U.S. Geological Survey, was designed to train participants to identify the common calls of secretive marsh birds, and how to use the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol. Marsh-dwelling waterbirds are difficult to survey because many species are inconspicuous, and their habitat is often inaccessible. Population sizes and trends for most species are largely unknown, but it's important to track the birds which are threatened by continued habitat loss and fragmentation, the impact of sea level rise on coastal wetlands, and various management practices. How they fare is an indicator of overall marshland quality. For more information, contact [Susan White](#).

In the Gulf States

Governor Riley Awards \$70.6 Million to Boost Hurricane Recovery Efforts

MONTGOMERY – Several southwest Alabama counties and cities still working to recover from the devastation caused last summer by Hurricane Katrina are getting a \$70,668,600 boost from Governor Bob Riley. Governor Riley awarded Community Development Block Grants to 12 county and city governments on Thursday. The grants will help pay for debris removal, water and sewer system repairs and improvements, road repairs and demolition of structures damaged by the storm.

“We have made significant progress in our recovery from the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, but areas of Alabama hit hardest by the storm still need our help,” Governor Riley said. “These funds will support ongoing recovery efforts in some of our most heavily damaged communities.”

Funding for the disaster recovery awards was provided to the state by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Governor Riley said that more funding is needed and state officials are seeking additional support from HUD and other federal agencies. Projects were selected to receive grants based on a number of factors, including the number of people benefited, a community's capacity to complete the project, cost-effectiveness, and the likelihood that construction could withstand future storms. A team headed by State Banking Superintendent John Harrison helped identify the most serious infrastructure needs. Representatives from HUD, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) and the Alabama Housing Finance Authority serve on the team, which continues to explore additional funding sources.

ADECA Director Bill Johnson said his agency will administer the grants, and work with HUD and the federal Office of Inspector General to carefully monitor each project. “ADECA will work diligently to ensure that these funds are spent wisely and for the purposes for which they are intended,” Johnson said.

The following local governments were notified by Governor Riley that they had been awarded grants:

- Baldwin County: \$4,200,000 for water system improvements
- Bayou La Batre: \$36,993,864 for a variety of needs, including sewer repairs, debris removal, housing rehabilitation, and repairs to the city's wastewater treatment pump station
- Chickasaw: \$1,844,000 for sewer work
- Grove Hill: \$381,000 for sewer repairs
- Mobile: \$7,610,268 for sewer repairs and renovation to a senior citizens center
- Mobile County: \$12,112,488 for housing rehabilitation, drainage improvements, debris clean-up and renovations of the Coden Community Center
- Mount Vernon: \$680,000 for water system repairs
- Prichard: \$1,000,000 for housing demolitions and drainage improvements
- Robertsdale: \$632,100 for sewer improvements
- Saraland: \$1,899,000 for sewer repairs
- Silverhill: \$300,000 to construct a replacement water well
- Washington County: \$3,015,880 to repair damaged homes, make water system improvements and street reconstruction

Dauphin Island Sea Lab Scientist Establishes Program for Manatee Sightings

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in sightings and anecdotal reports of manatees in Mobile Bay. These gentle, slow-moving creatures are well documented in Florida, but little study has been conducted in local waters. Dauphin Island Sea Lab Senior Marine Scientist Dr. Ruth Carmichael is establishing "Mobile Manatees," a program that encourages the public to report their sightings of these animals in Alabama waters, particularly in Mobile Bay. "We simply don't know how these endangered animals are using the Bay - what they are eating or why they are here," states Dr. Carmichael. "By tracking their locations and other conditions, we will gain a better understanding of how they live."

By calling the toll-free number or visiting the webpage to e-mail their sightings, the public can help scientists find, study, and protect these vulnerable creatures. Information needed includes:

- Date and time of sighting (please use military time or note AM or PM)
- Location of sighting with as much detail as possible, including an associated street address, river name, and (if possible) GPS coordinates
- Name and phone number or e-mail address of reporting party
- Number of animals and approximate size
- Any distinguishing marks, scars (manatees can be identified by scarring patterns)
- What they were doing (swimming, floating, foraging)
- How they were spotted (from boat, dock, etc.)
- Please send a photograph/.jpg, if one was taken

The "Mobile Manatee" program is part of a larger study that will include aerial and ground surveys of manatees in Mobile Bay and research to determine what manatees eat while in the Bay. The project, funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is a collaboration between Dauphin Island Sea Lab and researchers at Wildlife Trust in Florida.

"We really need everyone's help. We want people to be aware of manatees in Alabama waters, and to help us observe these animals in a positive way. We hope that by including the public, we can improve

the success of our study and reduce the likelihood of negative interactions such as boat strikes,” Dr. Carmichael adds. “We appreciate as much information as possible to confirm a sighting, but we discourage people from approaching the animals. Manatees need plenty of space. We do not want to alter their natural behavior, scare them away, or harass them,” she emphasizes. “The best rule of thumb is to stay at least 100 feet from manatees. If you spot one, don’t chase them, feed them, or touch them. Give us a call or visit the website as soon as possible, and we will get to work.”

Three Communities Selected for Waterfronts Florida Program

TALLAHASSEE--Three Florida communities were selected today to join the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program, a designation that will boost the communities' efforts to revitalize their traditional working waterfront areas. The designation makes the three communities eligible for technical assistance, grants and other aid from the state. Department of Community Affairs Secretary Tom Pelham, whose agency administers the Waterfronts Florida program, selected the City of Carrabelle in Franklin County, unincorporated Steinhatchee in Taylor County and the City of St. Marks in Wakulla County. The designations followed the recommendations of an application review committee, which heard presentations from applying communities and took public comment before assigning its highest rankings to the three communities. A total of 10 applications were received and reviewed by the committee.

"Throughout its history Florida's vitality has been connected to its waterfronts, and this program is an outstanding way to help communities reconnect with their past while moving into the future," said Secretary Pelham. "I am pleased that we will be able to help these three communities renew the waterfront areas that are so much a part of their history."

Carrabelle, Steinhatchee and St. Marks join 18 other Florida communities that have been selected for the Waterfronts Florida program since its inception in 1997. The program generally designates three communities every two years to receive state assistance that results in the formulation of a community-designed vision plan to guide the revitalization of traditional water-dependent economies. Each plan is designed to ensure public access to the waterfront area, prevent losses from disasters, protect environmental and cultural resources, and enhance the waterfront economy.

The Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program is funded with federal grants provided by the Department of Environmental Protection's Florida Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. DCA's Division of Community Planning provides staff to implement the program and provide hands-on technical assistance, training and contract management. Each designated community generally receives \$25,000 per year for two years to establish its local Waterfronts Florida program. Other applicants for Waterfronts Florida designation, in the order they were ranked by the review committee, were Millville (Panama City), Punta Gorda, Tarpon Springs, Titusville, Boynton Beach, Merritt Island (unincorporated Brevard County) and Miami River. In their applications, the three designated communities indicated what they hope to achieve by participating in the Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program:

Carrabelle

Private, public and commercial properties along the Carrabelle River represent significant cultural, economic and historical assets, including historic homes and buildings and a natural deep-water port. As a coastal community in an area frequently targeted by hurricanes and tropical storms, the city understands how fragile and vulnerable its important waterfront can be. The city's plans include redevelopment of a park and pavilion area and a Carrabelle Wharf project to increase public access.

Steinhatchee

The community's identity is closely linked to the nearby Gulf of Mexico and to the Steinhatchee River. Part of a state-designated area of critical economic concern, Steinhatchee has felt the effects of tighter regulation on commercial fishing and the closure of marinas that were purchased for residential development. The community plans to work through the Waterfronts Florida program to provide public access to the Gulf and river for commercial and recreational fishing and boating; to bring clean, waterfront-compatible business to the area, and to maintain historical resources and habitat when planning and approving new residential developments.

St. Marks

The part of St. Marks covered by the Waterfronts Florida designation represents the center of a major revitalization effort, the Riverfront Redevelopment Area, addressing the portion of the city most in need of assistance as a result of Hurricane Dennis in July 2005. That storm's 10- to 12-foot surge and strong winds caused considerable damage to the city, wreaking havoc on the riverfront business district and some residential areas. The city plans to use the resources of Waterfronts Florida to assist revitalization efforts by connecting to neighboring cities and attractions and reaping the benefits of eco-tourism while maintaining its own distinct identity and preventing urban sprawl.

Florida Communities Trust Partners with Leon County to Acquire Parcel for St. Marks Headwaters Greenway

TALLAHASSEE--The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) today presented a check to the Leon County Board of County Commissioners to mark the acquisition of a 160-acre parcel for the St. Marks Headwaters Greenway. Leon County partnered with Florida Communities Trust (FCT) on the \$1.5-million project, which will provide important water quality protection to the St. Marks River watershed, an Outstanding Florida Water.

The parcel is a crucial link in a large arc of conservation lands in eastern Leon County that help protect the entire Upper St. Marks ecosystem and Floridan Aquifer. This conservation corridor includes several previously funded FCT projects as well as lands purchased by the State of Florida and The Nature Conservancy. The parcel will be combined with the existing St. Marks Headwaters and Copeland Sink to form the 748-acre St. Marks Headwaters Greenway. The county will construct nature trails, a wildlife observation platform and a picnic pavilion for public recreation and enjoyment at the site.

Administered by the Department of Community Affairs, Florida Communities Trust is a state land acquisition grant program that has provided more than \$600 million to local governments to preserve parks and recreational space. The Trust makes \$66 million of Florida Forever funds available each year.

Florida DEP Creates Web Page for Emergency Information

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today released an updated version of its emergency management Web site, providing immediate access to updated information on wildfires, air quality and drought conditions. The Web page is designed to keep Floridians informed about conditions in their community and current emergency advisories.

“Florida is committed to keeping our residents up-to-date on current conditions throughout the state by providing constant updates to our emergency Web page,” said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. “The information on our Web page allows residents to take actions to protect their families and their homes.”

Florida is currently experiencing more than 220 fires across more than 50 counties, causing impacts to our state's air quality in certain areas. DEP's Web site provides daily air monitoring reports and current health or smoke advisories, as well as information on current restrictions on burning. The page links to other important information on emergency situation, such as wildfire reports by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Forestry and emergency response reports by the Division of Emergency Management.

In addition, DEP's Web site contains information on current drought conditions throughout the state. Parts of Florida, including South and Southwest Florida, are currently experiencing unusually dry weather that may persist long enough to cause problems such as crop damage and/or water supply shortages. The page contains a weekly drought summary, Florida's Drought Action Plan as well as links to get information on current water restrictions in place throughout the state. For more information, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/em/2007/wildfire/default.htm>

Florida Receives Conservation Planning Grant for Endangered Species

U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today announced more than \$68 million in grants to 21 states and one territory to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered species across the nation. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit species ranging from butterflies to bull trout. "These grants present an invaluable opportunity for states and landowners to work together to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species," said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. "Building conservation partnerships and developing cooperative conservation programs are important tools toward ensuring the survival of species and preventing species from becoming threatened."

Authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the cooperative endangered species fund this year will provide \$7.5 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$47 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program and \$13.9 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. These three programs were established to help reduce potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

Development of a Habitat Conservation Plan for Escambia County Beaches, Florida

(Escambia County, FL): \$492,000. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will use this grant to help develop a multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan for Escambia County's portion of Perdido Key. It will address twelve species including six that are federally listed. The federally endangered Perdido Key beach mouse only lives on Perdido Key. Escambia County's beaches were hit hard by Hurricanes Ivan, Dennis and Katrina in 2004-05. Current pressures to re-develop the area offer an opportunity for citizens, county government and others to work with state and federal agencies to protect endangered and threatened species while at the same time developing a vision for coastal protection and tourism.

Development of a Statewide Habitat Conservation Plan for Florida Beaches (Bay, Brevard, Broward, Citrus, Collier, Lee, Levy, Manatee, Martin, Miami Dade, Monroe, Pasco, Pinellas, St. Johns, St. Lucie, Santa Rose, Sarasota, Dixie, Duval, Escambia, Flagler, Franklin, Gulf, Hernando, Hillsborough, Indian River, Jefferson, Nassau, Okaloosa, Palm Beach, Taylor, Volusia, Wakulla and Walton Counties, FL): \$257,247. This grant will provide funds to start a statewide, coastal, multi-species Habitat Conservation

Plan. The plan will bring partners and stakeholders together to address potential impacts of shoreline coastal construction and to consider protection measures on beach habitat important to 15 federally listed species and two candidate species. The plan will address five species of sea turtles, five subspecies of beach mice, the roseate tern, red knot, Florida scrub jay, and four plants. The Florida coast is particularly susceptible to hurricanes. This planning process will help the State address shoreline protection while also ensuring that the needs of endangered, threatened and at-risk species are addressed in an environmentally acceptable way during shoreline recovery efforts. During the first year, the state will establish a steering committee, hold meetings with local governments and potential partners, determine the specific activities to be covered, and identify avoidance and minimization measures.

Louisiana Legislature Unanimously Adopts CPRA Master Plan as the Blueprint for Coast's Future

The Louisiana House of Representatives unanimously approved the plan Wednesday, marking the last step in the legislative adoption process. Both the master and fiscal year 2008 annual plans were introduced to the legislature April 30 and were unanimously adopted by the both the House and Senate Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Natural Resources as well as the full Senate before being adopted by the full House.

The master plan represents the first time Louisiana's history that the restoration of coastal wetlands has been integrated fully with hurricane protection of coastal communities and the national assets located in the coastal zone. The CPRA's Integrated Planning Team completed the Master Plan in late April of this year after more than a year of extensive research, scientific input, public discussion and stakeholder meetings. The master plan can be viewed at www.lacpra.org/masterplanfinal. The fiscal year 2008 annual plan can be viewed at www.lacpra.org/2008annualplan. For more information, please contact Chris Macaluso in the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities at (225) 342-3968 or by email at chris.macaluso@la.gov.

LA DNR Restoration Project Wins National Honor, Plaquemines Parish Project is Good Example

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) has named the Chalant Headland coastal restoration project as one of America's Top Restored Beaches. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) -- with NOAA's Fisheries Service as the federal sponsor -- performed the restoration work with funds from the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act.

The project involved pumping 1.79 million cubic yards of sand and 950,000 cubic yards of marsh fill to create a three-mile-long beach -- and backing marsh -- designed to protect wetlands against storms and storm surge. The project has restored over 400 acres of habitat but a second phase of the work is expected to benefit another 400 acres. The second phase of the project will go out for construction award later this year.

"Rebuilding barrier islands like this one in Louisiana has significant value because these shores are the first line of defense against storm surges," said DNR Secretary Scott Angelle. "The Chalant Headland is just one part of our ongoing and integrated effort to restore coastal Louisiana and in particular, the Barataria shoreline system near the Mississippi River delta," Angelle said. The Chalant project was completed this year and is located some eight miles from where Hurricane Katrina made landfall in 2005.

Three other similar restoration projects -- Pelican Island, East Grand Terre and Chaland Pass to Grand Bayou Pass -- will create beaches and marshes that will help protect Plaquemines, Orleans, and Jefferson parishes. This recognition is unique because Chaland Headland is the only project honored by the ASBPA that is strictly for coastal protection and habitat restoration. The others are for recreational beaches. ASBPA announced the honor on May 18. The award will be presented at a summit scheduled in Washington D.C. in 2008. For more information on this topic, contact DNR Public Information Director Phyllis Darensbourg at 225-342-8955. Or contact NOAA at 301-713-2370 or ASBPA at 202-232-6574.

Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book Wins National Award

BATON ROUGE, LA (May 22 2007)- The Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book received the 2007 Charter Award, an annual prize awarded by the Congress for New Urbanism honoring projects around the world that promote walkable, neighborhood development as an alternative to urban sprawl. Elizabeth "Boo" Thomas, ASLA, President and CEO of the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX); Ray Gindroz, FAIA, Chairman of Urban Design Associates, the creators of the Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book; and Suzanne Turner, FASLA, who contributed to the Pattern Book's Landscape section, accepted the award on behalf of Louisiana Speaks at an awards ceremony held on May 18, 2007, in conjunction with the fifteenth Congress for New Urbanism in Philadelphia. "The Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book has served as a valuable tool for thousands of residents across Louisiana, guiding the rebuilding of homes and communities safer, stronger and smarter than ever before," said Thomas.

Created as a resource for Louisianians rebuilding in the wake of the 2005 hurricane season, the Pattern Book contains patterns and techniques for building housing, neighborhoods, and towns while remaining true to the values and traditions of the people of Louisiana. It also provides guidance on incorporating green building, hazard-resistant design, and improved construction techniques into the built landscape.

A seven member jury chose the Pattern Book as one of 20 winning professional submissions and 5 student/faculty submissions from 125 entries received from across the country. CNU reports that "[T]he project has given many pride and hope to rebuild in ways that uphold local tradition."

One hundred thousand copies of the Pattern Book were printed due to a generous grant provided by the Fannie Mae Foundation. To date, nearly 75,000 books have been distributed free-of-charge to residents across Louisiana, and CPEX reports that requests have come from places as far as away as Japan and Australia. Pattern books were initially distributed at Lowe's, Stine Lumber Stores and other locally owned building supply stores. The award winning Louisiana Speaks Pattern Book is available for download at www.louisianaspeaks.org.

Governor Blanco Urges Personal Preparedness During Hurricane Season; Launches State Emergency Web Site

BATON ROUGE (May 31, 2007) - Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco took to the aisles of a local supermarket today to urge residents to gather and prepare for the 2007 hurricane season, which begins Friday, June 1. Joined by representatives of the American Red Cross and state agencies, the Governor announced the launch of www.emergency.louisiana.gov, a new Web site linking Louisianans with emergency preparedness resources.

"I remind citizens across South Louisiana to do the simple things that can make a big difference in an emergency," said Governor Blanco. "Tomorrow Louisiana begins what we all hope will be an uneventful

hurricane season. This year, we once again choose not to be afraid, but to be prepared. Preparedness is the first step in protecting our people and communities.

"Today, I am launching www.emergency.louisiana.gov, a new Web site that streamlines important information our people need before, during and after an emergency. This site, developed in partnership with the Division of Administration, contains important preparedness and evacuation information and connects citizens with additional resources. Should disaster strike, Louisiana's Joint Information Center will use this site as a main channel of communication. I encourage citizens to visit the site and sign-up for emergency alerts."

Gov. Blanco greeted shoppers at a Baton Rouge Wal-Mart Supercenter, sharing emergency supply checklists and information about the state's new emergency Web site. Wal-Mart is one of many regional distributors of the Louisiana Citizen Awareness and Disaster Evacuation Guides, which include maps of evacuation routes, contra flow plans, and other information critical for citizens during an emergency. "I am asking citizens to know where to go and what to do," Gov. Blanco said. "On your next shopping trip, pick up the supplies you need for your family's disaster supply kit. Don't wait. Do it this week -- so you have everything you need."

Louisiana Citizen Awareness and Disaster Evacuation Guides are provided by the American Red Cross, Department of Transportation and Development, Department of Social Services, Department of Health & Hospitals, Louisiana State Police, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and other state agencies.

Free copies of the Southwest and Southeast version of the Guide are available primarily in the Greater New Orleans, Lafayette and Lake Charles areas as well as coastal communities. In these areas, citizens may obtain guides at Wal-Mart, Lowes, The Home Depot, Rouses Supermarkets, State Police Troops, Emergency Management offices, and DOTD district offices. Guides are also available in the Governor's office at the State Capitol. A printable version of the guides is available online at www.emergency.louisiana.gov.

Seven CWPPRA Coastal Restoration Projects Celebrated

Grand Chenier, LA – Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Task Force members, state and local leaders, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) officials and the public gathered on the grounds of Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in Cameron Parish to celebrate and view the progress of seven southwest area restoration projects built or currently under construction by state and federal partners at a combined cost of \$55.44 million. With marshes as a backdrop, the dedication ceremony highlighted three U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) projects, three U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) projects and one USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) project that include:

LA-06 Shoreline Protection Foundation Improvements Demonstration

The goal of this demonstration project is to determine the feasibility of shoreline protection structures where a relatively poor soil foundation exists. This goal will be achieved by using sand as a foundation beneath rock dike structures to increase bearing capacity and tolerance of settlement consolidation. This project will be incorporated into the South White Lake Shoreline Protection (ME-22) project. This CWPPRA project was constructed in 2006 and is sponsored by the USACE, with a current cost estimate of \$1.1 million.

ME-22 South White Lake Shoreline Protection

This project is intended to reduce erosion along the southern White Lake shoreline through the construction of a foreshore rock dike and marsh creation. Marsh accretion and creation of submerged aquatic vegetation habitat are expected to occur behind the structure due to the occasional overwash of waves and the reduction of turbidity in the interior open water areas. This CWPPRA project was constructed in 2006 and is sponsored by the USACE, with a current cost estimate of \$19.7 million.

ME-16 Freshwater Introduction South of Hwy 82

This project was authorized to address saltwater intrusion and lack of freshwater and sediment input in the project area. Project components include the installation of approximately eight water-control structures, breaching spoil banks in areas near Louisiana Hwy 82 to allow water to flow across the chenier, and the removal of plugs to facilitate water flow from the Grand Lake-White Lake subbasin south into the Chenier subbasin. This CWPPRA project was constructed in 2006 and is sponsored by the USFWS, with a current cost estimate of \$6.1 million.

ME-19 Grand-White Lakes Landbridge Protection

This project is intended to protect freshwater wetlands by stopping the erosion of the southeastern shoreline of Grand Lake and the western shoreline of Collicon Lake. Project features include construction of hard structure shoreline stabilization and planted earthen terraces to protect the landbridge. This CWPPRA project was constructed in 2004 and is sponsored by the USFWS, with a current cost estimate of \$9.6 million.

CS-29 Black Bayou Culverts Hydrologic Restoration

The objective of this project is to discharge and remove excess water, which has contributed to marsh loss and shoreline erosion. This project consists of installing box culverts with sluice gates in Black Bayou and relocating Louisiana Hwy 384 over the culverts. Operation of the structure will be in coordination with Calcasieu Lock and the Schooner Bayou and Catfish Point water control structures. This CWPPRA project was constructed in 2007 and is sponsored by the NRCS, with a current cost estimate of \$5.4 million.

CS-28 Sabine Refuge Marsh Creation, Cycle 1 and Cycle 3

This project is intended to strategically create marsh in large, open water areas to block wind-induced saltwater introduction and freshwater loss. Additionally, it will increase nourishment in adjacent marshes while reducing open water fetch and erosion of marsh fringe. The project consists of five marsh creation sites (five cycles) within the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge by using material dredged from the Calcasieu River Ship Channel. Cycles 1 and 3 of this CWPPRA project were constructed at a current cost estimate of \$7.02 million. This project is sponsored by the USACE and the USFWS.

CS-32 East Sabine Lake Hydrologic Restoration

This project uses water control structures, shoreline protection, terraces, and vegetation plantings to restore the historical hydrologic regime to approximately 36,623 acres of the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge. Specific goals include reducing elevated salinities within fresh and intermediate marshes, reducing tidal scour, reducing erosion on the eastern shore of Sabine Lake, reducing the turbidity of open water areas, and restoring and protecting marsh. This CWPPRA project was constructed in 2007 and is sponsored by the USFWS and the NRCS, with a current cost estimate of \$6.49 million.

During the 20th century, coastal Louisiana lost 1.2 million acres (1,900 sq. mi.) of land, and if nothing is done, could potentially lose another 430,000 acres (670 sq. mi.) in the next 50 years.

For more information about America's vanishing wetland and efforts to protect and restore it, visit www.LaCoast.gov.

"Bonne Crevette" Kick-Off a Success

The 2007 Bonne Crevette Season (brown and white Louisiana shrimp) is open! The wait is over for chefs of the New Orleans French Quarter, Louisiana's shrimping families and shrimp lovers everywhere. As shrimpers hauled in the first catch of the season, the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board (LSPMB) scooped them up for direct delivery to Quarter chefs on May 15. In a season kick-off event, they brought heightened visibility to wild-caught Louisiana shrimp and the shrimping families who have always made it happen.

At OMNI BANK armed guards loaded blocks of shrimp packaged in gold into an armored truck for delivery to some of the Quarter's most prestigious restaurants. First stop, K-Paul's, where internationally famous Chef Paul Prudhomme waved to the approaching entourage, including shrimping families in horse-drawn carriages, an eight-foot tall dancing shrimp, a Dixieland brass band, local business owners, and other supporters of the shrimping community.

New Orleans Councilman James Carter did the honors, presenting Chef Paul with what shrimpers traditionally have called their catch - bayou gold. "Fishermen are the kingpin of shrimping," said Chef Paul. "These families hold up the whole house of cards, harvesting over 100 million pounds every year. I will always serve wild-caught Louisiana shrimp. Because it's local. Because it's the best."

Jim Hudson, president of OMNI BANK, said, "It's no coincidence that Louisiana shrimpers call it bayou gold. Here at OMNI, we know a good value when we see it and we're proud to be a part of this effort." Ewell Smith, LSPMB executive director, added, "Louisiana chefs didn't become famous cooking chicken or beef. Fresh seafood from our waters is the foundation of our esteemed culinary tradition."

Cathy Blanchard is one of the spirited founding members of Ladies of Lafourche Shrimpers, a group that works to get a fair price for shrimpers at the dock. "This is an excellent event for our industry," Blanchard said. "It helps promote wild domestic Louisiana shrimp. If you want to help, it's simple. Demand Louisiana shrimp. It will make a difference."

At the opening ceremony, French Quarter businessman Mel Ziegler announced an upcoming sister event. The New Orleans Seafood Festival is a grand, weekend celebration of Louisiana's culinary and music heritage. It is staged in the French Quarter at the Louisiana State Museum's Old U.S. Mint, June 8-10. For recipes and seafood suppliers, go to <http://LouisianaShrimp.com>. For more information, contact Sara-Ann Harris at 504-283-8292 or SaraAnn@LouisianaSeafood.com.

LaHouse Open for Hurricane Resistance Days

BATON ROUGE – LSU AgCenter's LaHouse – a model home that showcases storm resistant building practices – will have extended hours June 14-17 for Hurricane Resistance Days. Located on Louisiana State University's Baton Rouge campus, LaHouse is designed to educate homeowners, home buyers and the building industry on ways to create homes that are built for the hot-humid climate, are energy efficient and resist damage from hurricanes and termites, while minimizing adverse impacts on the environment.

Along with extended hours and guided tours during Hurricane Resistance Days, there will be short presentations on topics ranging from flood maps, flood insurance and storm-surge modeling, to choosing and working with a contractor and making your home more flood, wind and water resistant.

The Hurricane Resistance Days schedule is:

Thursday, June 14 – noon to 7 p.m.

Friday, June 15 – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday, June 16 – 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sunday, June 17 – noon to 7 p.m.

LaHouse is located near the southwest corner of campus, off Gourrier Lane. Driving directions, up-to-date program information, a schedule of presentations and list of participating agencies and vendors are available at www.BuildSaferStrongerSmarter.org.

Hurricane Resistance Days at LaHouse is part of the LSU AgCenter's "Build Safer, Stronger, Smarter" initiative. LaHouse is built through a public-private partnership. Representatives of FEMA mitigation, mapping and insurance programs; the Capital Region Builders Association and donors of high-performance building systems and materials used in LaHouse construction will be on site for the event. LaHouse is an ongoing construction site. Persons with accessibility issues should call 225/281-4609 so accommodations can be made.

Bay St. Louis Bridge Open

JACKSON, MISS., Thursday, May 17, 2007--The Mississippi Gulf Coast marked a milestone in Katrina recovery today with the Mississippi Department of Transportation's (MDOT) highly anticipated opening of the first two lanes of the new U.S. Highway 90 St. Louis Bay Bridge, linking the communities of Bay St. Louis and Henderson Point.

The ceremony took place at 2 p.m. on the west side of the bridge. MDOT, along with federal, state and local dignitaries, initiated the ceremony followed by two busloads of participants taking a short ride to the top of the bridge for the tying together of a huge ribbon signifying the communities are once again connected. Participants then traveled to the Henderson Point side of the bridge and back again.

"The opening of two lanes of this bridge is symbolic of the recovery of the coast," said Southern District Transportation Commissioner Wayne Brown. "We encouraged the public to participate in celebrating this significant milestone." "Bridges are vital to daily life for area residents," stated MDOT Executive Director Larry L. "Butch" Brown. "We are pleased that rapid progress for this massive project enables us to reestablish two lanes of bridge traffic, improving mobility and quality of life for residents of the Mississippi Gulf Coast."

The bridge is being completed under a \$266.8 million design-build contract with Granite Archer Western, a joint venture of Granite Construction Company of Watsonville, California, and Archer Western Contractors of Atlanta, Georgia. URS, a consulting engineering firm experienced in design-build projects, is providing project oversight on behalf of MDOT. According to Commissioner Brown, "On March 8, 2006, demolition crews began to complete what Hurricane Katrina started in order to get prepared for the first piling for the new bridge which took place on June 7, 2006. Now, approximately ten months after the original bridge was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, a celebration of re-connectivity for the Mississippi Gulf Coast is taking place."

When completed, the new bridge will have four 12-foot-wide lanes (two in each direction) separated by a concrete median barrier, with an eight-foot-wide inside shoulder and a 10-foot-wide outside shoulder. It will also feature a 12-foot-wide shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists alongside the eastbound vehicle lanes. The new structure will provide approximately 85 feet of vertical clearance to accommodate marine traffic.

Mississippi Draft CIAP Plan Available for Review through June 11

BILOXI, Miss. – After almost a year of planning and development, the draft Mississippi Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) Plan is available for public review. Gov. Haley Barbour made the announcement today to a packed house of more than 400 attendees at the Coastal Development Strategies Conference held at the IP Casino Resort Spa in Biloxi. Mississippi's CIAP plan describes how the state, through its lead agency, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the three coastal counties recommend spending about \$120 million for coastal conservation projects.

“We've collaborated with the county boards of supervisors, cities, other agencies, non-profits and many advisors on the creation of a comprehensive and unified plan to implement the CIAP program in Mississippi,” said Dr. William Walker, DMR Executive Director. “Our plan proposes implementing 111 projects through subgrants to cities, agencies and non-profits over the next eight years that will vastly improve the health of our coastal ecology.”

CIAP funds will be allocated to the state and coastal counties during fiscal years 2007 through 2010 from Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas revenues managed by the U.S. Department of Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS). The Energy Policy Act of 2005 created the CIAP program to provide funds to: 1) conserve, protect and restore coastal areas; 2) mitigate for damage to fish, wildlife and natural resources; 3) implement a federally approved marine, coastal or comprehensive conservation management plan; and 4) mitigate the impact of OCS activities through funding of onshore infrastructure projects and public service needs.

DMR was named by Gov. Haley Barbour as the lead agency responsible for developing the state plan to fund projects that will meet the purposes of the CIAP and to coordinate with Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties on the development of their recommended projects. The draft plan, released today, includes detailed descriptions of each proposed project and an overview of how the state and counties will cooperate on the management of the CIAP program over the next several years. “We crafted a comprehensive plan from the hundreds of proposals we received last fall,” said Tina Shumate, Mississippi CIAP Coordinator and Director of DMR's Office of Coastal Management Planning. “The projects include land acquisition for green spaces and habitat, ecotourism and education projects, water quality, utilities, invasive species, air quality and many other areas. It is a very diverse plan with many, many partners.”

The plan will be available for review and comment online at www.dmr.state.ms.us/ciap until 5 p.m. on June 11, 2007. Hard copies are available at the DMR office in Biloxi and at the Hancock, Harrison and Jackson County Courthouses. For more information on CIAP, visit DMR online or call (228) 523-4122. “Once all public comments have been received and incorporated, we will send the final plan to MMS for their approval. If it meets all the requirements and is approved, we hope to begin funding and implementing projects late this year,” said Shumate.

MS State Officers Join Forces to Protect Boaters in Marine Waters

BILOXI, Miss. – With more than 55,900 recreational boats registered in the three coastal counties, Mississippi's State Marine Patrol officers—working side-by-side with Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks conservation officers—will be out protecting the lives of Mississippi's boaters over the long holiday weekend. Because of a cooperative agreement reached between the two state agencies in 2003, the Department of Marine Resources is able to increase patrols on Mississippi's marine waters during times of high-volume boating traffic, such as the busy Memorial Day weekend.

“We have developed this cooperative enforcement agreement with Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, for one reason—to save lives,” said William Walker, DMR’s Executive Director. “This allows us to increase patrols during times of high-volume traffic on our marine waters, like the busy Memorial Day holiday weekend. We’re grateful to our sister agency, and their Director, Dr. Sam Polles, for their willingness to work with us to ensure the safety of Mississippi’s boaters.” Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks has assigned nine conservation officers and three enforcement boats to work with the DMR’s State Marine Patrol in the coastal and marine waters south of Interstate 10 from May 26 through May 28.

So don’t be surprised if the vessel that approaches you to do a safety check on your boat next weekend has officers onboard dressed in green rather than Marine Patrol blue. Officers from both law enforcement agencies will be patrolling the marine waters north and south of Interstate 10 from May 26 through May 28, stepping up enforcement of no wake zones, and checking boaters for life jackets and other required safety equipment to ensure a safe holiday for everyone enjoying recreational boating along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Mississippi’s no wake zone law states that “within 100 feet of any public boat launching ramp facility and within 100 feet adjacent to any small craft harbor, commercial harbor or public marina” are designated no wake zones. “Boaters should be aware that the boater is responsible for his wake,” said State Marine Patrol Chief of Enforcement Col. Walter Chataginer. “And they can be held liable by law for any damage caused by their wake.”

Governor Barbour Announces Grants to Help Revitalize Coastal Communities

(Jackson, Mississippi) – Governor Haley Barbour today announced approval of more than \$97.2 million in grants to help with post-Katrina revitalization projects in 15 coastal communities, ranging from new fire stations in Bay St. Louis, Moss Point, Picayune, Poplarville and Waveland to a county services complex in Jackson County. “Many of these grants will help implement ideas generated shortly after Hurricane Katrina during the ‘charrette’ process undertaken by the Governor’s Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal. That comprehensive early work with leaders from business, education, government and, in fact, all walks of local community life is paying dividends today. These projects will help restore many public resources on the Mississippi Coast, greatly improving day-to-day life for residents and helping the region come back stronger than ever,” Governor Barbour said.

In addition, Governor Barbour said a total of \$7.2 million in grants have been approved to help communities plan for new growth and development, an important element in recovery efforts. “The issue of how best to manage growth and development is important to the long-term economic health of the Coast. This funding will help local communities find what works best for them.”

Case Dismissed: Judge Finds Texas Open Beaches Act Constitutional

AUSTIN — Late Wednesday, United States District Judge Kenneth M. Hoyt dismissed a lawsuit by a California resident that claimed Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson’s enforcement of the Texas Open Beaches Act to be unconstitutional. “This comes as no surprise,” Patterson said. “The law is clear. Texas beaches belong to Texans — all Texans.” Patterson said he hopes that with the court battle over, he will be able to work cooperatively with all property owners whose structures obstruct public access to the beach. “I’d much rather work with property owners than fight with them in court,” Patterson said. “Working together, we can ensure a fair deal for the property owners and keep Texas beaches open to the public.”

Carol Severance, a California resident, filed the lawsuit. Severance owns three rental properties in Galveston that, due to erosion, are on the public beach. Severance purchased the rental properties in 2005. Her properties at the time were already completely, or partially, on the public beach. Under the Texas Open Beaches Act, Patterson may petition the courts to authorize the removal of any structure on the public beach to ensure the public's access. In 2006, Patterson notified several property owners, including Severance, that he might seek to remove any houses on the public beach and offered financial assistance to move the houses. Instead, Severance filed the lawsuit that was dismissed on Wednesday.

While Severance's claims were being considered, 14 other property owners along the coast accepted Patterson's offer of financial assistance to move their houses off the beach. Others have also expressed an interest in Patterson's relocation expense reimbursement plan, and houses continue to move off the public beaches. Patterson's relocation expense reimbursement program is an attempt to balance the right of public access to Texas beaches with the interests of property owners whose houses wind up in the public beach easement due to erosion, Patterson said.

Patterson's Plan for Texas Open Beaches seeks to avoid costly and time-consuming litigation by offering help to property owners to remove their structures from the public beach. Patterson made \$1.3 million in state money immediately available on an expense reimbursement basis to remove qualified houses from the public beach. He also is seeking additional funding for this effort. Patterson's Plan for Texas Open Beaches presents eight proposals, some of which include legislative measures under consideration by the 80th legislature. For more information on Patterson's Texas Open Beaches Enforcement Policy or Plan for Texas Open Beaches, visit <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/beachdune/openbeaches.html>.

Public to Have Say on Coastal Management

Texas Coastal Management Program hosts public meetings in Galveston and Corpus Christi
AUSTIN — Public input is needed to make sure a federal effort to manage the coasts gets a Texas perspective. The Texas Coastal Management Program urges Texans with an interest in the coast to participate in one of two public meetings in Galveston and Corpus Christi. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Coastal States Organization will use input from the meetings as part of a nationwide effort to improve coastal management.

The Texas Coastal Management Program will host meetings at the following dates and locations:

- **Galveston — June 12 at Texas A&M University at Galveston:** 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, June 12 at Texas A&M University at Galveston, Classroom Laboratory Building, Room 100, 200 Seawolf Parkway
- **Corpus Christi — June 26 at Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi:** 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, June 26 at Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, Carlos R. Truan Natural Resource Center, Room 1003, 6300 Ocean Drive

The meetings will help shape legislation being submitted to Congress later this year. During the meetings, Texas Coastal Management Program staff will present *Envisioning the Future of Coastal Management*, a joint effort of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Coastal States Organization, followed by a facilitated comment session. To allow the Texas Coastal Management Program staff to better prepare for these meetings, please notify Ben Rhame at ben.rhame@glo.state.tx.us if you plan to attend or if you have any questions. If you are unable to attend, you are welcome to submit your comments via the Internet. Additional information about the envisioning project and submitting online comments can be found at http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/czm/czma_vision.html.

Great Texas Birding Classic Winnings Fund Conservation

AUSTIN, Texas — With 320 species identified, the Environmental Partners birding team, sponsored by Reliant Energy, racked up its third consecutive first-place finish at the 11th annual Great Texas Birding Classic hosted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. Each year, winning teams allocate prize money to fund Texas wildlife habitat conservation and restoration projects approved by the Birding Classic staff.

Seven coastal habitat projects will share \$73,000 from contributions by corporate sponsors, team entry fees, community and individual donations, and a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Texas Coastal Program. “A number of the projects this year are restoration projects on land that has already been set aside,” said Carol Jones, Education Program Manager for the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. “A common thread among several projects this year is to remove invasive, nonnative species and replace them with native flora that better support birds and wildlife.” For example, Jones said the Bushnell-sponsored Butcherbirds team, who placed third in this year’s competition, donated their \$10,000 in prize money to the Texas City Prairie Preserve in Galveston County to remove a nonnative plant that is threatening to drive the Attwater’s Prairie Chicken to extinction. Funds were also donated to purchase land for future conservation and restoration efforts.

The Environmental Partners have allocated their \$20,000 first-place prize to the Columbia Bottomlands Conservation Project for the acquisition of key tracts of migratory bird habitat. Already, the project has conserved more than 14,000 acres of prime avian habitat. To date, the Great Texas Birding Classic has raised \$578,000 for wildlife conservation efforts along the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. “The Birding Classic has helped raise awareness that we need to preserve wildlife habitat not only for our resident birds, but also for our migratory birds to rest and refuel,” said Jones.

Other projects funded with prize money from the Great Texas Birding Classic include the following: \$10,000 from the second-place Cranes Team, sponsored by ConocoPhillips, will go to the Goose Island Walkway to Wetland Wildlife project to construct an 85-foot-long walkway for public access to the western half of Goose Island State Park. \$10,000 from the Lower Coast winners, the Swarovski-sponsored Roadside Hawks, will go to the Sabal Palm Audubon Center to restore wildlife habitat in Cameron County near Brownsville. In Nueces County near Corpus Christi, the Packery Channel Sanctuary Habitat will receive \$10,000 from the LSU Tiger-Heron team, sponsored by Zeiss, winners of the Central Coast region. Proceeds will help restore habitat that is native to the barrier island. The winners from the Upper Coast, the TAMUG Xtreme Birding Team, sponsored by AEP Texas, will donate their \$10,000 prize winnings toward restorations on the Horseshoe Marsh Prairie in Port Bolivar, Galveston County.

The \$3,000 prize for the Lone Star Bird Award, won by the Nikon and WildBird magazine-sponsored WildBirders team, will go to the Coastal Sanctuary Understory Diversification project, which aims to remove invasive species from coastal lands in Chambers County. For more information on the Great Texas Birding Classic, visit the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Web site: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/birding/gtbc/>.

Texas Ships Bass to Mississippi for Hurricane Recovery

ATHENS, Texas—When two massive hurricanes severely damaged the freshwater fisheries throughout Mississippi in 2006, Ron Garavelli, Director of the Mississippi Fisheries Bureau, did exactly what anyone in a disaster situation does—he turned to his neighbors for help. Garavelli went to the annual meeting of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in Norfolk, Virginia, in October 2006 and appealed to the directors of wildlife agencies from other states for help. Phil Durocher, Director of the Inland Fisheries Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and Robert L. Cook, Executive Director of TPWD, were at the meeting, and they quickly agreed to help.

Fast forward to May 23, 2007, the peak of the largemouth bass spawning season in Texas. Early that morning fisheries technicians and biologists at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) in Athens loaded 250,000 Florida largemouth bass fingerlings on a truck and sent them on their way to the Turcotte Fish Hatchery just north of Jackson, Mississippi. From there the fish were distributed to lakes in northern and western Mississippi. “The fish from Texas allow us to use fish from our Gulf Coast hatcheries for stocking coastal streams while maintaining our management practices in other lakes as well,” said Tom Holman, Fisheries Coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Parks. “We had offers of help from virtually every southeastern state.”

Providing the fish required no special effort on the part of Texas, said Jim Matthews, Hatchery Manager at TFFC. “We raise as many Florida largemouth bass as we can every year, and we are never able to produce enough to meet all our stocking requests,” Matthews said. “We simply put Mississippi at the top of the priority list to receive fish. It’s typical to have interstate cooperation. They help us when we need it, and we help them when they need it.”

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service lent a hand as well. “We got involved because we are the most convenient facility for delivering the fish from Texas to Mississippi,” said Karen Kilpatrick, Manager of the Natchitoches [Louisiana] National Fish Hatchery. “We are centrally located, and we have a big truck—normally used for stocking paddlefish—that holds 900 gallons and can carry that many fingerling bass.” While it might seem unusual for fish from Texas, South Carolina, Kentucky and Alabama to wind up swimming in Mississippi waters, it’s really no big deal, says Kilpatrick. “This is just another routine thing we do for the resource,” she said. “We do this kind of thing every single day for the public to be able to enjoy the legacy and the heritage of fishing, hurricane or not.”

Mississippi anglers will benefit for years from the aid offered by their neighbors. “Our freshwater habitat took a real hit,” said Garavelli. “Massive fish kills resulted from saltwater intrusion caused by the storm surge and from oxygen depletion as debris washed into lakes and rivers decayed. This stocking will increase the chances of a quick comeback of those species lost as a result of the storms.”

Texas’ World Birding Center Taking Wing

MISSION, Texas — Ten years after planning began to launch the World Birding Center in Texas’ Lower Rio Grande Valley, the ambitious project to restore wildlife habitat and promote birding and nature tourism has taken off and is gaining altitude. Comprised of nine sites strung along 120 miles of the Rio Grande corridor from Roma to South Padre Island, the WBC encompasses everything from saltwater flats and riparian woodlands to thick Tamaulipan thornscrub and palm-fringed resacas that attract an incomparable diversity of bird species.

As the WBC Web site notes: “The Rio Grande Valley hosts one of the most spectacular convergences of birds on earth. More than 500 species have been documented in this unique place.” And, some of the best places to see specialty birds of the Valley, such as the green jay, great kiskadee and Altamira oriole, are the two state parks run by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department that are currently open and six locally operated WBC sites.

Only TPWD’s **Resaca de la Palma State Park** near Brownsville has yet to open, but is expected to welcome visitors sometime this fall as the final link in the WBC chain. Resaca de la Palma will feature 1,700 semitropical acres etched by ancient curves of the Rio Grande that will nicely complement the other WBC sites, according to Russell Fishbeck, the South Texas region’s state parks director. “The managers of the various World Birding Center sites have worked pretty well together when they’ve needed to share staff and other resources,” Fishbeck said. “It’s hard to pinpoint the visitation numbers throughout the network, but the sites are really starting to connect with the local customer base through school programs and family nature events.”

TPWD’s executive director, Robert L. Cook believes, too, in the WBC’s educational mission and the Valley’s unique natural heritage. “The World Birding Center,” he explained, “is important for wildlife conservation and sustainable economic development, but its lasting impact may come through youth involvement and education. “The Lower Rio Grande Valley is one of the most biologically diverse ecological regions in North America and a critical migratory stopover point for birds that move between the Americas. Yet, more than three-quarters of the region’s original wildlife habitat has been replaced by human development. The WBC showcases ways to restore and protect habitat while providing a tourism destination that puts people directly in touch with nature and wildlife.”

TPWD operates both the headquarters of the far-flung World Birding Center at **Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park** near Mission and the recently opened **Estero Llano Grande State Park** in Weslaco. Estero Llano Grande features almost 200 acres of reclaimed wetlands that teem with birds and other wildlife. Six other WBC sites have been built and are operated by local communities in Edinburg, Harlingen, Hidalgo, McAllen, Roma, and South Padre Island. The \$7 million WBC headquarters includes an exhibit hall, lecture hall, gift shop, coffee bar and administrative offices on a former 60-acre farm field that has been replanted with native South Texas vegetation. Other elements include the hawk viewing tower, two bird viewing blinds with water features to attract birds, a flooded habitat courtyard that draws butterflies and birds, tram service to transport visitors within the park, and miles of hiking trails. More than 300 bird and almost 200 butterfly species have been documented at the 760-acre sanctuary only minutes from fast-growing Valley communities.

The advent of the WBC has been an economic boon to the Valley economy, which has suffered agricultural setbacks in recent years. Wildlife watchers from outside the region are estimated to generate more than \$100 million annually in new tourism dollars for the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Economic development motives, as well as the drive to conserve rapidly disappearing habitat, help explain the involvement of six major Rio Grande Valley municipalities in the World Birding Center.

South Padre Island and Nature Center bookends the string of WBC sites at the southern tip of the world’s longest barrier island. A boardwalk nature trail adjacent to the city’s convention center spans a marsh all the way to wildlife-rich Laguna Madre. Interpretive panels and bird blinds enhance the experience. A 10,000-square-foot visitor center, lengthening of the boardwalk and addition of two more bird blinds are on the drawing board.

For details on the World Birding Center, see the Web site or phone (956) 584-9156. Photos, maps and graphics are available for news media use on the TPWD Web site at http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/news_images/?g=world_birding_center.

Texas Receives Land Acquisition Grant for Endangered Species

U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today announced more than \$68 million in grants to 21 states and one territory to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered species across the nation. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit species ranging from butterflies to bull trout. "These grants present an invaluable opportunity for states and landowners to work together to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species," said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. "Building conservation partnerships and developing cooperative conservation programs are important tools toward ensuring the survival of species and preventing species from becoming threatened."

Authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the cooperative endangered species fund this year will provide \$7.5 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$47 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program and \$13.9 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. These three programs were established to help reduce potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

Whooping Crane Seadrift Habitat (Calhoun County, TX): \$412,750. This project proposes to acquire a conservation easement by The Nature Conservancy to preserve the 2,160-acre J. Welder Ranch, an area of coastal marsh that is optimal habitat for the endangered whooping crane and brown pelican, and the threatened piping plover. Increasing commercial and residential development pressures within, and adjacent to, currently used whooping crane habitat in Aransas and Calhoun counties make the need for habitat protection measures paramount for the recovery of these species.

Energy

Florida Park Service Adds Solar Powered Ferry to Fleet

DELAND – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Hontoon Island State Park and the Hontoon Island Foundation Citizen Support Organization, Inc. have completed a three month renovation project which included attaching four solar panels to the park's electric powered ferry. "This is an example of the kind of innovative technologies that can reduce our oil dependence and protect the environment," said head of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration John Bobo.

The Hontoon Island Ferry was converted to all electric approximately 12 years ago and has been transporting passengers and their equipment with a perfect safety record ever since. The ferry last year alone transported over 26,000 passengers. "This addition has reduced our need to plug into the grid to charge the ferry's batteries by approximately 50 percent which allows the park to direct the savings to other needs," said Hontoon Island Park Manager Mike Hayes. "This has given us the opportunity to educate visitors on the positive use of alternative energy and has generated much interest."

Hontoon Island State Park is located along the St. Johns River in Volusia County and welcomes visitors to enjoy Florida's nature and history. The island is accessible only by private boat or park ferry. Evidence of Native American habitation over thousands of years can be witnessed as visitors hike through the park.

Boating, canoeing, and fishing are popular activities and canoe rentals are available. Picnic areas include tables, grills and a playground. The park's ferry operates daily from 8:00 a.m. to one hour before sunset. For more information on Florida's state parks, visit www.FloridaStateParks.org.

Report Confirms Continued Energy Expansion into Deepwater Gulf of Mexico

HOUSTON — More than half of the active oil and gas leases in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) are in water depths greater than 1,000 feet. This continued expansion into the Gulf's deepwater is detailed in the latest deepwater report released today by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) at the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston. The report, [Deepwater Gulf of Mexico 2007: Interim Report of 2006 Highlights](#), chronicles the activities of the oil and gas industry in the deepwater (1,000 ft of water or more) Gulf over the past fifteen years. "There's solid evidence in both leasing and exploration activities to confirm the oil and gas industry's continued interest and motivation to explore and develop the deepwater frontier in the Gulf of Mexico," said Lars Herbst, acting GOM regional director, MMS. "In 2006, there were 12 new deepwater discoveries announced by oil and gas operators with the deepest being in 7,600 feet of water."

In 2006, 70 percent of the oil and 40 percent of the gas produced in the GOM region came from deepwater leases. Another indicator of the industry's commitment to producing in deepwater is the record number of technology approvals given in 2006 for use in deeper water depths. "MMS granted 30 new technology approvals in 2006," noted Herbst. "This set a record for the number of approvals for first – time use of technology in deepwater." The leasing activity also showed an increase in interest in deepwater. From 2005 to 2006, the number of tracts in 1,500 to 4,999 feet water depth range receiving bids increased by 32 percent while the number of tracts in 5,000 to 7,499 feet water depth range receiving bids increased by 29 percent.

You can telephone 1-800-200-GULF or (504) 736-2519 local. Ask for OCS Report MMS 2007-021, Deepwater Gulf of Mexico 2007: Interim Report of 2006 Highlights. The entire report, in Adobe's PDF format, can be found on the [MMS website](#).

Other News

MMS Develops Hurricane Web Page

WASHINGTON – To mark the beginning of Hurricane Season 2007, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS), today activated a web site that brings together extensive hurricane-related information and resources. The web site is designed to help describe and explain the preparations in advance of this hurricane season and the improvements instituted since Hurricane Season 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita cut a destructive path through the Gulf of Mexico and surrounding land mass region. The enhancements reinforce MMS's emphasis on supporting personnel safety, enhancing environmental protection, and improving the nation's energy security.

The website will be updated throughout the season with all available information regarding hurricane activity related to Gulf of Mexico energy operations. In addition to information in many subject areas ranging from safety and personnel evacuations to environmental studies and technological improvements,

the web site will also contain a section of historical hurricane data, a selection of photographs, statistics on the status of energy resources in the Gulf, and a list of hurricane-related terms, definitions, and fact sheets. The site may be accessed at: <http://www.mms.gov/2007Hurricane/2007HurricaneSeason.htm>.

200-year-old Shipwreck to be Recovered in Gulf of Mexico

NEW ORLEANS — The archaeological excavation of a historic shipwreck located in Federal waters 40 miles off the Louisiana coast begins today when archaeologists from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) and Texas A&M University's Department of Oceanography and Nautical Archaeology Program depart for the shipwreck site which lies in 4,000 feet of water. The record water depth makes it the deepest shipwreck in the world ever to be scientifically excavated for a non-commercial purpose.

Funded by the Okeanos Gas Gathering Company (OGGC) through an agreement with the MMS, the expedition team will excavate the shipwreck which was discovered along the route of a gas pipeline in what was then the Mardi Gras Gas Transportation System operated by OGGC. The pipeline which gathers natural gas from deepwater fields in the Gulf is now operated by BP America and an Enbridge Inc. subsidiary. "This wreck dates from an extremely fascinating and important time in the history of the Gulf of Mexico," said MMS Acting Regional Director Lars Herbst, "This ship likely sailed around the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the War of 1812, and the infamous buccaneer Jean Lafitte. Its recovery will tell a story about what life at sea was like at that time that cannot be found in the history books."

The actual identity of the ship is not yet known; archaeologists have dubbed it the "Mardi Gras Shipwreck" after the pipeline where it was found. Very little is known about the ship. Using deep sea robots called Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) scientists have been able to view the wreck through cameras in depths that are many times deeper than divers could reach and would crush most manned submersibles. What archaeologists have seen so far has caused them to speculate that the ship was a small merchant vessel or, possibly, a privateer and that it sank sometime between 1780 and 1820. The ship carried a cannon and a wooden chest filled with small arms, such as pistols, muskets, and swords.

Because of the great depth of the shipwreck, where the weight of sea water exerts almost 1,700 pounds of pressure per square inch, the excavation will rely entirely on a robotic ROV operating from a 265-foot long ship positioned over the site. Both the ship and ROV are under contract with Veolia Environmental Services, the world's second-largest waste services company. The ROV is equipped with special tools to be able to photograph, map, and recover artifacts as fragile as an hourglass, of which at least three have been seen so far on the shipwreck, or as large as the cast-iron ship's stove, one of only four such stoves known to exist in the world. A web site, hosted by the Florida Public Archaeology Network, will provide regular updates from the expedition team. The public will be able to take part in the discoveries as they are made at sea by visiting <http://www.flpublicarchaeology.org/mardigras/>. Artifacts recovered from the site will be donated to the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism for display at one of the facilities of the Louisiana State Museum.

MMS Receives Awards for Study of Shipwrecks as Artificial Reefs

Study Confirms Potential of Deep Water Oil and Gas Structures to Increase Marine Life Habitats
NEW ORLEANS – Deep sea wrecks act as artificial reefs, attracting far more species of plants and animals than expected, marine scientists report in a new award-winning study just released by Minerals Management Service (MMS). The finding indicates that oil and gas production platforms in deep water are likely to serve as hard surface, supporting hundreds of life forms. The MMS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Ocean Exploration funded this study. This project represents the first time that these two agencies have partnered through the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP). This resourceful partnership earned the study two awards: the Department of the Interior's Cooperative Conservation Award received in 2006 and more recently, NOPP's Excellence in Partnering Award.

The scientists at C&C Technologies of Lafayette, Louisiana, the contractor for the study, investigated seven shipwrecks, including a German U-2 submarine and some of its targets. The ships lie in water ranging from 400 to 6,500 feet deep. "The biological analyses conducted during this investigation concluded that as petroleum exploration and production expands into deeper Gulf waters, platforms potentially could provide a habitat for marine life," said Lars Herbst, acting Regional Director of the MMS Gulf of Mexico OCS Region. "By studying the artificial reef effect of World War II shipwrecks, this research may help us determine the potential effects of deep-sea drilling structures on biological communities," he added.

Wrecks in moderate depths gave researchers clear evidence of many rare and uncommon invertebrate species in close proximity to the wrecks and on the wrecks themselves. The number of species and individuals declined rapidly in proportion to distance away from the wrecks, showing that these wrecks form an attractive habitat for many kinds of marine life. Wrecks at these intermediate depths had 50 percent more species than those in shallower water or deeper water. Shallower water wrecks, likely because of turbidity, and deeper water wrecks because of the extreme conditions of cold, darkness, and pressure, hosted a smaller number of species.

The scientists reported, among other findings, that the diversity of fish species generally decreases with depth. At the shallower water wrecks, where corals were growing, reef fishes were present. At the deepest water wrecks, no corals were found, nor were community structure and fish density significantly different over the wrecks as opposed to away from them. Therefore, scientists conclude that, in the deepest water, the upper levels of offshore platforms will attract considerable marine life, but the platforms are not likely to attract fish at their deepest levels.

The marine archaeology part of the study positively confirmed the identity of three wrecks, and found a relationship among water depth, ship size, and the size of the debris field. The state of preservation of the wrecks was correlated with water depth. No wreck was found to be contaminating or adversely affecting the area around them. The report, *Archaeological and Biological Analysis of World War II Shipwrecks in the Gulf of Mexico: Artificial Reef Effect in Deep Water* (MMS 2007-015), is available from the MMS Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1-800-200-GULF on compact disc only.

Gulf Guardian Awards for 2007

The Gulf of Mexico Program announces applications for the Gulf Guardian Awards for 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.

[Gulf Guardian Award application](#)
[Gulf of Mexico Program](#)

Report: Beachgoers Can Expect Good Conditions

America's beach scorecard topped 95 percent during 2006, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's just-released Annual Beach Report. Of more than 676,000 beach days, fewer than five percent were restricted due to contamination-related closings. More than half of the actions lasted for two days or less. More than 3,700 beaches were monitored by 35 states and territories under EPA's Beach Program. Fewer beaches were in the program than in 2005 due to consolidations and corrected state survey data. Beach contamination often results from stormwater running off streets, fields, forests, and other sources.

"We're seeing progress in keeping America's beaches clean but significant challenges remain," said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles. "The administration is committed to working with our partners to prevent pollution, monitor water quality, and provide the public with timely and useful information on beach closures and advisories." (Beach days are those counted during the customary beach season for a given area. Many are seasonal, although beach days may be counted for most or all of a calendar year in warmer climates.)

EPA and its state partners are improving data collection and reporting, which will provide a more complete picture of the nation's beaches. The EPA Beach Grant program has made available \$62 million to 35 coastal and Great Lakes states and territories since the passage of the BEACH Act in 2000. The funding level for beach monitoring will continue at \$9.9 million this year. EPA beach research centers on new and ongoing activities meant to establish benchmarks, explore emerging technologies and refine methodology. Each of these actions is focused on preventing the pollution that can make the beaches and waters unsafe:

- development of a new test for water-borne pathogens that will provide results within two hours
- research to determine the incidence of health effects associated with beach water
- uncovering and correcting sources of disease-causing microorganisms
- working with communities to help build and properly operate their sewage treatment plants and end sewage overflows from outdated sewer systems
- implementing a national storm water program to reduce urban runoff
- working with the Coast Guard to improve sewage and other waste disposal from recreational boats and other vessels

[2006 Beach Report and National Summary: epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/seasons/2006](http://epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/seasons/2006)

[Historical information about specific beaches: epa.gov/waterscience/beacon/](http://epa.gov/waterscience/beacon/)

[General information about the beaches program: epa.gov/beaches/](http://epa.gov/beaches/)

Federal Emergency Management Agency Launches Call Center, Web Site for Flood Map Information

[» More Information on Mississippi Hurricane Katrina](#)

BILOXI, Miss. -- Property owners in Jackson, Harrison and Hancock Counties are getting two new resources—a call center and a Web site—that will provide them with information on the work being done to produce the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) being released later this year. Both are being rolled out June 4 by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). "We are pleased to provide these new resources for the residents of coastal Mississippi. People who have questions about the maps, the adoption process, or where to go for more technical information can visit the Web site or phone the call center for information or referrals," said Dennis Kizziah, acting director of FEMA's Mississippi Transitional Recovery Office.

The Mississippi Coastal Mapping Project Web site, www.mscoastalmapping.com, contains information on the status of the mapping effort, the National Flood Insurance Program, FEMA's flood map modernization effort, and other project-related activities. The Web site is designed to be a hub of information for a variety of audiences and is organized to be easy to use. The Web site includes information for:

- Homeowners, business owners and the general public
- Federal, state and local officials
- Builders, developers, floodplain managers, engineers, surveyors and architects
- Real estate, insurance and lending industry professionals
- News media

Frequently asked questions, fact sheets, and a glossary of terms and acronyms are available online. The site also contains a comprehensive list of links to other federal, state, and community Web sites related to the Mississippi Coastal Mapping project. Once the preliminary flood maps are released, the Web site also will link to these maps.

The Mississippi Coastal Mapping Call Center opens on June 4 to provide additional information or referrals for both general and technical questions. The call center will be open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CDT. Call toll free at **1-866-816-2804**. FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

FEMA Approves Over Half Million Dollars in Planning Grants

[» More Information on Louisiana Hurricane Katrina](#)

[» More Information on Louisiana Hurricane Rita](#)

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently approved funding to update existing hazard mitigation plans for the city of Covington and four Louisiana parishes - Plaquemines, Washington, Vermilion and Terrebonne. The more than half a million dollars in grant monies comes from FEMA's Expanded Mitigation Strategies Planning Grant Pilot. The program allows jurisdictions with FEMA-approved local hazard mitigation plans in place by Oct. 29, 2006, to apply for up to \$150,000 to update their local mitigation plans. These updates will reduce the potential loss of life and property in future disasters. After submitting proposed updates, the city of Covington and the four parishes qualified for grants worth \$112,500 each.

The city of Covington will strengthen its current hazard mitigation plan by analyzing projects that arose after hurricanes Katrina and Rita and any subsequent hazard events. Updates to the plan include adding a list of properties with flood and drainage problems or severe repetitive loss. The city will also identify critical facilities in need of hardening and/or elevation. "Our current plan was finalized in the wake and frenzy of Hurricane Katrina," said Covington Mayor Candace Watkins. "This grant gives us a second chance to go back and focus on amending the plan to fit our needs, after having experienced the type of disaster we hope to mitigate. We are very pleased to have this funding."

Three parishes, Plaquemines, Terrebonne and Vermilion, have earmarked funds to scope out hazard mitigation projects as well. Along with focusing on projects resulting from the effects of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, these parishes are taking into consideration the Advisory Base Flood Elevations, levee condition data, base mapping for flood prone areas and coastal erosion photography. "Plaquemines is unique because it runs along both sides of the Mississippi River," said Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser. "This funding will help identify projects to reduce the potential for losses. Because we stick out into the gulf we have lots of challenges to deal with."

Terrebonne Parish President Don Schwab appreciates FEMA's ongoing support to help his parish recover and rebuild. "The catastrophic storm events of 2005 heightened our awareness of the need to consistently maintain effective mitigation strategies by which the parish can identify and prioritize projects to reduce the potential for repetitive losses," said Schwab. "The awarding of this grant to our parish will serve to facilitate our on-going efforts to reduce our vulnerability to natural hazards in a planned and cost-effective manner."

Vermilion Parish President Luther Hardee III looks forward to utilizing the funding to strengthen his parish's mitigation plan. "Vermilion Parish appreciates the grant monies to update its existing hazard mitigation plan," said Hardee. "The funding will allow us the opportunity to identify areas in need of mitigation measures to reduce damages from future disasters." To update its current hazard mitigation plan, Washington Parish will assess implications of future scenarios relative to potential risk factors, as well as develop recommendations for mitigation efforts. "Washington Parish completed its existing hazard mitigation plan in 2004, long before we knew what the effects of a catastrophic storm such as Katrina would be," said Washington Parish President M. E. "Toye" Taylor. "Having lived through this event, we feel better prepared to make decisions on mitigation strategies for our future. The Pilot Planning Grant will provide the necessary funding to outline a path forward to a safer Washington Parish."

Grant Opportunities

Erosion Control Strategies RFP

In July 2007, the UNH / NOAA Cooperative Institute for Coastal and estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) will release a Request For Proposals (RFP) that focuses on understanding ecosystem tradeoffs associated with different erosion control strategies for sheltered shorelines. It is likely that this RFP will also require proposals to involve an economic cost / benefit analyses of currently available erosion control strategies. The RFP will mandate a collaborative research process that engages a large investigator team comprised of researchers and end users who participate at various levels of the decision making process, including homeowners, contractors, permittees, and outreach organizations.

CICEET will make approximately \$1.5 million available to two or more projects. Applicants from any coastal state, including those in the Great Lakes region, will be encouraged to apply. Proposals to this RFP will be due in mid-September. Given the complicated nature of such projects and the extensive research teams they require, CICEET urges potential applicants to plan proposal development accordingly. This RFP is the result of a multi-stage gap analysis that builds on the recently published National Research Council's (NRC) report "Mitigating Shore Erosion along Sheltered Coasts." CICEET was a co-sponsor of this study. For more information: http://ciceet.unh.edu/stats/erosion_rfp.html

If you are interested in learning more about CICEET, please have a look at our new strategic plan, which will guide the organization through 2012: http://ciceet.unh.edu/stats/strategic_plan.html. The goals and objectives in the plan will direct CICEET's work in addressing coastal resource management challenges. In particular, CICEET will focus on issues at the heart of ecosystem health and coastal resiliency. These include shoreline restoration, land use planning, nonpoint source pollution, harmful algal blooms, nutrient enrichment, and toxic contamination.

NCCOS Efforts to Integrate Human Dimensions Research Extend to Coastal Response Research Center

The Coastal Response Research Center (CRRC), a partnership between the National Ocean Service's Office of Response and Restoration and University of New Hampshire, announced the release of its 2007 Annual Request for Proposals (RFP) – including a solicitation for human dimensions research critical to oil spill response and restoration. National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) staff served on the planning board and participated in a 2006 workshop in which oil spill researchers, responders, regulators, impacted parties, and responsible parties identified human dimensions research needs as a basis for the RFP. The RFP, with details on the human dimensions and other priority areas, is available on the CRRC website: http://www.crrc.unh.edu/funding_opportunities.htm. For more information, contact Marybeth Bauer at Marybeth.bauer@noaa.gov.

Training and Conferences

Gulf Coast Ocean Observing and Gulf Alliance Education and Outreach Meeting

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.

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network (GOMA EEN)
Gulf Coast Ocean Observing System Education and Outreach Council (GCOOS EOC)
Joint Meeting
Five Rivers Delta Resource Center
Spanish Fort, Alabama
June 18-20, 2007**

To register: http://ocean.tamu.edu/GCOOS/Office/meetings/2007_Jun/2007_June.htm

Deadline to register is June 8, 2007.

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.

Creating Success: Scoping, Researching, Writing, and Tracking Grants

June 26, 2007

This workshop is sponsored by the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Target audiences for this event include grant writers and grant managers from city, county, federal and state agencies as well as non-profit organizations. Participants will explore the fundamentals of grant writing including strategies to help locate available funds, components of a successful proposal, leveraging resources, budget development, and project management and evaluation techniques. Workshop attendees will develop their own grant proposals using the techniques they learn during the day and present their work to the class at the conclusion of the event. Individuals who complete this workshop will be eligible to sign up to receive free technical assistance from Eco-Logic staff. Please contact Marian Dicas at 228.475.7047 or email her at marian.dicas@dmr.ms.gov to reserve your seat today!

Mississippi-Alabama Hurricane Conference

June 27-29, 2007

Biloxi, Mississippi

The second annual Mississippi–Alabama Hurricane Conference is a continuation of collaboration on a yearly event for the emergency management communities in Mississippi and Alabama. Hurricane Katrina showed us how a catastrophic storm can change the face of our Gulf Coast. It has also shown us that our concept of long-term recovery has to change. It is crucial that we look at these issues and prepare for times in the future when we may have to face this again. The presentations and information from this conference should help experienced and new emergency managers and local government officials look at recovery in a different light. Hopefully, it will encourage you to look at your recovery plans and begin making changes where needed. For more information go to

<http://www.mississippi.gov/frameset.jsp?URL=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.msema.org%2F>.

Gulf Alliance Implementation and Integration Workshop

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance will hold the Governor’s Action Plan Implementation and Integration Workshop in St. Petersburg, Florida, on **July 10-12, 2007**.

On March 28, 2006, the five Gulf State Governors released the Governors’ Action Plan, the blueprint for a regional partnership initiative designed to help address key issues facing the five U.S. Gulf States. The plan challenges the region’s state, local, federal, non-government, and private partners to achieve 11 strategic actions within 5 priority issues – water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds, habitat restoration, environmental education, habitat identification, and nutrient reduction - within 36 months.

With more than one year of effort dedicated to the Governors' Action Plan behind us, the Alliance will use this workshop to identify those actions that may still require additional focus and support, and plan how the Alliance partnership can collaborate to accomplish these actions. Once we have completed this task, the Priority Issue Teams will host several current technical workshops.

The summary agenda, hotel logistics, and registration form for the Governor's Action Plan Implementation and Integration Workshop are available at <http://www2.nos.noaa.gov/gomex/upcoming/welcome.html>.

Understanding Nutrient Dynamics and Effects in Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ecosystems

July 12, 2007
Hilton Bayfront
St. Petersburg, Florida

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Nutrients Reduction and Water Quality Priority Teams are holding a workshop to explore nutrient dynamics and effects in coastal ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico on July 12, 2007. This workshop will be held in conjunction with the Annual Gulf of Mexico Alliance workshop being held on July 10-12 at the Hilton Bayfront in St. Petersburg, FL. An agenda is available at http://www2.nos.noaa.gov/gomex/nutrients/nuts_dynamics_071207.pdf.

R.S.V.P.

Please confirm your attendance by June 27, 2007 to Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov.

Hotel:

A block of rooms is being held at the Hilton Bayfront in St. Petersburg, FL. Please call (800) 445-8667 or (727) 894-5000 to make reservations. Reference the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Implementation Workshop block of rooms for \$88/night plus tax. Hotel reservations need to be made before June 11, 2007.

Summary Agenda

8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Session I: Review of Estuarine and Coastal Waters Classification Systems

10:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Session II: Processes to Link Cause & Effect Variables in Estuarine and Coastal Waters

11th Annual GLOBE Conference

July 29-Aug. 3, San Antonio, Texas

Educators, scientists, and government officials from across the world will come together to address the key ideas for improving education through the GLOBE Program. The 11th annual conference will highlight GLOBE's new Earth system science projects as well as promote collaborative research related to regional projects. Participants will also have the opportunity to interact with scientists who are using GLOBE data in their own research, learn about new technology and science education, and discuss effective methods to enhance and implement GLOBE. Conference sessions will offer discussions on strengthening and sustaining the GLOBE Program, with particular attention paid to building regional

consortia that strengthen and empower GLOBE coordinators and learning communities with top scientists and educators from around the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.globe.gov/fsl/html/templ.cgi?sanantonio2007&lang=en&nav=1>

ASBPA/GLO Fall Coastal Conference: Caring for the Coast: Protecting, Enhancing, Preserving

October 22-24, Galveston, TX

American Shore & Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) and the Texas General Land Office (GLO) announce the opening of online registration for their joint 2007 Fall Coastal Conference at the Galveston Island Convention Center in Galveston Oct. 22-24.

EARLY REGISTRATION

Member — \$325 before Oct. 1

Nonmember — \$425 before Oct. 1

Optional Oct. 21 field trip — \$50

All full registrations include all conference sessions on Oct. 22-24 as well as all breaks and any meals as part of the conference. All nonmember registrations include a one-year membership in ASBPA. Partial registration and sponsorships are available at the online registration site (see below). A conference schedule will be available July 15 at http://www.asbpa.org/conferences/conf_fall_07.htm.

[Call for Awards](#) (Due July 20)

[Past Winners](#)

[Registration Link](#)

[Sponsorship Opportunities](#)

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

