

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

June 2007

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

New Advanced Hurricane Model Aids NOAA Forecasters

June 27, 2007 — NOAA’s [National Centers for Environmental Prediction](#) and its [National Hurricane Center](#) forecasters will now use the Hurricane Weather and Research Forecast Model to predict the track and strength of storms this hurricane season. Developed by scientists at the [NOAA Environmental Modeling Center](#), HWRF is a new cutting-edge computer model that will serve as the operational backbone for current and future hurricane track and intensity forecasts by meteorologists at the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

HWRF, a coupled ocean-atmosphere model, will utilize highly advanced physics of the atmosphere, ocean and waves in one prediction system, providing unparalleled understanding of the science of tropical cyclone evolution. Its output gives meteorologists an analysis of the hurricane in three-dimensions from real-time airborne Doppler radar. It will make use of a wide variety of observations from [satellites](#), [data buoys](#), and [hurricane hunter aircraft](#). No other hurricane model accesses this wide of a range of meteorological information.

“It is vital that we understand all the factors of hurricane forecasting throughout the life of a storm and HWRF will provide an unprecedented level of detail. Over the next several years, this model promises to improve forecasts for tropical cyclone intensity, wave and storm surge, and hurricane-related inland flooding,” said [Mary Glackin](#), acting director of [NOAA’s National Weather Service](#). “It will be one of the most dynamic tools available for our forecasters.”

HWRF will eventually run at a very high resolution with advanced representation of a hurricane on many different scales of motion, which means it will be able to describe and forecast the smaller scale features of the hurricane circulation along with its interaction with the environment. This will provide forecasters with critical information on the evolution of the wind structure within the storm.

“We must continue to improve our modeling capabilities and, with HWRF, more accurate hurricane forecasts will help protect the lives of those prone to such storms,” added [Louis Uccellini](#), director of NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Prediction. “HWRF will serve as a platform for future enhancements that will incorporate more advanced physics and advanced observations of both the atmosphere and ocean, not only through the large-scale global observations, but of the storm circulation.”

NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Prediction is composed of nine centers; the [Aviation Weather Center](#), [Climate Prediction Center](#), [Environmental Modeling Center](#), [Hydrometeorological Prediction Center](#), [NCEP Central Operations](#), [Ocean Prediction Center](#), [Space Environment Center](#), [Storm Prediction Center](#), and the [Tropical Prediction Center](#) that provide the United States with first alerts of weather, climate, ocean and space weather events.

Relevant Web Sites

[NOAA’s National Weather Service](#)

[NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Prediction](#)

Media Contact:

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NOAA Satellites Ready for Active Hurricane Season

June 18, 2007 — With an active [Atlantic hurricane season](#) expected for 2007, NOAA's high-powered [satellites](#) are ready to send forecasters a steady stream of crisp, detailed images, and other important data, of any storm that develops in the Western Hemisphere. The [NOAA Satellite and Information Service](#) operates a fleet of spacecraft that monitor the weather, including conditions that trigger [hurricanes](#) and the [tornadoes](#) and [floods](#) that accompany them. "These satellites often provide us with the first indication that a storm is forming and they play an important role in predicting where a storm will go," said [Mary Kicza](#), assistant administrator for NESDIS.

NOAA's [Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites](#) (GOES), which operate from a fixed position 22,500 miles above the east and west coasts, take constant images of hurricanes and track their movement. Additionally, NOAA's [Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellites](#) (POES), which operate 530 miles over the Earth, orbiting the entire planet, keep an eye on storms, while providing data — including [sea-surface temperatures](#), which is incorporated into global weather models.

Satellite data is used in combination with hurricane [buoys](#), [hurricane hunter aircraft](#), air-borne [Doppler radar](#), [dropwindsondes](#), and the experience and skill of NOAA's forecasters to predict tropical storm impacts. "Our satellites are in good health and are closely watching the oceans for any hint of tropical storm activity," Kicza added. "Our top priority is to provide the satellite images and data to NOAA meteorologists, who make the forecasts that enable emergency managers to help people get out of harm's way."

NOAA Satellite Fleet

NOAA currently has four geostationary spacecraft: two are in operation, one is stored in orbit as a ready backup and one satellite currently used to provide better coverage of South America as part of the World Meteorological Organization's World Weather Watch Global Observing System. GOES are the nation's primary hurricane spotters from space.

NOAA also has five polar-orbiting satellites – two that are operational, including a spacecraft in a joint venture with Europe, with three more serving as backup satellites. POES are key in monitoring changes in the atmosphere and ocean temperatures and climate phenomena, such as [El Niño](#) and [La Niña](#). "We have an elaborate system in place, including back-up satellites and partnerships with other nations, that would handle any hiccups and keep monitoring storms," said Kathy Kelly, director of the [NOAA Satellite Operations](#) and [Satellite Data Processing and Distribution](#).

Additionally, NESDIS processes data from other spacecraft, such as NASA's research QuikSCAT satellite, which is used in hurricane forecast models. "Our forecasters are using research tools like QuikSCAT to develop enhanced forecast models," said Mary Glackin, acting director of the [NOAA National Weather Service](#). "NOAA's satellites are a key component to accurate hurricane forecasts, but our focus on next-generation technologies will ensure continued to improvement in hurricane services."

Just last week, NOAA officially dedicated a new home for its around-the-clock environmental satellite operations. The [NOAA Satellite Operations Facility](#), in Suitland, Md., supports a range of high-technology equipment, including 16 antennas that control more than \$4.7 billion worth of environmental satellites. Each day, NSOF processes more than 16 billion bytes of environmental data from NOAA's satellites and the Department of Defense's Meteorological Satellite Program.

NOAA Satellites Show Moxie

During the [2005 Atlantic hurricane season](#), when a record 28 storms developed, NOAA satellites sent a total of 11,736 images of these cyclones to forecasters at the [NOAA National Hurricane Center](#) in Miami, Fla. In the relatively quiet 2006 hurricane season, the number of images was 7,380. In New Orleans, ground zero for [Hurricane Katrina](#), the costliest hurricane in U.S. history, GOES sent 716 images of the storm between August 26 and August 30. “During Katrina, nothing could have been more helpful to forecasters than [NOAA] GOES imagery,” said Paul Trotter, meteorologist in charge of the [NOAA National Weather Service forecast office in Slidell, La.](#) “In areas where observations were limited, satellite imagery of the southwest movement of Katrina, once it began to move through and exit Florida, gave tremendous lead time of the eventual curve toward southeast Louisiana.”

Future NOAA Satellites

[NOAA](#) and NASA are planning the next generation of satellites that will strengthen the prediction and tracking of hurricanes. Known as the [GOES-R](#) series, these next generation satellites are expected to bring key improvements in data for predicting severe weather, including hurricanes. GOES-R data will result in longer watch and warning lead times and a better definition of the threat area for hurricanes and other dangerous weather. “Since the first GOES satellite began monitoring the weather in 1975, we have never stopped trying to make this system better,” Kicza said. Also planned for the future is the [National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System](#), or NPOESS. This satellite system also will bring improved data and imagery for better weather forecasts, severe-weather monitoring and detection of climate change.

Media Contact:

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NOAA and the National Park Service Team Up to Educate Beachgoers on How to Break the Grip of the Rip®

With the summer vacation season here, NOAA and the National Park Service are alerting beachgoers to the threat of rip currents and how to escape their strong and potentially fatal grip. It is the focus of NOAA's national Rip Current Awareness Week, June 3-9, 2007. Rip currents are narrow channels of fast-moving water that pull swimmers away from the shore. Panicked swimmers fail trying to counter the current by swimming straight back to shore — putting themselves at risk of drowning because of fatigue. Rip currents account for more than 80 percent of rescues performed by lifeguards, totaling tens of thousands of people in the U.S. every year. An estimated 100 people are killed by rip currents annually. “Before going into the water, check the rip current forecast, swim on guarded beaches and know how to escape a rip current's grip,” said Brig. Gen. [David L. Johnson](#), U.S. Air Force (Ret.), director of NOAA's National Weather Service. “Doing so may just save your life.” Rip currents are prevalent along the East, Gulf, and West coasts in addition to the Great Lakes. Rip current education is critical to every swimmer and especially those who visit the beach infrequently and may be unfamiliar with this leading swimming hazard.

NOAA National Weather Service forecast offices that serve coastal areas issue Surf Zone Forecasts with rip current outlooks when rip currents are a threat. These are available online, through the media and are broadcast over [NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards](#). “Everyone should learn how to identify rip currents and take the time to assess the surf conditions before diving in,” advises Tom Herrington, director of the [Stevens – New Jersey Sea Grant Cooperative Extension](#). “If caught in a rip current, don't fight it! Swim

parallel to the shore and back to land at an angle.” Sea Grant is NOAA's primary university-based program, located in each coastal state, to promote better understanding, conservation and use of America's coastal resources.

Moving at speeds of up to eight feet per second, rip currents can move faster than an Olympic swimmer and can easily overpower a victim. Ian Crocker, four-time Olympic medalist for the United States Swim Team, holds the men's world record for completing the 100 meter butterfly in 50.40 seconds—a pace of nearly six feet per second. "A rip current is one competitor all swimmers should avoid challenging," said Crocker, who joins NOAA and the NPS in educating the public on rip currents through his participation in public service announcements.

“Every year, more than 75 million visitors come to swim, fish, snorkel, scuba dive, boat and enjoy the wildlife and majestic scenery in the coastal areas of our National Park System. The National Park Service has had a long partnership with NOAA and its National Weather Service to enhance our ability to provide visitors with the latest information on water safety,” said Mary Bomar, director of the National Park Service. “We are thrilled to partner with NOAA for this important awareness campaign to bring scientific-based information to the public about the dangers of rips currents and safety measures that will save lives in waterways throughout our parks.”

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the [U.S. Commerce Department](#), is celebrating [200 years of science and service](#) to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

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 our 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:

NOAA Rip Current information: <http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov>

NOAA Sea Grant: <http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov>

Break the Grip of the Rip® is a registered trademark of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Chaland Headland Named One of America’s Top Restored Beaches Following NOAA-Led Project in Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

On the cusp of summer beach season, Chaland Headland of Plaquemines Parish, La., was named one of America’s Top Restored Beaches by the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association. The Chaland Headland Restoration Project received the ranking following successful efforts by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center, in cooperation with local, state and national authorities, to restore more than 400 acres of barrier island habitat.

Over the years, the shoreline along Chaland Headland has eroded severely due to human and natural factors. Also, recent storms breached the shoreline and segmented the 2.6-mile island into three smaller

fragments. Left unaddressed, these breaches would have led to further erosion and would have threatened the integrity of the Gulf of Mexico shoreline, interior coastal wetlands, and oil and gas infrastructure.

“We are proud that NOAA’s efforts at Chaland Headland are being recognized,” said retired Navy Vice Adm. [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D, NOAA administrator and undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere. “Wetlands and barrier islands are our first defense against storms, and provide important habitat for coastal organisms, such as our marine fisheries. This restoration will help absorb surging water and wind during storms, protecting our national energy assets and Louisiana’s coastal communities.” The Chaland Headland restoration project is one of the largest island restoration projects ever conducted by NOAA. Workers dredged and performed major earth-moving activities on Chaland Island to create beach and marsh habitat, which will help protect Louisiana’s coastal communities from the devastating effects of wind, waves and flooding.

This is the first of three NOAA-led barrier island projects along the Gulf of Mexico under the Coastal Wetlands Protection, Planning and Restoration Act. The [CWPPRA](#) provides funding for coastal protection and restoration in Louisiana. The Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force oversees the implementation of CWPPRA. The task force is composed of NOAA’s Fisheries Service, the state of [Louisiana](#) and five federal agencies, the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#), [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), [USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), and the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#). This unique partnership has led to the completion of 67 wetlands restoration projects in the state. The program also has 71 projects either in the engineering and design or construction phases.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation’s living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA Emphasizes Importance of Using New Elevations in Louisiana Reconstruction, Recovery Projects

Officials from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced today that new elevations for more than 340 bench marks in southern Louisiana have been published. The newly published values will provide official elevations in 27 parishes across the southern part of Louisiana that experienced damages from hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The announcement was made today at a ceremony attended by U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu in Galliano, La.

This network of elevation bench marks, with additional Global Positioning Station Continuously Operated Reference Station), establishes an essential new network of vertical control to serve as benchmarks for south Louisiana. A large portion of the funding for this project was provided through a cooperative agreement between NOAA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and included the cooperation of the Louisiana Spatial Reference Center at Louisiana State University located in Baton Rouge, La.

“Users should avoid using older, outdated bench marks for vertical control,” said NOAA National Geodetic Survey Director Dave Zilkoski. “These new heights are considerably more accurate than those measured previously.” Use of the new elevations and vertical control network continues to be paramount in supporting hurricane recovery, repair and construction efforts. These new elevations and the control

network will be needed in the future to enable projects such as evacuation routes, restoration projects and hurricane protection levee projects.

"NOAA's National Ocean Service recognizes the importance of continuing to support the rebuilding and restoration efforts in Louisiana by providing accurate bench marks made possible through this cooperative effort with FEMA," said [John H. Dunnigan](#), NOAA assistant administrator for the National Ocean Service. "One of NOAA's central missions is promoting public safety and preparedness. These new, accurate elevations are a significant contribution to that effort." Planners will be better equipped to determine road and bridge heights relative to water and ground levels from this data, thus assuring restructured evacuation routes and shipping lanes will have the appropriate clearance to avoid flooding and obstructions.

NOAA and the [Louisiana Spatial Reference Center](#) have made significant efforts to establish outreach and education throughout the coastal parishes. Meetings have been held with officials to explain the new data points and offer training in the use and extension of the more accurate elevation points now available. NOAA also continues to coordinate with officials from [FEMA](#) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to explain the new benchmarks and instruct users on the use of these new technologies. The use of the Global Positioning System and NOAA's Continuously Operating Reference Stations will continue to provide accurate elevation reference points as the region recovers from the impacts of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

NOAA officials noted it is critical that users of the elevation data apply it in accordance with new approaches being developed, and work with the Louisiana Spatial Reference Center to improve the geospatial reference system in Louisiana. While there will be fewer specific benchmarks maintained, the overall accuracy of the heights will be maintained for longer periods. NOAA officials emphasized that NOAA does not predict the rates of subsidence nor attempt to determine its causes in Louisiana or elsewhere. NOAA is the supplier of data used by the [U.S. Geological Survey](#), [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), state agencies, academics, emergency planners, engineers, surveyors, environmental restoration efforts, and others to determine those rates based on various models. The new elevations will assist in the on-going statewide effort in Louisiana to improve the accuracy of the state's survey benchmarks. The original announcement of this height modernization effort was made in July 2005 at a New Orleans news conference.

Currently, NOAA's [National Geodetic Survey](#) is analyzing the historical leveling, new leveling and GPS surveys. The data is being feed into updated scientific models to provide more accurate elevations on a number of additional benchmarks in southern Louisiana. The Louisiana Spatial Reference Center was established in 2002 at Louisiana State University in response to users' and public safety needs. The Reference Center operates in partnership with NOAA to develop and provide height modernization procedures in Louisiana to share technology development with others.

Critical Update on South Louisiana Elevation Surveys Announced

On June 16th, the South Lafourche, LA Levee District hosted an event for NOAA's National Geodetic Survey (NGS), FEMA, and the Louisiana Spatial Reference Center of Louisiana State University to unveil the results of a recent elevation survey in Southern Louisiana. The ceremony, attended by U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu, was held to commemorate the latest efforts in supporting restoration and protection efforts of coastal Louisiana and the release of new heights for the southern 27 Parishes. In addition, there was a dedication of the newest of Louisiana's Continuously Operating Reference Stations, part of a national network of GPS stations managed by NGS. This new network of vertical control for

Southern Louisiana is critical for recovery and construction projects, as well as future activities such as evacuation route planning and levee projects. For more information, contact [Ronnie Taylor](#).

Multiple Algal Toxins Found in Bottlenose Dolphins Identifies Potential Vulnerability of the Florida Panhandle Coast to Unusual Mortality Events

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) scientists have confirmed the simultaneous presence of brevetoxin and domoic acid in tissues of dolphins caught during a July 2006 capture-release health assessment in St. Joseph Bay, off the Florida Panhandle in the Gulf of Mexico. These data will be used by the NOAA Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources and NCCOS researchers who have been conducting dolphin health assessments in the Florida Panhandle as part of the investigation into repeated mortality events. This research will help scientists and resource managers understand the apparently greater sensitivity of Panhandle dolphins to marine toxins relative to those living in southwest Florida. For more information, contact Mike.Twiner@noaa.gov.

Award-Winning Article Details Hurricane Damage to Gulf Region Economy

Two economists associated with NOAA co-authored an article that received the Lawrence Klein Award, which recognizes the best articles appearing in the Monthly Labor Review published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The article, "Hurricane Damage to the Ocean Economy in the U.S. Gulf Region in 2005," draws extensively from data produced by the NOAA-funded National Ocean Economics Program. It appeared in the publication's August 2006 issue and can be viewed online at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2006/08/contents.htm>. For more information, contact [Jeffery Adkins](#).

Gulf Council to Conduct Public Hearings on Aquaculture Amendment

Tampa, Florida – June 19, 2007 - The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) has scheduled a series of public hearings to solicit public comment on a draft Aquaculture Amendment. The draft Aquaculture Amendment will require persons to obtain a permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in order to participate in aquaculture by constructing an aquaculture facility in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico. Each application for permit must comply with many permit conditions related to recordkeeping and operation of the facility. These permit conditions will assure the facility has a minimal affect on the environment and on other fishery resources. Compliance with the conditions will be evaluated annually for the duration of the permit as the basis for renewal of the permit for the next year.

Public input is an important part of the amendment process. It offers the public an opportunity to have ideas heard and possibly included as alternatives presented to the Council for consideration. Therefore, the Council strongly encourages public participation. Meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. and will conclude no later than 10:00 p.m. For a list of locations go to <http://www.gulfcouncil.org/Beta/GMFMCWeb/prrel/pr%202007-20.pdf>.

Copies of the draft Amendment and other related materials can be obtained by calling 813-348-1630. The meeting is open to the public and is physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign

language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Council office at least five working days prior to the meeting.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils that were established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council prepares fishery management plans that are designed to manage fishery resources in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

Collaborative Survey to Assess Ecological Condition of Florida Coastal Ocean Waters Completed

Scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) completed a survey aboard NOAA Ship NANCY FOSTER on May 15-29, to assess ecological conditions along the U.S. continental shelf from Tampa to West Palm Beach. The work is part of a series of studies by NOAA and its federal and state partners to assess condition of living resources and ecosystem stressors throughout coastal ocean waters of the U.S., inclusive of sanctuaries and other protected areas. It also serves as a basis for tracking future changes due to either natural or human disturbances. Samples were collected at 50 stations for analysis of multiple indicators of water and sediment characteristics, stressor levels in sediments and fish, and biological condition. Partners include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Florida's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory in Miami. For more information, contact Jeff.Hyland@noaa.gov.

Other NOAA News

NOAA Celebrates World Ocean Day: Recognizes Fifth Anniversary of the UN Atlas of the Oceans

NOAA joins 14 of its partner organizations today to celebrate World Ocean day by marking the fifth anniversary of the UN Atlas of the Oceans. The Atlas is a pioneering online encyclopedia containing a wealth of information on the world's oceans. The Internet-based Atlas of the Oceans contains information relevant to sustainable development of the oceans and to the advancement of ocean science. It allows policymakers, resource managers, academics and other experts to access, contribute and continuously update a globally-relevant marine ecosystem information system. To access the Atlas of the Oceans, visit <http://www.oceansatlas.org>.

"NOAA is proud to have been a key contributor in establishing the Atlas," said Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.), under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "When the Atlas was launched in 2002, we were optimistic that it would significantly enhance public literacy of the world's oceans and five years later we are heartened to see its recognition as a valuable tool."

The Atlas includes background on the oceans, from how they were formed to their physiology, biology and climatology; the uses of the oceans, from food to shipping, mining and energy; and other ocean

issues, such as sustainability, food security and global change. It also includes a geographic dimension to enable users to explore materials for their own region of interest.

Currently the atlas contains more than 4,000 entries on a vast range of themes, ranging from fisheries biology to ocean law, to undersea prospecting for pharmaceuticals to maritime transport and telecommunications. About 100,000 people access the UN Atlas of the Oceans website each month.

NOAA Releases Revised Five-Year Research Plan for Public Review

The roadmap for NOAA's short-term research efforts is available for public comment. The NOAA Five-Year Research Plan provides specific research milestones to be achieved during fiscal years 2007-2011. This is the second edition of the plan, which was initially released in 2005 and then revised based on comments from a variety of constituents, including university partners and the general public. Events, such as Hurricane Katrina and the release of international scientific reports on climate change, also caused some changes in the focus of the plan.

"We took a broader look at the research questions that affect all of NOAA, such as hazard resiliency, economic competitiveness and providing accurate assessments to policy makers," said [Richard W. Spinrad](#), NOAA assistant administrator for oceanic and atmospheric research. "With this revised plan, we hope to ensure that all of our research is linked to meeting essential societal needs. But we rely on our partners to let us know if we meet those needs."

Spinrad noted that the revised plan also introduces a more rigorous approach that includes measurable goals and monitoring research performance across NOAA. "This is a plan for action with specific milestones and objectives that will allow us to provide the nation with the information it must have to make the best decisions possible to meet the social, economic, and environmental needs of a dynamic and productive society," he said.

The Five-Year Plan organizes scientific activities around NOAA's four mission goals and a mission support goal focusing on ecosystems, climate, weather and water, commerce and transportation, and technology and mission support. The Plan is available for review and comment until July 18 at: <http://www.nrc.noaa.gov/plans.html>. While the Five-Year Plan deals with short time frames, it complements NOAA's 20-Year Research Vision, which establishes broader long-term goals and activities. "There are some very big questions out there that NOAA is well-positioned to help answer," Spinrad said. "Both of these plans will help guide our research directions to be of the best use to society."

NERRS Web Site Offers Link to Near-Real-Time Monitoring Data

Visitors to the NERRS [Web site](#) can now view near-real-time weather and water quality data as it is collected and reported by the National Weather Service's [Hydrometeorological Automated Data System](#) (HADS). This new link is in addition to the primary real-time data links through CDMO.

The link takes visitors to a [new Web page](#) with a map of the reserve system and a table of reserves and their monitoring stations. The list of monitoring stations links directly to the most recent data reported by that station. The reported data are telemetered from System-Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) stations at the reserves directly to NOAA satellites and then downloaded by HADS for use by weather forecasting offices and other users. The telemetering capability, added to the SWMP stations last year, enables the reserve system to play a crucial role in the development of the [Integrated Ocean Observing System](#).

NOAA Promotes Clean Marina Program to Enhance Waterfronts: Boaters in Hundreds of Marinas Benefit from Local Waste & Pollution Control

With the start of summer this month, many Americans are enjoying the nation's great outdoor recreational opportunities. Seeking relief from summer heat, thousands of boaters ply the waters of our rivers, bays, lakes and seashores. To ensure that future generations can enjoy these activities, NOAA and its partners are promoting the Clean Marina Program, which seeks to ensure that boating, a popular summer recreation, remains safe and non-polluting.

Pollution from marinas can have a significant impact on local water quality. The Clean Marina Program is a voluntary, incentive-based program encouraging marina operators and boaters to protect coastal water quality by practicing environmentally sound operating and maintenance procedures, such as regular boat engine inspection, proper waste disposal and reduction of discharge. These practices can contribute to safer, cleaner marinas, as well as cleaner waterways. Also, the program provides education assistance to boaters to minimize impacts on the marine environment and aids marinas in controlling non-point pollution.

"Small steps that individuals can take will make a huge difference in the long run, and will create a safer, cleaner and more enjoyable setting for everyone," said retired U.S. Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. With nearly 95 thousand miles of ocean and Great Lakes coastline contributing tens of billions of dollars to the economy, we can all do our share to ensure the vitality of recreational and commercial boating."

Marinas that have pledged to be "Clean Marinas" benefit from improved water quality and habitat for living resources. As additional benefits, these marinas are aesthetically pleasing, enjoy lower operating costs for marine debris removal, reduce the risk of legal liability and fines, and can receive state assistance and recognition as a designated "Clean Marina."

"Clean water benefits not only the recreational boating community but also those who live on or visit our nation's coasts," said Leon Cammen, director, NOAA National Sea Grant College Program. "The success of the Clean Marina Program stems from the strength of fostered partnerships between marinas and recreational boaters. We are greatly pleased to see this concept being widely adopted."

The [Clean Marina Program](#) is a public-private partnership involving numerous federal agencies, private industry, and academia, including [NOAA Sea Grant](#), [NOAA's Coastal Non-point Control Program](#), the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), and other partners. While the program is administered differently among states, many hundred marinas have already been given "Clean Marina" status, with hundreds more pledging to become a "Clean Marina." Find out whether your local marina is a Clean Marina: <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/initiatives/links.html#2>.

NOAA Releases Annual Status of U.S. Fisheries Report for 2006

NOAA today released its annual report on the status of U.S. marine fisheries for 2006, tracking both population levels and harvest rates for species caught in federal marine waters, between three and 200 miles off U.S. coasts. In 2006, the report shows population levels for 187 fish stocks and multi-species groupings known as complexes. Of these, 47 were overfished. NOAA scientists also assessed harvest rates for 242 stocks and found that 48 were subject to overfishing.

“Overfishing must be solved now,” said [Bill Hogarth](#), director of NOAA Fisheries Service. “We have the right combination of legal tools to improve stewardship, and we’re moving full throttle ahead with implementing the new mandate to end overfishing so future generations of Americans can enjoy sustainable and healthy marine ecosystems.”

The first step to rebuilding a fish stock is to end overfishing. Last year, the Bush Administration gained bipartisan support in Congress to rewrite and strengthening the [Magnuson-Stevens Act](#), which has governed management of America’s fisheries for 30 years. The reauthorized act now requires fishery managers to revise fishery management plans to end overfishing by 2010, a call made by the Bush Administration in the 2004 [U.S. Ocean Action Plan](#).

Each year, NOAA issues a report on the state of U.S. fisheries to inform Congress and the American public of the agency’s progress in restoring fish stocks to sustainable population levels. The annual report tracks the population and harvesting status of marine fisheries in the United States. NOAA recently completed nine public meetings and a 45-day comment period to hear ideas from fishing communities about ways to end overfishing. NOAA is evaluating all the public comments and will release a range of proposals for further public review and comment this summer.

On the Web:

Status of Stocks Report to Congress - 2006:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/statusoffisheries/SOSmain.htm>.

IOC/UNESCO and Integrated Coastal Area Management

On May 31 and June 1, staff members from the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management and the National Weather Service met in Paris with the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Expert Group to develop guidance on “Mainstreaming Awareness and Mitigation of Marine Related Hazards and Risks in Integrated Coastal Area Management.” The expert group completed the meeting with an annotated outline for a guidance document, designated leads and writing teams for each section, and a rough timeline for completion. NOAA raised and will continue to promote the idea of hazards resilience as an organizing principle for the proposed document, and is working to use this activity to integrate IOC work in a number of areas. NOAA will assist in drafting several sections of the report and will work with other NOAA offices to identify staff to provide input to, or review, various chapters. For more information, contact Bill.Obeirne@noaa.gov.

In the Gulf States

Alabama's "Grasses in Classes" Project at River Delta Marina County Park

On May 15, 2007 students from Satsuma High School's Grasses in Classes Program undertook a planting project to stabilize an eroding ditch bank at the River Delta Marina County Park in Creola. Despite the swarming bees, persistent mosquitoes, and blazing mid-day sun, the ten students used shovels, hand trowels, and bare fingers to plant 370 recently purchased marsh plants in the soft soil. The students planted bull tongue, also known as duck potato, pickerel weed, soft rush, and blue flag iris among existing native plants to give Mother Nature a needed "boost".

The project began when Ron Jones, of the Mobile County Parks and Recreation Department called on Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) Coordinator Kara Lankford to help coordinate the planting at the marina on Dead Lake Road. Lankford contacted The Mobile County Grasses in Classes Program at Satsuma High School to provide manpower for the restoration project. This MBNEP program, like its counterpart in Baldwin County, utilizes high school students who spend the school year cultivating native dune and wetlands plants for use in environmental restoration projects.

The plants used in this project were not grown by the students but rather purchased from local vendors with funding from the Parks and Recreation Department. The Satsuma High School students worked enthusiastically and gained experience for fall plantings when they will use the plants they have been nurturing all winter and spring for restoration projects around Mobile County.

New Habitat Research Database Seeks Project Entries

BY Melissa Schneider, Communications Coordinator, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium

A new database is giving researchers in Mississippi and Alabama the opportunity to let others learn from their successes and setbacks in the field of habitat conservation and restoration.

The recently launched Mississippi-Alabama Habitat Conservation, Restoration and Enhancement Database is ready for use. Resource managers, scientists and other researchers are encouraged to enter their habitat projects into the easy-to use system.

"At this point, we want resource managers to submit entries," said Roberta Arena Swann, deputy director of Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and manager of the Mississippi-Alabama Habitat Conservation, Restoration and Enhancement Database. "This database is only going to be useful if it captures a wide range of projects."

If all habitat researchers share their work, the database may prove to be a valuable tool in replenishing and protecting habitats in the bi-state area. "It is our hope that this database will improve networking and coordination among grassroots groups, resource managers, scientists and local governments for better habitat conservation along the northern Gulf Coast," Swann said. The database, which also maps project locations, currently logs 11 projects in the 11 southern-most counties in Alabama and Mississippi. Projects deal with issues such as restoring stable channel dimensions, eradicating invasive species and

stabilizing shoreline to help increase wildlife habitat. Stewardship Coordinator Christopher May of Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve said there are two particularly useful database features.

“First, the ability to upload images adds a valuable dimension to this database,” May said. “Users will be able to see how a site looked before and after management activities occurred. The second feature I find useful is the interactive map. Users can locate projects nearby or projects in particular habitat types that might be most relevant.” Swann said the database will allow resource managers to work together. “The hope is that resource managers can gain insight into available conservation methods, funding sources, etc.,” Swann said. “They can network with other resource managers to tie small-scale restoration efforts into ecosystem-level projects.”

The process for submitting projects consists of obtaining a user name and password and entering all project information, including photos and location. The public also is invited to view the projects and learn about what scientists are doing to protect and restore habitats on the coast. The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium provided funding and technical expertise during Dauphin Island Sea Lab’s initial development of the database. The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program provides ongoing funding and technical support. The Mississippi-Alabama Habitat Conservation, Restoration and Enhancement Database can be found at <http://restoration.disl.org/database/>.

Weeks Bay Foundation: A Conservation Success Story

BY Walter Ernest, Executive Director, Weeks Bay Foundation

The Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation was incorporated in 1990 as a non-profit organization to support the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Baldwin County. The Foundation supports the Reserve through donations of land and through educational exhibits, public awareness and education programs, water quality monitoring efforts, and by helping provide volunteers.

The Foundation is a strong advocate for the Reserve, raising money to allow the Reserve to develop facilities, including the Boardwalk behind the Interpretive Center and the Kurt G. Wintermeyer Boardwalk at the Pitcher Plant Bog. It funded the specimen collections, including live species and the cabinets in the Interpretive Center. The Foundation also pursues land acquisition activities in the Weeks Bay watershed, and publishes *The Pelican Post* newsletter quarterly.

The Foundation Board of Directors recently voted to change its name to the Weeks Bay Foundation. The change is to reflect the Foundation’s existing watershed approach to conserving ecologically sensitive land. The Foundation has been involved in land protection since it was first established. The largest land protection success stories would be the acquisition of the Safe Harbor RV Park and Marina in 1997 and the 684-acre Bayou Sara tract in Mobile County. The marina and RV Park were purchased at public auction and later conveyed to the State of Alabama. The Bayou Sara Tract was donated to the Foundation by Dr. Thomas M. Roush and later conveyed to the State of Alabama. The Foundation has also conveyed numerous other properties to the State of Alabama.

The Foundation is a member of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). The LTA promotes voluntary private land conservation that benefits communities and natural systems. The LTA is the national convener, strategist and representative of more than 1,600 land trusts across America. The Foundation is working toward national accreditation as a land trust. The national accreditation program is a new program that will roll out in 2008 and be fully functional by 2012. Some of the requirements are to adopt implementation of the LTA’s *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, perform an organization self assessment, conduct an annual audit, and have completed at least two land transactions in the last two years.

The Foundation can accept land donations, conservation easements, bargain sales of property, life estates, and fee simple acquisition purchases. The Foundation looks forward to its continued role as the friends group of the Weeks Bay Reserve and its continued work as a land trust in Coastal Alabama. The primary focus area will continue to be the Reserve and the Weeks Bay watershed. To learn more about the Foundation, visit the website at www.weeksbay.org.

Overfishing Large Sharks Impacts Entire Marine Ecosystems, Shrinks Shellfish Supply

~Dauphin Island Sea Lab Scientists Conduct Shark Survey in Gulf of Mexico~

Despite a public relations image that has elevated them to tabloid status, sharks play a vital role in the ocean's food chain. Fewer big sharks in the oceans mean that bay scallops and other shellfish may be harder to find at the market, according to an article in the March 30 issue of the journal *Science*, tying two unlikely links in the food web to the same fate. A team of Canadian and American ecologists, led by the late, world-renowned fisheries biologist Ransom Myers at Dalhousie University, has found that overfishing the largest predatory sharks, such as the bull, great white, dusky, and hammerhead sharks, along the Atlantic Coast of the United States has led to an explosion of their ray, skate, and small-shark prey species. "With fewer sharks around, the species they prey upon – like cownose rays – have increased in numbers, and in turn, hordes of cownose rays dining on bay scallops, have wiped the scallops out," says co-author Julia Baum of Dalhousie. Co-author Dr. Sean Powers, a Senior Marine Scientist at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and Assistant Professor of Marine Sciences, University of South Alabama, says, "Shark populations are uniquely susceptible to over-fishing. Compared to other fish, sharks have very low reproductive rates and are extremely long-lived."

Here on the Gulf Coast, Dr. Powers and DISL Marine Scientist Dr. John Dindo are in the midst of a long-term survey of Alabama coastal shark populations. In monthly trips in 4-60 feet of water, the scientists and their teams long-line sharks for tagging, as well as collecting tissue samples and determining the health and age of the sharks. With 80 species of sharks in the Gulf of Mexico, 29 of them coastal species, Drs. Powers and Dindo are collecting invaluable data to help determine the status of sharks in the Gulf.

"By conducting a long-term study of the shark population along the Alabama Gulf Coast we're trying to determine how their populations have and will change over time and what does the future hold for them." "In the Atlantic, the removal of these top predators led to the collapse of the century-old scallop fishery in North Carolina. We need to find out if we see the same changes in the Gulf of Mexico and evaluate the potential impact of these changes on shellfish populations." "The cownose ray example is just one of a growing number of studies that point out that fishery species are connected throughout the foodweb and that management of one species can have consequences for others. Consequently, efforts to manage fisheries need to take into account these multi-species or ecosystem effects," he concludes.

McDonough Hired as Coastal Nature-Based Tourism Specialist

GULF SHORES, Ala. -- Joanne McDonough has been hired through a joint project between Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center and the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau to offer support to existing and new nature-based tourism businesses on the Alabama Gulf Coast. The Auburn University grant will fund the coastal nature-based tourism project for three years. Nature-based tourism brings people into natural areas to experience local flora and fauna in a manner that minimizes the impact on the ecosystem.

In her new job, McDonough will evaluate existing nature-based tourism businesses and identify their needs. She will work with a variety of organizations to provide training and other resources to help improve business management expertise. She will build educational resources to assist nature-based business owners gain a better understanding of the ecosystems in which they work. McDonough also will assist in creating marketing plans for nature-based businesses.

Nature-based tourism is valuable to communities along the coast because it promotes hands-on experience with the natural world. It allows communities to gain economic value from the native natural habitat. It also teaches customers how to become better environmental stewards. McDonough's office is at the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau in Gulf Shores, Ala., and is a resource for all nature-based tourism businesses in Baldwin and Mobile counties.

McDonough has been a resident of Orange Beach, Ala., for 16 years. She spent many years working as a television news producer until 1997, when she opened her own nature-based tourism business: Caribiana Island Cruises. McDonough's enthusiasm and past experience with nature-based tourism are well-suited for her new position, according to Richard Wallace, Director of the Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center. McDonough can be contacted at jmcdonough@gulfshores.com.

Estuary Reflections: Stormwater Management Local Initiative Gains Support

BY David W. Yeager, Director Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

Baldwin County is one of the fastest growing counties in the State of Alabama. In fact, according to Byron Rush White of the Alabama Real Estate Research and Education Center at the University of Alabama, the population of Baldwin County is projected to reach 300,000 to 340,000 by 2016, over twice the current population estimate in just less than 10 years! To make matters worse, this growth is occurring in a region particularly susceptible to its impacts, the coastal zone.

During the past year, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program led a group of individuals representing Baldwin County municipalities, the County Government, the legislative delegation, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Alabama Coastal Foundation, Wolf Bay Watershed Watch, and others in efforts to generate an initiative to deal with one of the most significant byproducts of this explosive growth – stormwater runoff. In fact, a conceptual plan for examining the feasibility of creating a regional stormwater management utility in Baldwin County was transformed into a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow creation of a public service utility capable of helping local governments manage the impacts of stormwater runoff and funded by a small, equitable user fee. Legislation to allow creation of such a utility passed the Alabama House of Representatives and was reported out of Committee favorably in the Senate before action on the bill was postponed on the last day of the 2007 regular session of the Alabama Legislature.

The problem with stormwater, simply put, is that increased growth converts acres of forest and pasture to rooftops, streets, and parking lots – areas categorized as impervious surfaces. These areas do not allow rainfall to infiltrate naturally into the ground but instead create more storm water runoff. More impervious surface in an area increases the volume and velocity of runoff and contributes to surface water quality degradation through increased pollutant loadings carried into area streams and coastal waters. Flooding, increased erosion, habitat destruction, and ultimately aesthetic and property value impacts can all result. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has indicated that polluted runoff is the number one threat to water quality today.

Coastal growth and development are a fact of life. We all want to enjoy the amenities of coastal life, and Baldwin County's growth is certainly not unique. Estimates indicated that 53 percent of the population lived within the coastal zone in 2003 and predicted that 75 percent would live in this zone nationwide by 2025. Two major reports to the Nation since 2003, The Pew Ocean Commission Report and the Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, have both cited the impacts of our growth and development in coastal areas on coastal waters and the oceans. Our local tourism economies and our public health are dependent on water quality, and our coastal water quality depends in large measure on effectively managing polluted runoff.

Stormwater runoff does not follow political boundaries. It is a regional problem and must be dealt with in like fashion, across jurisdictional boundaries. Twelve of the thirteen Baldwin County municipalities and the County Commission passed resolutions supporting development of enabling legislation for a regional stormwater utility. Other groups such as the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce also passed such resolutions.

The fate of this year's attempt at stormwater legislation for Baldwin County is not the most important thing resulting from the efforts of the Baldwin County Stormwater Working Group over the past 11 months. The effort to create a more broadly supported legislative instrument that supports local governments' ability to deal with stormwater management will no doubt continue. What is of primary importance is that Baldwin County's elected leaders and other stakeholders recognize that growth and development in the coastal zone are not without consequence, and that they are willing to initiate and support local actions to mitigate those consequences. The fact that a bill made it this far in the State House during the current session is simply proof of this recognition.

Florida DEP Awarded \$2.5 Million Grant for Florida Coasts

--Funds help restore coastal resources and assist coastal communities--

TALLAHASSEE – The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was recently awarded a \$2.5 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to increase protection for Florida's coastal resources and revitalize coastal communities.

“With thousands of miles of beaches and coastal communities that draw millions of visitors, improve local economies and provide an excellent quality of life for residents, Florida is dedicated to preserving our pristine coastlines and world renowned beaches,” said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. “These federal funds will help strengthen our commitment to working with businesses and local communities to renew beachfronts, improve water quality and safeguard coastal areas.”

The funds will be used for a variety of state priorities including developing a statewide program for reporting seagrass status and trends; providing better protection for and access to Florida's archaeological sites; reducing non-point source pollution; improving interagency coordination of aquaculture activities; and developing plans for post-disaster redevelopment, harmful algal bloom response, and aquatic preserve management. In addition, ten coastal communities will receive funds to improve access on public lands; restore coastal habitats; revitalize waterfront areas; increase public education; promote native landscaping and improve water quality.

DEP's Florida Coastal Management Program includes a network of agencies that protects and enhances the state's natural, cultural and economic coastal resources and helps sustain viable waterfront communities. The program coordinates local, state and federal agency activities using existing laws to

ensure that Florida's coast is as valuable to future generations as it is today. The program will also continue to provide beach safety and beach access materials to coastal communities for the benefit of residents and visitors statewide. For more information on the Florida Coastal Management Program, including information on applying for local grant funding, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/programs/cmp.htm>

Rookery Bay Reserve Hosts Coastal Zone Management Workshop

-Public "envisioning" workshop solicited public input-

NAPLES – June 22, 2007 As part of a series of discussions around the nation, the State of Florida, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Coastal States Organization (CSO) hosted a one-day workshop today at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Naples. Coastal managers, researchers, members of academia as well as stakeholders, including coastal-dependent businesses, recreational users, government and non-profit, emergency response and planning entities were invited to share ideas to shape the future of coastal management in the United States.

"We feel it is extremely important to understand and include the perspectives of stakeholders in this process from the start," said Reserve Manager Gary Lytton. "Everybody has a role to play in the management of our coasts."

More than 120 environmental leaders were in attendance for today's management workshop. Information gathered from the workshop will be used by states, federal agencies and Congress to improve environmental programs. Among the topics discussed were; current and future coastal issues, how current programs are working, ideas for new approaches and solutions to challenges and setting goals for measuring success.

"Today's workshop is another important step in a national effort to protect our coastal resources," said Bob Ballard, Florida's Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation. "To improve the way we manage our coasts we must use opportunities like this one to gather ideas and then put them into action." Across the country, there are five national stakeholder-input meetings being held in Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco and Honolulu. A series of meetings are also being held in Washington, D.C. as well as in several states, with Florida being the first in the series.

"This is a great opportunity for Floridians to influence national legislation concerning how we manage our coastal and ocean resources," said Katherine Andrews, Executive Director of the Coastal States Organization. "Given the length of the state's shoreline, its large coastal populations and how Florida's quality of life is so dependent on healthy coasts, we look to Florida to be a national leader on strengthening coastal management through this Visioning process."

Rookery Bay was established 28 years ago as a partnership between the State of Florida and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The reserve is one of 27 research reserves operating across the nation, a list that includes three in Florida. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal and Aquatic Areas (CAMA) oversees Rookery Bay along with 44 other sites that include aquatic preserves, two other National Estuarine Research Reserves and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's programs are designed to help Floridians better understand and conserve the State's resources through research, education and preservation. For information about Rookery Bay or Florida's Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/.

Rookery Bay Debuts “Estuary Minute” PSA’S on WGCU-FM

--Local public radio station to air spots weekly--

NAPLES – June 13, 2007 Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) is hitting the airwaves this weekend with a new series of public service announcements on WGCU-FM. One minute stories about the Rookery Bay Reserve, the Environmental Learning Center and the stewardship of coastal lands and waters are scheduled to air at 8:19 a.m. every Saturday. “Increasing community awareness of the need to protect our estuaries has always been a priority for us,” said Rookery Bay NERR Director Gary Lytton. “This is a great opportunity for us to reach a much broader audience.”

The series was originally recorded for the audio tour at Rookery Bay’s Environmental Learning Center before being converted to radio format matching National Public Radio style. The twenty-three professionally narrated stories are interspersed with staff interviews and sound bytes on topics such as mangroves, least terns, water quality monitoring and prescribed fire.

Opened in 2004, the Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center is a 16,500 square-foot facility that includes four research laboratories, classrooms, a 140-seat auditorium and a two story visitor’s center. The Learning Center offers a variety of hands-on experiences such as a 2,300 gallon aquarium and interactive exhibits addressing research and stewardship efforts ongoing within the Reserve as well as a nature store, gallery and picnic area. For information about Rookery Bay or Florida’s estuaries, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/. For more about the Friends of Rookery Bay, visit www.rookerybay.org

Anniversary of Babcock Ranch Purchase Highlights a Year of Progress

--2007 Sustainable Florida Legacy Award honors conservation achievement--

TALLAHASSEE – Surrounded by pristine wildlife Babcock Ranch, conserved through an unprecedented partnership between the State of Florida, Kitson & Partners and Charlotte and Lee Counties, recently received the Council for Sustainable Florida’s 2007 Sustainable Florida Legacy Award. The Babcock Preservation Act, which authorized the state funds used to purchase the ranch, was signed a year ago.

“The 2007 Sustainable Florida Legacy Award recognizes efforts of these partnerships to protect in perpetuity this large expanse of environmentally-sensitive land,” said Bob Ballard, Deputy Secretary for Land & Recreation. “Partnering with local governments, the private sector and the community, ensured the preservation of more than 74,000 acres of wildlife habitat, a valuable water-recharge area and an historic working ranch”

The State reached an agreement with Kitson & Partners in 2005 to preserve more than 80 percent of the 91,000-acre ranch. At a total cost of \$350 million, the State committed nearly \$310 million to purchase more than 74,000 acres of the historic ranch for preservation, with Lee County contributing more than \$40 million to the acquisition. Since the acquisition one-year ago, nine board members, with a diverse range of expertise in land management, ranch operations, wildlife management and outdoor recreation, were appointed to a Board of Trustees to develop the management plan for the unprecedented purchase. As a result, the State of Florida has executed the five-year Management Agreement between the Board of Trustees, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Department of Agriculture and Consumer

Services and Lee County that will preserve and protect the property while allowing increased public access

Part of the State's Florida Forever land conservation program, the 74,000-acre acquisition brings to near completion a natural land corridor stretching from Lake Okeechobee to the Gulf of Mexico. The landmark purchase preserves the single largest tract of contiguous conservation lands in the state's history while at the same time protecting a vitally needed water-recharge area for Southwest Florida. Home to the Florida panther, Florida black bear and the crested caracara, Babcock Ranch has expansive tracts of pine flatwoods and scrubby flatwoods and a highly functional freshwater swamp system, Telegraph Swamp.

"The State is proud to receive the 2007 Sustainable Florida Legacy Award as a part of the public, private partnerships that worked diligently toward preserving Babcock Ranch," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "The acquisition of Babcock Ranch not only preserves significant natural habitat for endangered species and other wildlife, it also provides opportunities for future generations to enjoy recreational activities in Florida's natural environment."

The Council for Sustainable Florida, a program of the Collins Center for Public Policy, is a forum on innovative policies and practices linking economic development, environmental stewardship and healthy communities. The Council's Sustainable Florida Awards Program recognizes outstanding leadership in management, technical and scientific innovations and collaborative partnerships. The Council's board of directors and partners represent leaders from both the public and private sectors.

The 10-year, \$3 billion Florida Forever program established by the Florida Legislature in 1999 conserves environmentally sensitive land, restores waterways and preserves important cultural and historical resources. For more information on Florida Forever, visit www.FloridaForever.org. For more information on the Council for Sustainable Florida, visit www.SustainableFlorida.org

Florida Paddling Trail Receives National Recognition

--Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail designated as National Recreation Trail--

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail, managed by the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT), has been designated as a National Recreation Trail—joining an elite list of 1,000 locations. As announced by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne in conjunction with National Trails Day on June 2, the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail was one of the 40 National Recreation Trails (NRT) designated in 2007.

"We are extremely proud of this recognition for the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail, as it showcases the coastal resources of our state and enhances accessibility to so many points of interest," said Jena Brooks, Director of the DEP's Office of Greenways & Trails. "We are pleased to share this honor with the many partners who have supported the development of Florida's longest and most ambitious sea kayaking trail."

National Recreation Trails are components of the National Trails System and recognize existing trails that connect people to resources and improve their quality of life. Florida now boasts 25 NRT designated trails. Trails inducted into the system will receive a certificate of designation and trail markers. With this year's designations, 1,000 trails have been identified as national recreation trails.

"We are excited about the designation as it gives the circumnavigational trail a higher profile and will make it easier for local governments to obtain grants to set up campsites, kayak launches and other trail amenities," said Doug Alderson, Field Director for the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail. "The trail has been embraced by paddlers, outfitters, tourism officials, health professionals and numerous government agencies and their outpouring of support for this designation was impressive."

Now part of a national network of more than 11,000 miles of trail, the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail educates paddlers about Florida's rich history and fragile coastal environment. Following the Florida peninsula from Pensacola around the Keys to the Georgia border, this 1,500-mile sea kayaking paradise is often described as the saltwater version of the Appalachian Trail. The trail highlights 37 of Florida's 41 aquatic preserves and offers paddlers access to many state, national and local parks, seashores, wildlife refuges, marine sanctuaries and historic sites along the coast of Florida.

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

For more information or maps of the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail visit www.FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com. More information about the NRT program is available at www.NPS.gov/RTCA.

Florida DEP Celebrates National Oceans Month

-DEP recognizes President's proclamation of National Oceans Month-

TALLAHASSEE- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is joining the nation to celebrate National Oceans Month. President George W. Bush recently signed a proclamation to honor the world's oceans and recognize those dedicated to making our oceans and coasts cleaner, healthier and more productive. "Throughout the year, DEP remains committed to preserving the oceans that provide us precious natural treasures, food and recreational and economic opportunities," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "With the longest coastline in the contiguous United States, Florida will continue to be one of the nation's leaders in protecting our oceans and coastal resources."

Governor Charlie Crist and DEP are continuing to strengthen coastal and marine protection for Florida. In the Fiscal Year 2007-2008 budget, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$5.2 million to increase protection of Florida's marine resources, including \$3.2 million for the Florida Oceans and Coastal Resources Council and \$2 million for the Osborne Reef tire removal project.

The Florida Legislature set aside \$3.2 million for the Florida Oceans and Coastal Resources Council, a group established by the Legislature in 2005 to develop priorities for ocean and coastal research and establish a statewide ocean research plan. The research plan will focus on water quality research, ocean and coastal systems research and tools and technology research. Priorities will include:

- Real-time statewide information that guides water quality management, navigation and hazard response, and marine resource management.
- Monitoring programs that relate nutrients and living resources to human activities, to provide cost effective resource management programs improving oceans and human health.

- Develop integrated coastal and ocean observing systems and integrated data management prediction programs.

The remaining \$2 million is dedicated to the project removing waste tires from the Osborne Reef off the coast of Broward County. This innovative project combines support from local, state and federal agencies to remove and recycle or dispose of tires from the artificial reef. Approximately two million tires covering 34 acres were placed in 60-70 feet deep water about 1.3 miles off the beach of Ft. Lauderdale in the 1970s to create artificial reefs. Under the direction of Broward County, the U.S. military will dive to recover tires and DEP will explore available recycling opportunities for tires, including being used as fuel for industrial plants.

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

Florida Recognizes Week of June 29 as Clean Beaches Week

--State's beaches provide environmental, recreational and economic value--

TALLAHASSEE - Recognizing the importance of beaches to Florida's marine environment, the state's tourism industry as well as the economy, Florida Governor Charlie Crist recognized June 29 – July 5, 2007 as Clean Beaches Week. Florida is home to the nation's most pristine and well-managed coastal parks, with more than 100 miles of beaches protected for public enjoyment. Florida's beaches make the Sunshine State one of the top travel destinations in the world with 85 million tourists contributing \$65 billion to the state's economy in 2006.

As a testament to the success and value of the state's investment in beach and coastal protection efforts, the Clean Beaches Council recognizes more than 40 of Florida's renowned beaches as Blue Wave Beaches, based upon their water quality, cleanliness, safety, services and maintenance, conservation efforts, warning and information systems, and management of erosion.

Additionally, since 1991 several Florida beaches have been included in the annual list of America's Top Beaches. Caladesi Island State Park is ranked as one of the top two beaches in the country for 2007 by coastal geologist Dr. Stephen Leatherman ("Dr. Beach") of Florida International University. Dr. Beach conducts an annual survey evaluating beach quality on 50 different factors, including water color and temperature, sand color and softness, public access and area wildlife and vegetation.

"Throughout the year, the Department remains committed to preserving the beaches that provide us with precious natural treasures, as well as recreational and economic opportunities," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "We hope as residents and tourists make their Fourth of July plans, they get out and appreciate why Florida continues to be one of the nation's leaders in protecting our oceans and coastal resources."

Governor Charlie Crist and DEP are continuing to strengthen coastal and marine protection for Florida. In the Fiscal Year 2007-2008 budget, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$5.2 million to increase protection of Florida's marine resources, including \$3.2 million for the Florida Oceans and Coastal Resources

Council and \$2 million for the Osborne Reef tire removal project. “This investment by the state has more than environmental benefits,” said Secretary Sole. “For every dollar invested in beach restoration, the state receives a \$6 - \$8 economic return in state taxes from tourists.”

Florida’s beach and dune system acts as the first line of defense during hurricane season. Beach nourishment significantly reduces damage to structures by increasing their distance from the shoreline and providing a buffer to dissipate possible wave energy. Wide sandy beaches reduce the impacts of storm surge and provide wave attenuation reducing structural damage. Since 1999, Florida has invested almost \$350 million to restore Florida’s shoreline, and to date, more than 192 miles of beach has been restored and maintained through the State program. To learn more about the state’s beach and coastal protection efforts visit www.dep.state.fl.us. [View the proclamation.](#)

Research Shows Seagrass Gains in Tampa Bay

Tampa Bay has gained nearly 1,300 acres of seagrass since 2004, and now supports more seagrass than at any time measured since the 1950s, according to newly released data presented to the Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP). Additionally, water clarity in the bay is also the best it has been since record-keeping began, with all major bay segments meeting targets. Overall, the amount of seagrasses in Tampa Bay increased by 4.7 % percent from 2004-2006, according to surveys conducted by scientists with the Southwest Florida Water Management District’s Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program. Seagrasses – which generally grow in waters less than 6 feet deep – are an important barometer of the bay’s health because they require relatively clean water to flourish.

SWIM scientists assess seagrass coverage in the bay every two years, using a combination of maps produced from aerial photographs followed by ground-truthing to verify accuracy. The results are used to track trends in seagrass extent in estuaries throughout Southwest Florida. Digital photography was used for the first time this year to collect the aerial images, said Kris Kaufman, the project coordinator. The use of digital imagery, combined with good water clarity in February 2006 -- when the surveys were conducted -- allowed scientists to reliably map deeper-water seagrass beds for the first time. Field verification also eliminated some areas that had previously been mapped as seagrass but were actually thick mats of algae or some other anomaly.

The results indicate that Tampa Bay has about 28,299 acres of seagrass – far less than the Estuary Program’s goal of 38,000 acres, but the highest recorded total since the benchmark 1950s period adopted by the Program. Water clarity also is meeting Estuary Program goals for all bay segments for the first time since scientists began tracking water quality in the 1970s. Data on water clarity is collected by the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County from more than 60 sampling stations scattered throughout the bay.

Although the overall “report card” on the bay’s health is positive, not all bay segments experienced seagrass expansion. Significant declines were noted in Middle Tampa Bay – which lost 1,180 acres of seagrass from 2004-2006 -- and in Hillsborough Bay, with a loss of 151 acres of seagrass during that time frame. Conversely, the area generally north of the Gandy Bridge, known as Old Tampa Bay, experienced a 16% increase in seagrasses from 2004-2006 – good news for an area that had been steadily losing seagrasses for a decade.

Seagrasses are the nurseries of the bay, sheltering and supporting an amazing variety of juvenile fish and other marine creatures. The Tampa Bay Estuary Program has set a goal of restoring seagrasses baywide to the levels at which they were present in the 1950s, roughly 38,000 acres. Results of the 2004-2006

surveys show that the bay is regaining seagrasses overall at a rate of 2-3% every year. These new statistics are surprising to some scientists because they came in spite of the active hurricane seasons of 2004 and 2005, indicating that seagrasses may be more resilient to hurricane impacts than previously thought.

Project Seeks to Restore Lost Sandbars in Tampa Bay

A \$560,000 research project coordinated by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program seeks to restore natural sandbars to areas of the bay where they once existed. Scientists hope that re-creating the sandbars will facilitate the recovery of underwater seagrasses vital to the bay's health by buffering wave action that may be preventing seagrasses from growing. The project plans to install four longshore bars in various areas of the bay, testing different construction techniques – such a riprap, dredged material and geo-tubes. Funding has been secured for one bar installation, and grants are being sought for the three other experimental sandbars. Seagrass will be transplanted once the bars are in place, and survival and growth rates monitored.

Seagrass already has been transplanted at one site adjacent to MacDill Air Force that historically contained a sandbar. Scientists are monitoring that area to see if the presence of the seagrass might actually promote the natural creation of a sandbar, since seagrasses help to trap and stabilize bottom sediments. Historical photos of the bay indicate sandbars once were prevalent along the shoreline in many areas, but have since disappeared. Scientists speculate that these sandbars helped soften the impacts of waves, allowing seagrasses to flourish in the quiet, protected waters behind the sandbars.

Restoring sandbars in areas vulnerable to erosion from ship wakes may allow seagrasses to once again colonize these areas, they hope. A variety of partners are participating in this innovative project, including the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough; Lewis Environmental Services; the city of Tampa's Bay Study Group; the Tampa Port Authority; and Tampa BayWatch.

Weather Channel Features Louisiana's Disappearing Wetlands

Louisiana's "Disappearing Wetlands" are featured on The Weather Channel's Cover Story during the "Abrams and Bettis" nightly news show on June 20, 2007. This segment is part one (1) in a series to be continued this week. You can watch the segment by clicking on the link below, which includes interviews with Al Levron, Public Works Director of Terrebonne Parish and Chairperson of the Barataria-Terrebonne Management Conference; Jerome Zeringue, Levee and Conservation District Executive Director and Member of the Barataria-Terrebonne Management Conference; Daniel Henry, lifelong Bayou resident and friend of the Estuary; and Kerry St. Pe, Director of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. For best results, please view the segment using Internet Explorer.

http://www.weather.com/multimedia/videoplayer.html?clip=6935&collection=videocoll26&from=vid_brws2&tab=3&nav=14

Louisiana D.W.F. Coordinating Oyster Reef Rehabilitation

Federal Funding Aids Resource Recovery Effort in Hurricane-Impacted Areas

Federally funded reef building activities, overseen by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), are rehabilitating sections of the state's public oyster resources that were impacted by Hurricane Katrina. Public oyster reefs in two areas - Black Bay in Plaquemines Parish (completed in May) and Mississippi Sound in St. Bernard Parish (beginning in June) - are being rehabilitated with approximately \$2.3 million federal hurricane disaster grant funding, part of \$53 million in resource recovery funds provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC).

"These initial expenditures of federal dollars will greatly assist our efforts to stimulate productive reef growth, and both commercial and recreational fishing interests will see the benefit," said Bryant Hammett, LDWF secretary. "Our congressional delegation and the state's fishing industry leaders came together quickly after the hurricanes of 2005, the recovery funding needs were determined and today we are seeing the results of those efforts."

Approximately 200 acres of existing oyster reefs are being rehabilitated in each area this spring. The process involves placing cultch material (limestone, crushed concrete, oyster shell, etc.) on the reefs to provide suitable substrate for larval oyster attachment.

Approximately \$10 million is currently programmed for oyster rehabilitation in the public oyster areas. Additional funds will be spent in subsequent years in various public oyster areas throughout the Louisiana coast. In addition to the \$10 million for public oyster rehabilitation, approximately \$12 million is being used to assist with rehabilitation work performed on private oyster leases under the Private Oyster Lease Rehabilitation (POLR) program. The Louisiana oyster industry in 2003 produced a harvest valued at \$33.4 million annually, supporting 3,300 jobs and generating \$11 million in tax revenue for the state.

In the September 2005 to August 2006 harvest period following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the state's oyster harvest was reduced 26 percent when compared to the five-year, pre-storm average. That percentage is based on the 10.2 million pounds of oysters landed post-Katrina/Rita versus the 13.8 million-pound, average annual landings in the previous five years. The number of jobs within the state's oyster industry, post-Katrina/Rita, has not yet been determined.

"The Louisiana Fishing Community Recovery Coalition (LFCRC), working with the assistance of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, assessed resource damage in the fall of 2005 and determined recovery funding needs," said Mike Voisin, Louisiana Oyster Task Force Chairman and Co-Chair of the LFCRC. "The state's congressional leaders who worked to get us to this point are to be commended for their efforts as we work to rebuild the state's fishing industry."

Additional phases of the fisheries resource recovery work will include removing debris from the traditional coastal fishing grounds critical to the state's commercial and recreational fishing industries. The grant also will fund monitoring programs to track both the recovery of fishery resources as well as that of the fishing industries. For more information, contact Jim Hanifen at 225-765-2383 or jhanifen@wlf.louisiana.gov.

Entergy Contributes to Rebuilding Old Homes in New Orleans

— LADNR assists with energy technology —

The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has teamed with the Preservation Resource Center (PRC) to help homeowners in the Holy Cross and Lower 9th Ward neighborhoods rebuild with techniques that are energy efficient, sustainable and environmentally responsible.

In May of this year, Entergy joined forces with DNR and PRC to donate \$10,000 to the Holy Cross Energy Efficient Historic Homes project.

“This funding will boost our current efforts to an even higher level on these historic homes,” said R. Stephanie Bruno, director of the Preservation Resource Center’s Operation Comeback.

This is the eighth year that Entergy has offered the Environmental Stewardship grants to non-profit groups. The company’s program has funded more than 250 projects (within its operating areas) with grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$17,500.

“Once the Holy Cross neighborhood homes in the program are complete, they will demonstrate how energy savings measures can be used in remodeling older homes. This public-private partnership that started as a result of recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina, will document how a homeowner can use various techniques and products to build energy-efficient homes,” said DNR Energy Manager Paula Ridgeway. DNR intends to produce ‘how-to’ guidebooks and informational materials for the public to use as a result of this demonstration project.

Louisiana Legislature Supports Task Force to Study Comprehensive Office of State Planning

BATON ROUGE, La. (June 20, 2007) - Today, Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) and Louisiana Speaks officials thanked members of the Louisiana Legislature for passing House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 229, a measure introduced by Representative Cheryl Gray in the House and sponsored by President Donald Hines in the Senate, which supports the establishment of a task force that will study and make recommendations for implementation of a comprehensive Office of State Planning. HCR 229 unanimously passed the House of Representatives on Monday, and cleared the Senate late yesterday afternoon.

"Today we thank the Legislature for acting so quickly to implement one of the key recommendations from the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan," said Donna Fraiche, Chair of the LRA's Long Term Planning Task Force. "Once established, this task force will work with citizens, local governments and state agencies to integrate planning for hurricane protection, land use, transportation, health care, education and economic development."

After 18 months of working with world-renowned planners, local experts and tens of thousands of Louisiana citizens, the LRA unveiled the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan in May 2007. The plan, which serves as a roadmap for development over the next 50 years, proposes steps that will help Louisiana recover sustainably, grow smarter, and think regionally.

One of more than 100 action items included in the plan calls for the creation of a coordinating and capacity-building entity at the state level which would provide a framework in which state, regional, and local governing bodies can coordinate to implement Louisiana's strategic vision for the future.

Consistent with this recommendation, HCR 229 calls on the governor to establish a task force which includes representatives from the Governor's Office, the Division of Administration, the LRA, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, the Police Jury Association, the Louisiana Municipal Association, the Louisiana Association of Planning and Development Districts, the Louisiana Chapter of the American Planning Association the Center for Planning Excellence, and Louisiana Speaks. The resolution also requests that the governor convene the task force for its first meeting prior to August 30, 2007. Click here to view complete resolution. (<http://www.legis.state.la.us/billdata/streamdocument.asp?did=442244>)

Louisiana Speaks Update: Key Recommendations from Regional Plan Accomplished this Session

Baton Rouge, LA (June 29, 2007) - This Session, the Louisiana Legislature acted upon several key recommendations from the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan that will increase hurricane protection, lower insurance rates, and improve local, regional and state planning initiatives to move Louisiana forward.

Coastal Master Plan Approved

The first and most crucial step to restoring confidence in South Louisiana's future is to provide physical safety from storms. Recognizing this, the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan called for the immediate adoption, funding, and implementation of the state's master plan for coastal restoration and hurricane protection.

This session the Legislature unanimously approved resolutions to adopt the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's master plan and annual plan for the 2008 fiscal year. This measure clears the way for the state to immediately begin implementing projects to rebuild and sustain coastal marshes, restore barrier islands, and enhance hurricane protection for key population centers. Louisiana's \$510 million share of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenues that will be generated over the next four years, and administered through the federal Coastal Impact Assistance Program, will be used to fund the first steps of implementation of this master plan.

The Legislature's supplemental appropriations measure, House Bill (HB) 765 / House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 10, also includes \$200 million in state funds that will be used to further accelerate implementation of the coastal master plan.

Insurance Rating Commission Abolished

Because the accessibility and affordability of insurance is critical to recovering businesses and homeowners, the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan also called for the Legislature to abolish the Insurance Rating Commission as one part of a detailed strategy to mitigate risk and encourage more private insurers to do business in Louisiana.

Consistent with this recommendation, the Legislature passed House Bill 960 by Rep. Karen Carter, which abolishes the seven-member Louisiana Insurance Rating Commission as of Jan. 1. Because Louisiana is the only state in the nation that still has such a commission, this panel is largely seen as a deterrent that inhibits the expansion of private insurance capacity in the state. HB 960 also establishes a consumer advocate's office that will receive complaints and represent consumers' interests.

Support for Comprehensive Planning and Model Zoning Codes

Because some of the challenges facing Louisiana extend beyond city and parish lines, the regional plan also called for the creation of a coordinating and capacity-building entity which would provide a

framework for state, regional, and local governing bodies to coordinate and implement Louisiana's strategic vision for the future.

Acting upon this recommendation, staff from the Louisiana Recovery Authority and Louisiana Speaks worked with the Legislature to pass House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 229, a measure introduced by Representative Cheryl Gray in the House and sponsored by President Donald Hines in the Senate, which supports the establishment of a task force that will study and make recommendations for implementation of a comprehensive Office of State Planning.

Once established, this task force will work with citizens, local governments and state agencies to integrate planning for hurricane protection, land use, transportation, health care, education and economic development. The Legislature also passed a resolution, HCR 123, to recommend the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance to parishes and municipalities as a means of promoting the development of affordable housing for low and moderate income families.

Hurricane Awareness Breakfast Brings Together Government and Volunteers

LEESVILLE, La. -- Representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Voluntary Agency (VOLAG), local voluntary agencies and government officials from around Vernon Parish recently came together to discuss hurricane season preparations.

CenLa Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) hosted the Hurricane Awareness Breakfast, which was also sponsored by the city of Leesville, the Vernon Parish Sheriff's Office and the Vernon Parish Police Jury. Officials discussed changes made since hurricanes Katrina and Rita, including new regulations regarding sheltering, evacuations and procedural improvements. Other topics included supplies, logistics and funding.

FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison (VAL) Eva Williams discussed FEMA's role in working with nonprofit volunteer organizations, state and local governments and emergency responders in a disaster. Williams explained how a VAL serves as a liaison between FEMA and voluntary agencies in community organizations involved in disaster response and recovery.

The American Red Cross, the Food Bank, United Way, Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief Ministries and the Salvation Army also talked about their roles and responsibilities during a disaster.

The breakfast served as both an educational session as well as a chance for community and government leaders to network with non-profit disaster service organizations. The goal was to forge working relationships now before a disaster threatens the area.

"The breakfast was a good thing to have because it brought government and community leaders together to collaborate on the effort of preparedness," said Williams. "I thank our host VOAD and all those who sponsored this event for having the foresight to make this happen."

Aside from the attending the breakfast, officials have been busy preparing for this year's hurricane season, from updating evacuation maps to improving communication between shelters and law enforcement. 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.

South Louisiana Parishes Receive Funding for Planning Grants

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently approved funding to update existing hazard mitigation plans for five Louisiana parishes - Acadia, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, St. Helena and Tangipahoa. More than a 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 five parishes qualified for grants worth \$112,500 each.

Though all parishes will use the allotted monies to update their existing hazard mitigation plans, each parish will prioritize its own mitigation needs accordingly. Acadia Parish will strengthen their 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. "This grant will help us to identify and define projects that, once implemented, will be very beneficial in reducing damage to property and, perhaps, saving lives," said Lee Hebert, Acadia Parish Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

To update its current hazard mitigation plan, Jefferson Davis Parish will review identified projects for design and engineering feasibility, environmental and cultural resource consideration, benefit cost analysis and cost estimating. Jefferson Parish, with one of the highest rates of repetitive loss properties in the nation, has earmarked monies for projects to identify repetitive loss properties and strengthen critical facilities. These projects will be reviewed for design and engineering feasibility, environmental and cultural resource consideration, benefit cost analysis and cost estimating before being incorporated in the parish's current hazard mitigation plan.

"This planning grant will allow Jefferson Parish to update our previously approved FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan based on experiences from Katrina/Rita and conduct necessary project scoping for hazard mitigation projects that will reduce or eliminate long-term risk for our citizens and their property," said Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard.

St. Helena Parish will compile a list of mitigation projects to address flooding and drainage problems throughout the parish. It will focus on improvements to current flood prone areas, including Margaret's Shop Lane; Under the Hill Street; Pumping Station, Rohner, Leggett, Dennis Lee, Leonard Chapel and Hano Roads and Bobcat Trail Creek. "I'm excited about receiving the money," said St. Helena Parish Emergency Management Director Mark Harrell. "With that money, we will update our mitigation plans and conduct studies on drainage projects, which is a big issue in St. Helena Parish."

To update its plan, Tangipahoa Parish will review identified projects for design and engineering feasibility, environmental and cultural resource consideration, benefit cost analysis and cost estimation. The parish will then coordinate these projects with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan currently being developed for the parish.

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration, to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. 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.

Smart Growth Wins Big On the Mississippi Gulf Coast

The Office of Coastal Management and Planning, at the MS Department of Marine Resources is responsible for coordinating and facilitating smart growth throughout coastal Mississippi. The program continues to provide the in-depth education based on the set of principles and practices of smart growth for development along the MS Gulf Coast. Since the first conference in 1999 the Coastal Development Strategies Conference – Smart Growth continues to be the premier conference providing the information required to increase the knowledge and skills to address the challenges and identify issues associated with environmental protection and economic development in the six lower counties of the state.

Considered the leader in education and outreach on smart growth issues, the Office of Coastal Management and Planning was host to the eighth annual conference. The Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce is now a host partner and provides support for smart growth in the region.

The two day conference was held in May at the IP Casino Resort Spa and was the largest to date. With support from federal, state and local governments, business, non-profit sectors and surrounding community partners the conference has grown into the vehicle where planners, elected officials, attorneys, real estate professionals, economic developers, citizens, environmental groups, industry, business owners, bankers, and others convene to work on strategies, refining ideas and implementation methods for creating sustainable communities in the region.

Keynote speakers MS Governor Haley Barbour and Don Chen, Smart Growth America addressed the more than 600 participants. Chairman Donald Powell, Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding joined the group and offered support during his luncheon address.

Plenary speakers presented issues ranging from Smart Growth/SmartCode, Regional Cooperation, Legislative Issues, Hurricane Hunter Tasks, to Affordable Housing. Concurrent breakout sessions covered Banking, Main Street Programs, Floodplain Management, Heritage Tourism, Development Site Designs using Smart Growth BMP's, Bike Trails, Walking Paths and Green Space, Data and Technology Integration, Wetlands Permitting, and Business Safety designed to assist with land use decisions, water quality, building and redevelopment, economic development and preservation issues.

Over 50 real estate professionals and 20 appraisers received continuing education credits. Community sponsors and exhibitors support the program and strategies. For more information, contact: Tina Shumate Tina.Shumate@dmr.ms.gov.

Beautiful Day, Bountiful Shrimp on Opening Day of the 2007 Mississippi Shrimp Season

BILOXI, Miss.—Shrimp season, which officially opened in Mississippi territorial waters at 6 a.m. today, brought with it better than average size shrimp. The Department of Marine Resources' (DMR) marine fisheries staff was on the water conducting interviews and surveying shrimp boats this morning. Approximately 300 commercial and recreational shrimp boats came out to work the opening day, which is about equal to last year's count of 306. As of June 5, 2007, the number of commercial resident shrimp licenses sold was 356, down 50 from last year. The number of out-of-state commercial shrimp licenses sold was 120, down nine from 2006.

“Reports from the fishermen have been favorable today,” said DMR’s Shrimp and Crab Bureau Director Traci Floyd. The majority of boats were congregated at Belle Fontaine and inside Cat Island. Other boats headed to the inside area of Horn Island where there were reports of larger shrimp. “Our shrimp fishermen are bringing in larger than average size shrimp and in good numbers,” added Floyd. “This reflects the good shrimp growing conditions—warm waters, high salinities, and little rain—that Mother Nature gave us in late winter and spring.”

The DMR’s Marine Patrol was out in full force starting at 6 p.m. June 5 and worked ’round the clock to ensure a smooth shrimp season opening. This included 34 officers, two reserve officers and three dispatchers. Marine Patrol officers conducted patrols from 14 patrol boats throughout the Mississippi Sound. As of 3 p.m. today, the 14 Marine Patrol boats patrolling the waters have responded to two confirmed capsizings and one boat in distress. “We are extremely pleased with the opening day of the 2007 shrimping season,” said Col. Walter Chatagner, Chief of the DMR’s Marine Patrol. “Compliance rates were much higher than in previous years.”

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

MS DMR Offers Free Boat and Water Safety Classes Scheduled for July-September

BILOXI, Miss. –The Department of Marine Resources’ (DMR) Boat and Water Safety class schedule for July through September 2007 is now available. Classes are free and open to all ages. “Summer is upon us, and the boating season is in full swing,” said Lt. Frank Wescovich, head of the DMR’s Boat and Water Safety program. “Unfortunately, the number of boating accidents continues to climb. Now is the time to take advantage of DMR’s free boating safety courses.”

The DMR Marine Patrol-sponsored courses have been designed to effectively introduce topics such as basic boating safety, boating equipment, boat registration, navigating by buoys and channel markers, emergency communications, choosing the right boat, swimmer safety, trailering, first aid response and weather watch into a comprehensive one-day class. The classes will be taught in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties.

In order to operate a motorboat or personal watercraft in Mississippi, those born after June 30, 1980, are required to successfully complete an approved boating safety course and to have a certificate of satisfactory completion in their possession while in operation of the motorboat. “We in Marine Patrol would really like to see everyone wear their life jacket, regardless of age,” Wescovich said. “It is a proven fact that life jackets save lives. Accidents can happen in an instant, and it is usually too late to put on a life jacket. Remember that Safe Boating is No Accident.”

Since the inception of the DMR’s Boat and Water Safety program in March 2000, DMR Marine Patrol Officers have taught over 350 courses and have certified over 3,500 students in Boating Safety. These programs and certification courses are conducted by the DMR free of charge, in the three coastal counties, year-round for the public and in the school systems.

In the DMR's Boat and Water Safety presentation program, students learn the history of boat and water safety, the duties of the DMR's Marine Patrol, what to expect in the certification course and why there is a need for it. Topics covered include registration, safety equipment, negligent operation, who has the right of way, boating accidents, no wake zones, weather and navigational aids.

To register for a free boating safety class or to bring a class into your school, call Marine Patrol Dispatch at (228) 523-4134. For more information, visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes.

Mission-Aransas NERR Hosts Human Dimensions Workshop

Preliminary results of the Mission-Aransas Reserve's April 10-11 human dimensions regional roundtable workshop are now available at the reserve's [web site](#). The workshop engaged regional partners to develop a plan of action for applied social science activities in the Texas "Coastal Bend" region. Approximately 35 stakeholders from state, county and local government, the business community, Texas Sea Grant, academia, the non-profit sector and other local protected areas participated.

The workshop, made possible by a cooperative agreement between the reserve and the Coastal Services Center, included field trips such as an early morning boat cruise to view endangered whooping cranes and other wildlife. The Mission-Aransas Reserve is the 27th in the system and was designated on May 3, 2006.

Texas Lands Major Wind Turbine Research Lab

Department of Energy chooses both Texas and Massachusetts sites

AUSTIN — The future of clean, renewable wind energy will be planned on the Texas Gulf Coast. Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today welcomed the announcement by U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Samuel W. Bodman that Texas will be home to one of two large-scale wind turbine research and testing facilities. This facility will develop the next generation of wind turbine technology, which will produce more kilowatts per turbine.

"This is the birth of a new industry here in Texas," Patterson said. "Once we build these test facilities, the wind turbine and blade manufacturers will come. I think there will be plenty of business for both Texas and Massachusetts to come out winners." Patterson praised President Bush's renewable energy initiatives announced Monday. "President Bush is a Texan who understands the energy business," Patterson said. "The president knows our nation needs oil, gas and coal. But we also need to diversify our portfolio to include renewable energy sources such as wind power."

The site for the Texas large-scale wind turbine and blade testing facility will be just north of Corpus Christi, at Ingleside-on-the-Bay. BP, which has a history of developing cutting edge technologies and is an acknowledged leader in the development of alternative energy, generously donated 22 acres of land for the effort. BP also donated \$250,000 toward funding the facility.

"BP has a major stake in helping the U.S. deliver clean energy from a secure and sustainable resource," said Bob Lukefahr, president of BP Power Americas. "We firmly believe that locating this facility in

Texas will enable the wind industry to move at the pace this nation now demands. Texas has long been recognized as the leading state for the offshore energy industry. By locating the facility in Texas, we will benefit from the ability to leverage the skills and knowledge available from the offshore industry.”

The Texas bid for the test facility was handled by the Lone Star Wind Alliance, a Texas-led coalition of universities, government agencies and corporate partners created to prepare the proposal for submission to the federal government. The Lone Star Wind Alliance includes the University of Houston’s Cullen College of Engineering, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, West Texas A&M University, the Houston Advanced Research Center, Stanford University, Montana State University, New Mexico State University, Old Dominion University, the Texas General Land Office, the State Energy Conservation Office, the Texas Workforce Commission, Governor Rick Perry, Dow Chemical Company, Huntsman and Good Company Associates.

“We are very excited about this opportunity and it is an important step in the leadership of Texas in wind energy,” said Ray Flumerfelt, Dean of the Cullen College of Engineering at the University of Houston. “It will result in Texas having unique world-leading research and test capabilities for large turbine blades and other wind energy system components.”

The facility will be built through an innovative public-private partnership, organized through the National Renewable Energy Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Energy. Private wind turbine and blade manufacturers are expected to fully fund the operations of the facility within five years of its construction. The Texas Legislature played a crucial role in securing the facility, pledging \$5 million toward its construction. State Sen. Judith Zaffirini carried the \$5 million request, and Gov. Perry signed off on it in the final budget. Another \$5 million is pending final approval through the state’s Emerging Technology Fund. Texas’ representatives in Congress were also very supportive, with Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison championing the effort.

Patterson has likened the potential impact of the test facility to that of NASA in Houston during the space race in the 1960s. In May of 2006, the Department of Energy announced it is seeking partners to build a new facility capable of testing blades up to a minimum of 70 meters long. In addition to Texas, the states of Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Ohio and Virginia submitted applications for the test facility.

Energy

Secretary Kempthorne Approves 2007-2012 Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Program Becomes Effective July 1, 2007

WASHINGTON - Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today approved the Minerals Management Service's 2007-2012 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The program, which becomes effective July 1, 2007, schedules 21 lease sales in eight planning areas.

The Minerals Management Service estimates that the program could produce 10 billion barrels of oil and 45 trillion cubic feet of natural gas over 40 years, generating almost \$170 billion, in today's dollars, in net benefits for the nation. "This energy production will create jobs, provide greater economic and energy security for America and can be accomplished in a safe and environmentally sound manner," Kempthorne

said. "The approval and implementation of this new program mark the culmination of almost two years of extensive consultation by the Department of the Interior with coastal states, the public at large, the environmental community and the natural gas and oil industry. The new program balances the critical need for domestic energy resources with protection of human, marine and coastal environments."

The final program is identical to the proposed final program announced by Secretary Kempthorne on April 30, 2007. Twelve sales are slated for the Gulf of Mexico, eight off the coast of Alaska and, at the request of the Commonwealth of Virginia, one in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area, which would be at least 50 miles off the coast of Virginia. This sale would only take place if the presidential withdrawal is modified and the congressional moratorium discontinued in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area. The department will conduct additional environmental reviews and consultations before deciding whether to proceed with each sale. A table listing the schedule of 2007-2012 oil and gas lease sales, maps of the program areas and the complete final program are available online at: <http://www.mms.gov/5-year>.

Coastal Impact Assistance Program Environmental Assessment Available

Finding of No Significant Impact

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has published a final programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) and Finding of No Significant Impact. The EA assesses potential impacts on the environment from the implementation of the program, and assists MMS in planning and decision making on future assessment of individual CIAP projects. The EA is available on the MMS website at: www.mms.gov/offshore/CIAPmain.htm.

The CIAP was established under section 384 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior, through MMS, to distribute \$250 million annually to six states -- Alabama, Alaska, California, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas -- all Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas producing states, in fiscal years 2007 through 2010. The Act requires that all CIAP funding be used for projects and activities for the conservation, protection, or restoration of coastal areas, including wetlands; mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, or natural resources; planning assistance and the administrative costs of complying with CIAP legislation; implementation of a federally-approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan; or mitigation of the impact of OCS activities through funding of onshore infrastructure projects and public service needs.

MMS recently announced availability of the FY 2007 and FY 2008 allocations to each of the six eligible states and their Coastal Political Subdivisions (CPSs), which include counties, parishes, or boroughs. CIAP funds will be distributed through a grant process. States must submit a State CIAP plan to MMS. Once a State plan has been approved by MMS, States and their CPSs can submit grant applications to MMS. CIAP funds cannot be drawn without MMS approval of grant applications. MMS will accept grant applications beginning in mid-October 2007. More information on the CIAP program is available at: <http://www.mms.gov/offshore/CIAPmain.htm>.

OCS Alternative Energy Draft Programmatic EIS Comments Available

Public comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Alternative Energy Development and Production and Alternate Use of Facilities on the Outer Continental Shelf are now

available for browsing or downloading from the OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Programmatic EIS Information Center at <http://ocsenergy.anl.gov/draftcomments/index.cfm>

The Draft Programmatic EIS is available at <http://ocsenergy.anl.gov/eis/guide/index.cfm>. For more information about the Programmatic EIS and public involvement activities, visit the OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Programmatic EIS Information Center at <http://ocsenergy.anl.gov>, or contact us at: ocsenergywebmaster@anl.gov. Please forward this message to any party you feel may be interested in the OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Programmatic EIS.

Other News

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Releases New Orleans Risk Analysis

NEW ORLEANS – (June 20, 2007) – Today the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released the prototype risk assessment for the hurricane protection system in the New Orleans, La., vicinity. This comprehensive risk analysis was developed by the Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET) as part of their mission to study the effects of Hurricane Katrina on the protection system. The innovative risk assessment provides information on the vulnerability of the protection system as it existed June 1, 2007. Future risk analysis work using these new modeling tools will look at the next level of protection (100-year storm elevations) for the protection system that will be provided in the coming years.

These prototype risk products profile pre-Katrina and current protection system conditions. This shows the dynamics of risk and the effects of system improvements on risk and vulnerability. The risk products already show risk reductions in some areas from repairs and improvements to the protection system. This risk information will be useful for officials and the public to make their own informed decisions. The risk products for the 100-year elevation levels of the protection system will be done later this summer by the New Orleans District using the IPET risk models.

The IPET risk analysis employs the most advanced physics, mathematics, engineering, hydrological, geological and meteorological knowledge available. It incorporates three main factors when determining risk: hazard (probability of hurricanes, their surge and waves), the protection system (performance of levees, floodwalls, and other structures) and consequences (loss of life or property). Incorporating the hazard into the risk assessment involved modeling the chances of many possible future hurricanes. The IPET factored the chances by using a suite of 152 different possible future hurricanes that might hit the Louisiana coast, ranging in severity from 50-year storms (2 percent annual chance of occurring) to 5,000-year storms (.02 percent annual chance of occurring). To achieve this modeling feat, an entirely new advanced hurricane modeling method was developed by the IPET, the Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, universities and private industry.

The hurricane modeling provided critical water levels (storm surge and waves) about hazard for future storm events. These water levels were then applied to New Orleans' 350-mile hurricane protection system to determine reliability factors. More than 135 reaches of floodwalls and levees, representative of uniform areas of the system, and 350 specific structures (gates, transition points, pump stations and other features) were profiled in the protection system model. Information on elevation, design, construction, maintenance, soil foundations, soil erosion and other factors was incorporated into the structural data to determine the overtopping, overtopping and erosion breaching, foundation failure, and other parameters

of the protection system performance. These factors gave the reliability and potential flooding aspects of the protection system.

This information was then applied to pre-Katrina population and property values to determine risk for loss of life and economic losses for the entire region by natural drainage basins in the area parishes.

Annualized risk for flooding (water depths) was also computed for these areas based on hurricane hazard, structural reliability, and ground elevation.

Risk modeling can be developed into a variety of products, such as maps, graphics and other information. This information displays risk elements by sub-basin, basin, or region:

- Probability of inundation (getting your feet wet, to deep water flooding);
- Risk to populations or property;
- Relative risk by parish (county);
- Principal sources of risk from breaching, overtopping, flooding from a transition point or special feature, etc.; and.
- Specific sources of risk (i.e., a gate, transition point or structure).

The first set of publicly-released risk products on June 20 is prototype drafts that will receive additional detailed technical review and public comment. Peer review panels from the American Society of Civil Engineers and the National Academies' National Research Council will complete technical reviews, as they have for all the IPET analyses, reports and findings.

The Corps of Engineers has already solicited comments from local officials and the public from a series of presentations of the draft risk products during the last six weeks to ensure the risk products are useful and effective. Samples of the risk products, interactive map links, and other information can be accessed at <http://NOLArisk.usace.army.mil> or at <https://IPET.wes.army.mil>. For more information: http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/Status%20Report%20Newsletters/June_20_2007_R&R_Rollout.pdf

EPA Delivers First National Estuary Condition Report

(Washington, D.C. - June 5, 2007) The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released its first *National Estuary Program Coastal Condition Report*, which ranks the condition of ecological resources in the 28 estuaries of EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP). This report serves as a foundation for EPA's efforts to protect, manage and restore coastal ecosystems.

"As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the National Estuary Program, we are seeing that nothing can compare to the value of partnerships in delivering lasting environmental results," said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. "Under the leadership of President Bush, more than 1 million acres of coastal habitat have been restored and protected. Together with our vital partners, EPA is ensuring our coasts and wetlands remain beautiful, ecologically-sound treasures for generations of Americans."

Overall, the NEPs are in fair condition and scored better than or equal to all other non-NEP U.S. estuaries despite significant population pressures. The information in the report is based upon EPA-sponsored monitoring data collected from 28 NEPs between 1999 and 2003 as well as monitoring data collected by the individual NEPs. The data were collected as part of EPA's National Coastal Assessment – the most comprehensive and nationally consistent data set available on estuarine conditions. The NEP estuaries were rated individually, regionally, and nationally using four primary indicators of estuarine condition: water quality, sediment quality, benthic (bottom) condition, and fish-tissue contaminant concentrations.

While population pressures in the NEPs were greater than those in the non-NEP estuaries from 1990-2000, the NEP estuaries showed the same estuarine conditions as, or better than, other coastal waters overall. By 2000, more than two-thirds of the coastal population lived in NEP counties, which comprise less than six percent of the coastal land area. Twenty-eight of the nation's estuaries are located in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico. They have been designated as estuaries of national significance because of their unique economic, ecological, recreational and aesthetic values.

In the United States, estuaries provide habitat for more than 75 percent of America's commercial fish catch. Estuarine-dependent fisheries are among the most valuable, with an estimated worth of more than \$1.9 billion nationwide. Coastal recreation and tourism generate an additional \$8 to \$12 billion annually. The report can be accessed at [NEP Coastal Condition Report: epa.gov/owow/oceans/nepccr/index.html](http://epa.gov/owow/oceans/nepccr/index.html).

EPA Gulf Program Seeks Entries for 2007 Gulf Guardian Awards

(STENNIS SPACE CENTER, MS – JUNE 14, 2007) – The Gulf of Mexico Program today announced that entry forms for the 2007 Gulf Guardian Awards are available online at: <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/gulfguard.html>. The deadline for applying for a 2007 Gulf Guardian Award is July 31.

The Gulf of Mexico Program partnership developed the Gulf Guardian awards in 2000 as a way to recognize and honor the businesses, community groups, individuals and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. Each year, a first, second and third place winner are awarded in seven categories: 1) Business, 2) Government, 3) Civic/Nonprofit Organizations, 4) Youth/Education, 5) Partnerships, 6) Individual and 7) Binational, which jointly honors U.S/Mexico Partnership programs and projects.

“Government alone can’t solve the environmental challenges we face today,” said Bryon Griffith, director of the Gulf of Mexico Program, encouraging applications for these prestigious awards. “The Gulf Guardian applicants and subsequent winners over the years have repeatedly demonstrated that the answer to our environmental problems is by working together as one Gulf community through creative and effective public and private partnerships.”

The Gulf of Mexico Program began in 1988 to protect, restore and maintain the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem in economically sustainable ways. The Program is sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is a non-regulatory, inclusive consortium of state and federal government agencies and representatives of the business and agricultural community, fishing industry, scientists, environmentalists and community leaders from all five Gulf States. The Gulf Program seeks to improve the environmental health of the Gulf in concert with economic development.

To apply for a Gulf Guardian Award, go to the web address above and click on the “2007 Gulf Guardian Application” link. The application is available in English and in Spanish. Please email your completed application to gulf.guardian@epa.gov. For more information, please call Diane Altsman at 228-688-7015.

Grant Opportunities

GEMS-CRP Request for Preproposals

Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership is seeking to fund on-the-ground activities throughout the Gulf of Mexico which restore marine, estuarine, and riparian habitats benefiting living marine resources and provide educational and social benefits by significantly involving the community. Preproposals are due by July 31, 2007. Funding will be available January 2008.

Previous projects funded in Alabama include Bohemian Park Stream Restoration, The Baldwin County Grasses in Classes Program, wetland restoration at the Weeks Bay NERR and the ACF Mon Louis Island Restoration Project.

The Request for Preproposals and application are accessible at <http://gulfmex.org/restoration.htm>. Prior to submitting an application, applicants should read these documents carefully as they provide guidance as to what is required and what reviewers of the proposals will be looking for.

Please feel free to forward this notice to any one you think may be interested in applying for grant funds. Questions may be sent to Carl Ferraro, ADCNR at carl.ferraro@dcnr.alabama.gov or to Kathryn Tunnell, the Gulf of Mexico Foundation program coordinator, at Kathryn@gulfmex.org.

Galveston Bay Estuary Program Education and Outreach Grants

The Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) announces the opportunity for eligible entities to secure grant funding for up to two years to perform Galveston Bay education and outreach education efforts. GBEP expects to award, but does not guarantee, \$100,000.00 in Fiscal Year 2008 federal funds to multiple grantees. Eligible entities that may be interested in applying for a grant include: state agencies; colleges and universities; city and county governments; school districts; political subdivisions of the state (port authorities, river authorities, soil and water conservation districts, groundwater conservation districts); councils of governments and other regional authorities; and non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations.

Interested parties are encouraged to view the Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) for complete specifications at http://esbd.tbpc.state.tx.us/bid_show.cfm?bidid=71525. Additional information on the Galveston Bay Estuary Program can be obtained at www.gbep.state.tx.us. The deadline for responding to this RFGA is September 6, 2007.

Climate and Coastal Resource Management Grants

NOAA's Climate Program Office (NOAA/CPO) announces FY 2008 funding opportunity for several programs focused on applied impacts, adaptation and decision support research. One of these programs, the Sectoral Applications Research Program (SARP), includes an explicit focus on climate and coastal resource management (in addition to water and drought). SARP is designed to catalyze and support interdisciplinary research, and the development of innovative outreach and education methodologies that

enhance the capacity of key socio-economic sectors to respond to and plan for climate variability and change through the use of climate information and related decision support resources. Proposals from interdisciplinary teams of researchers that demonstrate an active partnership with planners and/or resource managers in coastal regions are encouraged.

For examples of the types of projects SARP has funded to date, please see http://www.climate.noaa.gov/cpo_pa/sarp/. For further details about the FY 2008 funding opportunity (including an Information Sheet that describes SARP program priorities for FY 2008), please visit the CPO website at <http://www.climate.noaa.gov/>. Letters of Intent are due by July 23, 2007. Full proposals must be submitted through Grants Online by September 24, 2007.

Training and Conferences

Governor Crist Highlights Agenda for Florida Summit on Global Climate Change

Keynote speakers to include international experts on global climate change –

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today announced speakers and [agenda](#) details for the Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change to be held at the Intercontinental Miami Hotel on July 12-13, 2007. With more than 450 participants and nearly 100 Florida, national and international journalists registered for the two-day conference, Governor Crist invited interested individuals, organizations and media to finalize their plans to attend by registering at www.MyFloridaClimate.com.

“I am confident that every person who cares about Florida’s environmental and economic future will want to join us for this summit,” Governor Crist said. “Our outstanding keynote speakers and panelists will share their tremendous insight into the importance of Florida’s developing strategies to address global climate change.”

Last month, Governor Crist announced three keynote speakers for the summit: California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Theodore Roosevelt IV. In addition, the summit will bring together other state, regional, national and international leaders in global climate change, as well as significant members of the business and environmental communities, to explore methods for advancing the global climate change agenda and for adopting specific climate action plans.

Agenda for the Florida Summit on Global Climate Change

Speakers and panelists at the summit will help participants understand the urgency of climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Topics of sessions include clean and renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, efficient transportation and land use, agriculture and forestry conservation and success stories relating to reducing carbon emissions.

Panelists with expertise in increasing energy efficiency include Dr. Bill Chameides, chief scientist for Environmental Defense, and Dr. R. Neil Elliot, director of the Agriculture and Industry Program for the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. Dr. Nick Bollman with the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions at Florida Atlantic University will speak about how smart-growth principles can increase energy efficiency.

Today, Governor Crist announced that venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, co-founder of Sun Microsystems, will be a keynote speaker at the event. Khosla has invested heavily in renewable energy companies, including ethanol companies. His firm, Khosla Ventures, supports breakthrough scientific work in clean technology areas such as bio-refineries for energy and bioplastics, solar batteries and other environmentally friendly technologies.

Other renewable energy experts will include Dr. James M. Fenton of the Florida Solar Energy Center; Dr. Lonnie Ingram, distinguished professor of microbiology and director of the Florida Center for Renewable Chemicals and Fuels at the University of Florida; Ernie Shea, project coordinator of 25x'25 America's Energy Future; and wind-energy expert, Steve Bolze, president of Power Generation at GE Energy.

About the Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change

The summit will bring together policy makers, academics, scientists, environmentalists and the business community to discuss the impact of climate change in Florida. These experts will help develop best practices related to alternative fuels and emission standards. The group's strongest recommendations will help shape procedures for state agencies and future legislation. Individuals and media interested in attending the summit can register at www.MyFloridaClimate.com. For more information, visit www.MyFloridaClimate.com or www.flgov.com.

New Approaches to Floodplain Management for Coastal Communities

Thursday, July 19, 2007 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

New Approaches to Floodplain Management for Coastal Communities is a FREE workshop designed to provide participants with skills needed to implement floodplain management strategies that help decrease the cost of natural disasters, increase community resiliency, and reduce negative impacts from flood events to local coastal resources. Six hours of continuing education credit will be available for floodplain managers. Presented by: Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM), Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) and Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP), Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL)

Location: Gulf Coast Research Laboratory Auditorium, 703 East Beach Drive Ocean Springs, MS 39564
<http://www.usm.edu/gcrl/location/index.php>

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

