

# Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

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## NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

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### ***Impacts of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma on Commercial and Recreational Fishery Habitat Report Released***

The report, "[Impacts of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma on Commercial and Recreational Fishery Habitat](#)", mandated by the U.S. Congress under Section 213(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act, discusses the impacts of the 2005 hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma on commercial and recreational fishery habitat, including that of shrimp and oysters, for the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Where possible the report describes pre- and post-hurricane habitat conditions. However, much of the information in this report comes only from post-hurricane sampling and some is only qualitative or anecdotal. A companion report, "[Report to Congress on the Impacts of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma on Alabama, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas Fisheries](#)", mandated under Section 213(a), is also available.

### ***NOAA Develops Seafood Consumer Guide***

*To be Unveiled at the Great American Seafood Cook-off in New Orleans*

Seafood consumers in the U.S., increasingly concerned about the sustainability and quality of seafood, can now turn to a NOAA Fisheries Service Web site, FishWatch, for the latest information. The Web site, at <http://www.fishwatch.noaa.gov>, has information on more than 30 of the most popular seafood species, with more species to be added in the near future. NOAA Fisheries Service is inviting the public to visit the FishWatch Web site and provide feedback on the program through the comments section within the next 60 days.

"Consumers are increasingly concerned about the safety, quality, and sustainability of the seafood they eat," said [Bill Hogarth](#), NOAA Fisheries Service director. "This guide brings accurate fish information available to your seafood market, and it allows consumers to make informed decisions about purchasing seafood."

FishWatch provides seafood consumers with timely information about seafood, such as red snapper. The Web site includes details on population strength and status, as well as consumer information such as on fat content and vitamins. FishWatch also provides economic information, such as where seafood comes from and how much money it brings to the economy.

The President's Ocean Commission charged NOAA Fisheries Service with informing the public about the status of the living marine resources managed by the agency, and FishWatch is an outgrowth of that initiative. Hogarth plans to unveil the FishWatch guide at the fourth annual Great American Seafood Cook-off in New Orleans, La., on August 4, 2007. NOAA co-sponsors the cook-off to celebrate the wide variety, high quality and sustainability of domestically harvested seafood.

## **NOAA Updates Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook**

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center today released its update to the [2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook](#), maintaining its expectations for an above-normal season. As we enter the peak months (August through October) of the Atlantic hurricane season, NOAA scientists are predicting an 85 percent chance of an above-normal season, with the likelihood of 13 to 16 named storms, with seven to nine becoming hurricanes, of which three to five could become major hurricanes (Category 3 strength or higher on the [Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale](#)).

The development of key climate factors through early August has increased the confidence of an above-normal season, and has also led the NOAA team to slightly tighten the ranges that had been given in their May outlook – due to development of [La Niña-like](#) conditions exerting influence. In May, NOAA predicted a range of 13-17 named storms, with seven to 10 becoming hurricanes, and three to five becoming major hurricanes.

The climate patterns responsible for the expected above-normal 2007 hurricane season continue to be the ongoing multi-decadal signal (the set of oceanic and atmospheric conditions that have spawned increased Atlantic hurricane activity since 1995), warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures in key areas of the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, and the [El Niño/La Niña cycle](#), according to [Gerry Bell](#), Ph.D., lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center based in Camp Springs, Md.

“Most of the atmospheric and oceanic conditions have developed as expected, and are consistent with those predicted in May,” said Bell. “The biggest wild card in the May outlook was whether or not La Niña would form, and if so, how strong it would be. “Today’s El Niño/La Niña forecast from the Climate Prediction Center indicates a slightly greater than 50 percent probability that La Niña will form during the peak of the hurricane season. But more importantly, we are already observing wind patterns similar to those created by La Niña across the tropical Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea that encourage tropical cyclone development. The conditions are ripe for an above-normal season.”

NOAA's seasonal outlooks do not specify where and when tropical storms and hurricanes could strike. Nevertheless, during above-normal seasons many of the storms form over the tropical Atlantic Ocean. These systems generally track westward, towards the United States and the Caribbean Sea, thereby posing an increased threat to these regions. So far this season, there have been three Atlantic named storms ([Andrea, Barry and Chantal](#)), which is slightly above average. On average, one to two storms develop in June and July. The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30.

The 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season outlook is a joint product of the scientists at NOAA's [Climate Prediction Center](#), [National Hurricane Center](#), [Hurricane Research Division](#), and [Hydrometeorological Prediction Center](#). NOAA meteorologists use a suite of sophisticated computer forecast models and high-tech tools to forecast tropical storms and hurricanes. Scientists rely on information gathered by NOAA and [U.S. Air Force Reserve](#) personnel who fly directly into storms in hurricane hunter aircraft; NOAA, NASA and Department of Defense [satellites](#); a network of [Doppler radars](#) and [buoys](#) and partners among the international meteorological services.

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 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

## ***NOAA Provides Easy Online Access to Historical Hurricane Tracks***

Visitors to NOAA's [Historical Hurricane Tracks](#) Web site and mapping application can easily generate customized maps based on more than 150 years of Atlantic hurricane data. The recently updated Web site includes historical tropical cyclone data and information on coastal county hurricane strikes through 2006. Developed by the NOAA [Coastal Services Center](#) in partnership with the [National Hurricane Center](#), the site allows users to search by U.S. ZIP code, state or county, or latitude and longitude points. Visitors can also search the site using a storm's name or year. From this information, they can generate a map showing the track of the storm or storms along with a table of information. Searches can be narrowed to specific storm categories, years, or months.

"Understanding the history of hurricane landfalls in your community is an important step toward assessing your vulnerability to these potentially devastating storms," said Ethan Gibney, a senior geospatial analyst for NOAA and one of the site's developers. "The Historical Hurricane Tracks Web site allows visitors to quickly and easily conduct highly customized searches of historical hurricane data." The site also features a searchable database of population changes from 1900 to 2000 for U.S. coastal counties versus hurricane strikes, as well as links to detailed text reports on the life history and effects of U.S. tropical cyclones since 1958.

"The increasing coastal population means more people are at risk when the next big storm approaches," said [Margaret Davidson](#), director of the NOAA Coastal Services Center in Charleston, S.C. "And in many cases, the majority of these residents have never experienced a hurricane. With the coastal population tool found on the site, emergency managers can get a quick picture of which counties face the greatest potential risk and then plan outreach and education efforts accordingly." For municipalities or individuals who use geographic information systems, the data can also be downloaded as a GIS file, along with accompanying metadata.

## ***Survey to Address Marine Research Needs***

Anyone interested in Gulf of Mexico coastal and marine issues is invited to complete a survey that will help scientists and funding agencies prioritize regional research and informational needs. Participants can help shape the future direction of Gulf of Mexico research, discovery and information dissemination by identifying the topics they believe are most important. The survey, which takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, is available online at <http://masgc.org/gmrp>.

Resources that help scientists and managers understand the natural and human-caused impacts on the Gulf are limited, yet coastal and marine concerns continue to rise. Current topics of concern include stewardship of natural and cultural resources, ecosystem and human health, marine operations, natural hazards and the ocean's role in climate. This survey and other stakeholder input will be used to develop a regional priorities plan for the Gulf of Mexico research community. The plan will assist research-based organizations collaboratively work to address the most-pressing needs.

The Gulf of Mexico Research Prioritization and Information Needs project is coordinated regionally by the Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi-Alabama and Texas Sea Grant programs and engages federal, state, university, non-governmental, and international organizations. The project is funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. For more information, contact Steve Sempier, Sea Grant Gulf of Mexico research coordinator, at [stephen.sempier@usm.edu](mailto:stephen.sempier@usm.edu) or (662) 325-5509.

## ***Fisheries Management at Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Benefits from NCCOS Expertise***

A National Center for Coastal Ocean Science scientist participated in two workshops at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary held on July 18-19 in Galveston, Texas at the NOAA Fort Crockett laboratory. The two workshops were “Fishing Impacts Workshop” and “Boundary Expansion Workshop.” Potential action strategies were discussed to address possible impacts related to fishing at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. CCMA was invited to participate due to previous interest and expertise in the area. The workshop was also open to the public. For more information, please contact [Charles.Menza@noaa.gov](mailto:Charles.Menza@noaa.gov).

## ***Texas Mapping Project Merits Journal’s Cover Story***

A benthic habitat mapping project along the Texas Gulf Coast was the cover story in the August issue of the journal *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing*. The article, which can be accessed at <http://www.asprs.org/publications/pers/2007journal/august/>, describes how the Texas Seagrass Monitoring Program will be used to help locate and protect seagrass beds. To support this program, NOAA’s Coastal Services Center collaborated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas A&M University Center for Coastal Studies. For more information, contact [Bill Stevenson](#).

## ***NOAA Helps to Remove Marine Debris from Florida Waters***

NOAA’s Restoration Center, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, partnered with the State of Florida and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to locate and remove illegal lobster condos or “casitas” from the sanctuary. Casitas are sheets of waterproof material (steel, cement, tin, etc.) propped four to six inches above the seafloor on cement blocks or similar structures, creating an ideal habitat for spiny lobsters. The casitas smother the seafloor and concentrate lobsters for increased harvest through illegal fishing. Florida prohibits harvesting spiny lobsters on non-permitted artificial structures. NOAA conducted side scan sonar surveys over 12 square miles to locate the casitas. Over 60 of the illegal structures were removed from the seafloor. This multi-agency effort was a first step in addressing this issue. For more information, visit <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/projects/casitas.html>, or contact [Carey Morishige](#).

## ***NCCOS Research Points to Prioritization to Improve Seagrass Restoration Following Vessel Groundings***

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science research on the physical factors influencing seagrass recovery from vessel groundings in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary should improve restoration effectiveness by prioritizing sites according to probability (or lack thereof) of natural recovery. The age, original volume of injury to the sediment, and the site’s relative wave exposure significantly influence the potential for seagrass recovery. Larger, newly formed injuries exposed to higher wave energy exhibited lower probabilities for recovery compared to smaller, older injuries in environments with lower wave exposure. These three variables in combination resulted in predictions of seagrass recovery with probabilities of 50% at best. Nonetheless, a site with low probability for seagrass recovery should be assigned a high priority for restoration. If conditions are favorable for recovery,

restoration may be postponed or unnecessary. These preliminary findings were presented at the 92nd Annual Meeting of the Ecological Society of America (ESA) in San Jose, August 5-10. For more information contact [Amy.Uhrin@noaa.gov](mailto:Amy.Uhrin@noaa.gov).

### ***Characterization of Stress Responses in the Florida Red Tide Dinoflagellate Provides Tools for Forecasting Bloom Termination***

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researchers have demonstrated that the Florida red tide dinoflagellate efficiently responds to environmental change without troubling to activate genes typically needed to protect cells from stress. Identification of the suite of proteins produced during these adaptive responses provides tools for identifying blooms undergoing stress and predicting their termination. Since the impacts of this harmful algal bloom species are most severe when coastal blooms persist for several months, the ability to predict bloom termination could provide coastal managers with essential information needed for decision making. Florida red tides cause extensive marine animal mortalities and human respiratory illness, resulting in significant economic impacts on coastal communities on the Gulf coast. For more information, contact [Fran.VanDolah@noaa.gov](mailto:Fran.VanDolah@noaa.gov).

### ***Hypoxia Task Force Revised Action Plan to Reduce Size of Hypoxic Zone in Gulf of Mexico***

The Coordinating Committee of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force took a critical step toward a revised draft of the 2001 Action Plan to reduce the size of the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf of Mexico during its meeting on August 14-16, 2007. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) plays a key advisory role on the Task Force Coordinating Committee, and NCCOS-funded monitoring of the Dead Zone is the primary metric through which the efficacy of nutrient reduction activities is evaluated. In addition to reassessing management goals, the Coordinating Committee developed specific action items for improved science and nutrient reduction strategies to allow for increased specificity of actions and accountability within the revised Action Plan. A draft of the revised Action Plan will be reviewed by the Task Force at its 15th meeting on October 29-30, 2007. For more information, please contact [David.Kidwell@noaa.gov](mailto:David.Kidwell@noaa.gov).

### ***Alabama Added to the Volunteer Phytoplankton Monitoring Network to HAB Forecasting in the Gulf of Mexico***

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's Southeast Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (SEPMN) has enhanced its Gulf of Mexico monitoring efforts to include Alabama, which will support NOAA's Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast by providing new regional coverage and seasonal abundance data for the toxic dinoflagellate *Karenia brevis*. Operation of six monitoring sites along the Alabama coast will be sponsored by the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Institute and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, while SEPMN will provide training and network support. SEPMN enhances the awareness of harmful algae and their impacts, and directly engages volunteers in coastal stewardship, with 72 groups monitoring over 96 sites along the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, Hawaii and the Virgin Islands. For more information, contact [Steve.Morton@noaa.gov](mailto:Steve.Morton@noaa.gov).

## ***Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Summit***

On August 25, 2007, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour hosted executive level representation from the five Gulf States, the Interagency Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management Integration federal agencies, and several members of Congress and their staffs, for a dialogue on the future of the [Gulf of Mexico Alliance](#).

Under the theme of “Building upon a Successful State-Federal Partnership,” the five Gulf States reviewed successes to date in achieving the [Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts](#) and outlined a vision for the next phase of the Alliance. This vision includes the development of a new five-year action plan and an associated legislative strategy. Federal, nonprofit, and industry representatives agreed to support the Alliance and collaboratively address regional priorities identified by the five Gulf States. Federal agencies additionally agreed to work to enhance the existing federal support framework to the Alliance and the Governors' Action Plan. For more information contact [Brent.Ache@noaa.gov](mailto:Brent.Ache@noaa.gov).

## **Other NOAA News**

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### ***NOAA Fisheries Service Issues Rule to Improve Sea Turtle Bycatch Monitoring***

NOAA Fisheries Service issued a rule under the Endangered Species Act today to require fishing vessels in designated fisheries to take observers on board to help collect information on bycatch of sea turtles. Collected information from the observers helps better protect sea turtles from being injured or killed in fishing nets. All sea turtles in the United States are listed as endangered or threatened. Thousands die each year as a result of getting entangled in fishing gear.

“We’re issuing this rule to increase our ability to protect sea turtles, and to restore their populations,” said [Bill Hogarth](#), NOAA Fisheries Service director. “Observers collect key scientific information that we need to minimize bycatch in our fisheries. This information also helps us carry out our obligations under the ESA.”

NOAA Fisheries Service will be better positioned to address the sea turtle bycatch problem in the future as a result of the observer rule. Observers will help determine whether existing measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch are working, or whether new or additional measures are needed. The rule will apply to designated fishing vessels operating in both state and federal waters, and to designated U.S. fishing vessels on the high seas.

Current regulations under the Endangered Species Act allow NOAA Fisheries Service to place observers on vessels on a short-term basis in response to an emergency event, such as a mass sea turtle stranding. However, these limited, temporary observer requirements do not enable the agency to collect comprehensive information on all sea turtle-fishery interactions of concern. The new rule allows NOAA Fisheries Service to identify potential sea turtle bycatch problems before they reach crisis levels, which could ultimately result in stricter management measures.

Under this rule, each year NOAA Fisheries Service will publish in the [Federal Register](#) a draft and final determination of fisheries it intends to monitor for sea turtle interactions. The determination will be based

on the best available information regarding sea turtle-fishery interactions, sea turtle distribution or fishing gear characteristics.

The final rule can be found online at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/turtles/regulations.htm>. [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.

**On the Web:**

Final Observer Rule: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/turtles/regulations.htm>

## ***Greenhouse Gases Likely Drove Near-Record U.S. Warmth in 2006***

Greenhouse gases likely accounted for more than half of the widespread warmth across the continental United States last year, according to a new study by four scientists at NOAA's Earth System Research Lab in Boulder, Colo. Last year's average temperature was the second highest since record-keeping began in 1895. The team found that it was very unlikely that the 2006 El Niño played any role, though other natural factors likely contributed to the unusual warmth. The findings appear Sept. 5 in the *Geophysical Research Letters*, a publication of the American Geophysical Union.

The NOAA team also found that the probability of U.S. temperatures breaking a record in 2006 had increased 15-fold compared to pre-industrial times because of greenhouse gas increases in Earth's atmosphere. Preliminary data available last January led NOAA to place 2006 as the warmest year on record. In May, NOAA changed the 2006 ranking to second warmest after updated statistics showed the year was .08 degree F cooler than 1998. The annual average temperature in 2006 was 2.1 degrees F above the 20th Century average and marked the ninth consecutive year of above-normal U.S. temperatures. Each of the contiguous 48 states reported above-normal annual temperatures and, for the majority of states, 2006 ranked among the 10 hottest years since 1895.

"We wanted to find out whether it was pure coincidence that the two warmest years on record both coincided with El Niño events," says lead author [Martin Hoerling](#) of [NOAA/ESRL](#). "We decided to quantify the impact of El Niño and compare it to the human influence on temperatures through greenhouse gases." El Niño is a warming of the surface of the east tropical Pacific Ocean.

Using data from 10 past [El Niño](#) events observed since 1965, the authors examined the impact of El Niño on average annual U.S. surface temperatures. They found a slight cooling across the country. To overcome uncertainties inherent in the data analysis, the team also studied the El Niño influence using two atmospheric climate models. The scientists conducted two sets of 50-year simulations of U.S. climate, with and without the influence of El Niño sea-surface warming. They again found a slight cooling across the nation when El Niño was present.

To assess the role of greenhouse gases in the 2006 warmth, the NOAA team analyzed 42 simulations of Earth's climate from 18 climate models provided for the latest assessment by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#). The models included greenhouse gas emissions and airborne particles in Earth's atmosphere since the late 19th century and computed their influence on average temperatures through 2006. The results of the analysis showed that greenhouse gases produced warmth over the entire United States in the model projections, much like the warming pattern that was observed last year across the country.

For a final check, the scientists compared the observed 2006 pattern of abnormal surface temperatures to the projected effects of greenhouse-gas warming and El Niño temperature responses. The U.S. temperature pattern of widespread warming was completely inconsistent with the pattern expected from El Niño, but it closely matched the expected effects of greenhouse warming.

When average annual temperature in the United States broke records in 1998, a powerful El Niño was affecting climate around the globe. Scientists widely attributed the unusual warmth in the United States to the influence of the ongoing El Niño.

“That attribution was not confirmed at the time,” says Hoerling. “Now we have the capability, on the spatial scale of the United States, to better distinguish natural climate variations from climate changes caused by humans.” The authors also estimate that there is a 16 percent chance that 2007 will bring record-breaking warmth.

### ***NCCOS-led Report Guides Future Estuarine, Coastal, and Ocean Modeling Efforts for NOS\****

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) hosted a Café Conversation session at the Coastal Zone 2007 conference to solicit feedback on a recent report led by NCCOS on prioritizing future modeling efforts for National Ocean Service. Approximately 25 participants attended the session “Making Waves: Establishing Priorities for NOS Estuarine, Coastal, and Ocean Modeling”. Two breakout groups discussed modeling needs for Commerce, Transportation, and Coastal Hazards; and Water Quality, Public Health, and Coastal Habitat. The groups were reacting to the report findings, available at [http://www.cop.noaa.gov/ecoforecasting/workshops/MPP\\_finalreport\\_0107.pdf](http://www.cop.noaa.gov/ecoforecasting/workshops/MPP_finalreport_0107.pdf). Their feedback will be incorporated into a summary available as a supplement to the report, to be posted by September 2007. For more information, contact [Elizabeth.Turner@noaa.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Turner@noaa.gov).

### ***Integrated Assessments to Improve Research Reserve Management***

NOAA’s Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC) researchers are making significant progress in developing methodologies for integrated resource management, risk assessment, and environmental decision-making. The new conceptual modeling approach better integrates human systems and interactions into assessment plans, central to an Integrated Assessment and Ecosystem Management Protocol (IAEMP). IAEMPs allow National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERR) to move from conceptual model to risk assessment to management action. ECSC developed their model for use in integrated assessments at the Delaware NERR habitats and watershed, finding that climate, development, and agriculture are the most significant drivers affecting aquatic habitats. Further, ECSC's model indicates that resource managers can expect these stressors' effects to impact future development, land use regulation, and habitat mitigation/restoration efforts. The IAEMP is now the focus of a demonstration project at Apalachicola NERR, Florida. For more information, contact [Mike Reiter](#) or [Gary Matlock](#).

## ***Improved Evaluation and Management of Coastal Development Impacts through NCCOS/NERRS Collaboration***

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science scientists provided preliminary results from a NCCOS/National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) collaborative effort to produce integrative assessments of the condition of tidal creek habitats within the NERRS. This information was presented and discussed at the Southeast Regional NERRS Meeting held at the North Inlet-Winyah Bay NERRS on Aug 14, 2007. These initial studies were conducted collaboratively during the summer, 2006, with the North Carolina and Georgia NERRS and with ACE Basin South Carolina and North Inlet-Winyah Bay NERRS in summer 2005. The objectives of the research are to identify potential threats to estuarine resources from multiple ecosystem stressors and to predict the impact of land use changes on tidal creek habitats within the NERRS and nearby watersheds through an integrated framework. For more information, contact [Guy.DiDonato@noaa.gov](mailto:Guy.DiDonato@noaa.gov) or [Susan.White@noaa.gov](mailto:Susan.White@noaa.gov).

## ***NOAA Line Offices Join Forces to Aid Flood Map Study***

Several NOAA line offices are contributing information and expertise to a National Research Council (NRC) study on flood map accuracy. The NRC is undertaking this project to evaluate sources of error in flood maps for the National Flood Insurance Program. As part of the study NOAA's Coastal Services Center (CSC), National Geodetic Survey, Office of Coast Survey, and National Weather Service are providing information on inundation modeling, mapping uncertainty, flood warning products, and other topics. The two-year project, funded by CSC and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is designed to foster close coastal-resilience partnerships between NOAA and other agencies. The project will also help NOAA gain a better understanding of FEMA's map accuracy requirements and better integrate NOAA's data products and services into FEMA's mapping program. For more information, contact [Todd Davison](mailto:Todd.Davison@noaa.gov).

## **In the Gulf States**

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### ***Alabama DCNR-Marine Resources Division Partners with Fishermen***

***Alabama Current Connection: by Leslie Hartman, ADCNR-Marine Resources Division***

Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast; from Texas to Alabama, with homes and businesses destroyed, families separated, and lives lost. In Alabama, Bayou La Batre was particularly hard hit. Shrimpers, crabbers, hook and liners, and oystermen all suffered loss of income as they struggled to repair homes and businesses after the storm. Because the damage to this multi-billion dollar industry was so extensive, the Federal government provided funds to rebuild and repair the damages done to the fishermen and the habitat. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources-Marine Resources Division (MRD) has helped allocate some of these funds to research, habitat restoration, and fishermen partnerships.

Recently, MRD has partnered with the Organized Seafood Association of Alabama (OSAA), Oyster Farmers Association of Alabama, and the Orange Beach Fishing Association to help get much needed

money into the hands of our fishermen. The OSAA is managing several projects to improve or repair our marine habitat while providing funding to qualified fishermen. Currently OSAA is overseeing the replenishment of shallow water oyster reefs in Heron Bay.

When oysters are spawned, they become free swimming larvae which settle on any hard surface, preferring existing, live oysters. Following storm events, the oyster reefs are often broken up or covered in mud and become unsuitable for settlement by young oysters. The addition of hard material, or “cultch”, to these areas ensures a consistent supply of oysters. Planting cultch in shallow areas of Heron Bay improves the settlement potential for new oysters and provides additional areas for oystermen to harvest.

To plant in the shallow waters of Heron Bay, cultch material – either limestone or oyster shell –is barged in from Bayou La Batre. Because of the size and weight of the barge, the vessel cannot get into shallow water. Smaller boats are used to carry scoops of cultch into shallow waters, of one to three feet depth, for planting. Qualified fishermen are being paid to transport cultch material from the barge to designated shallow water areas where the material is shoveled, pushed or blown overboard. Within a year, much of this material will be covered with harvestable-sized oysters. From Monday through Saturday, as many as 65 fishermen can be found in Heron Bay helping to plant cultch material. As boats arrive in the morning they check in at the OSAA vessel and are assigned a number corresponding to the order in which they arrive. On the barge, Bobcats (small front end loaders) sit at either end of the barge waiting to distribute scoops of material on to the awaiting vessels.

Once barge crew, fishermen, state observers, and the ever diligent receipt recorders are in place, the boats will begin loading, with odd numbers at one end even numbers at the other. Once secure next to the barge, the Bobcat scoops up a level scoop of cultch and carefully dumps it midline of the boat. Vessel sizes vary; larger boats will carry up to eight scoops in one trip, smaller ones may carry just one. Once a boat is safely loaded, fishermen proceed to that day’s designated planting area and offload their vessels. Each licensed fisherman can plant a maximum of eight scoops per day and is paid weekly.

This is the first time this type of partnership has been attempted, and from “day one” it has been a success. Fishermen, OSAA, barge crews, and state officials all work in together to ensure that each fisherman is fairly and safely loaded and that any issues that in tandem arise can be addressed quickly and effectively. It is truly a community affair with barge crews being sent off to aid the elderly in planting, state agents handling boats, and everyone sharing supplies and conversation with their neighbors.

## ***Two Decades of Getting the Trash Out of the Splash!***

### **[Alabama Current Connection](#)**

For two decades the Alabama Coastal Cleanup has brought volunteers from across the state to the coast for one purpose...to clean up the debris and trash they find there. In what sometimes feels like the “endless pursuit” of removing marine debris from the shoreline, these volunteers and sponsors have dedicated their time and energy to making the coast of southern Alabama a safe and beautiful place to visit and to live.

But the effort of one morning’s work does not stop there. The effect of removing all that debris is compounded by the fact that a hazard, or potential hazard, to the environment is no longer a threat. In addition to being an eyesore, marine debris also poses a real danger to both marine wildlife and people.

Afflictions from marine debris entanglement can include lethal cuts, hampered mobility, suffocation, and drowning. Wildlife can also fall victim to trash that people cannot see, such as ingested debris. Many

animals, like seabirds, are indiscriminant eaters and unintentionally ingest debris. Others confuse trash (like plastic bags) with food. In many cases, debris ingestion can lead to strangulation, starvation and death. The Alabama Coastal Cleanup is part of an international effort to remove marine debris from coastal waters. Alabama joined the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) in 1987. Since then 48,446 volunteers in Alabama have removed a total of 902,242 pounds of debris and cleaned 2,847 miles of Alabama coastline. The International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) is the largest singleday volunteer event for the marine environment with nearly one-hundred counties participating all on the same day. Part of this unique experience is data collection.

After years of collecting data on the specific types of marine debris being found, ICC data now focuses on the activities that cause the debris. The Ocean Conservancy compiles, analyzes, and tracks this data to identify the activities and general sources of the debris in a region, state, or country. This analysis has resulted in six primary human activities that lead to marine debris. These activities are:

- **Recreational and Shoreline Activities** – Debris from beachgoers, picnics, sports and games, and festivals, as well as litter washed from streets, parking lots, and storm drains.
- **Ocean/Waterway Activities** – Debris from recreational fishing and boating; commercial fishing; cargo, military, and cruise ships; and offshore industries.
- **Smoking Related Activities** – The littering of cigarette filters, cigar tips, and tobacco products packaging is common on land and sea.
- **Dumping Activities** – Debris from legal and illegal dumping of building material or large household items.
- **Medical/Personal Hygiene** – This debris can be left by beachgoers as well as disposed of improperly into toilets and city streets. Because medical and hygiene debris often enters the waste stream through sewer systems, its presence in the beach can indicate the presence of other, unseen pollutants.

The Alabama Coastal Cleanup engages local citizens to remove trash and debris from the Gulf Coast beaches and waterways, to identify the sources of debris, and to change the behaviors that cause pollution. In a continuing effort to clean up the coast, the 20th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup is scheduled Saturday, **September 15, 2007** from **8:00 a.m. until noon**. Come show your support and concern for Alabama's waterways by participating. You or your organization can make a difference by volunteering to clean up our cherished coastal area. For more information about participating in the 20th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup, please call 251-621-1216 or visit [www.AlabamaCoastalCleanup.com](http://www.AlabamaCoastalCleanup.com).

## ***The Little Lagoon Preservation Society***

***Alabama current connection by Dennis Hatfield, President LLPS***

Morgan Peninsula in southern most Baldwin County is a remarkable, prolifically productive, eight mile long, three quarter mile wide, sand-dominated, brackish coastal lake. National publicity, low-interest loan money, federal flood insurance, and a general desire to live on and visit the coast have resulted in dramatic development within the Lagoon watershed. Such vigorous development has resulted in damage and destruction to wetlands within the watershed and contributed to a measurable degradation of water quality in the Lagoon. Nutrient and fecal coliform levels have trended upwards over the past 10-15 years, and it is suspected that other pollutant (petroleum products, pesticides, etc.) concentrations are also increasing. Water quality problems are complicated by low circulation and slow turnover, resulting in long residence time for pollutants and accumulation of nutrients, creating ideal conditions for phytoplankton "blooms".

Increasing boat traffic, recent tropical weather events, and haphazard development practices are accelerating shoreline erosion and loss of shoreline-stabilizing vegetation and habitat. Unfortunately, bulkheading is the primary shoreline stabilization method being used to address erosion.

Little Lagoon Preservation Society (LLPS) was formed in the late 1980's – "To preserve and improve the quality of life on and around Little Lagoon by: 1) endeavoring to assure that the quality of water in the Little Lagoon is maintained to the highest standards set by the appropriate state and federal regulatory agencies, and 2) banding together as a group to influence items of interest or concern to the majority of the membership". These include: a) protecting the lagoon and surrounding wetlands and wildlife habitat, and b) monitoring government activities as an advocate and watchdog group to influence matters that might impact Little Lagoon.

A defining moment for the Society was a hard-fought legal battle that resulted in a 1990 court order requiring the state to maintain tidal flow (flushing) into and out of the Lagoon. LLPS has partnered with ADEM for over a decade to monitor bacteria and chemistry within Lagoon waters. We have trained members to participate with Alabama Water Watch and partner with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab to 1) expand chemistry and bacteria monitoring, and, 2) assist researchers in identifying phytoplankton species and abundance within the Lagoon. LLPS promotes and instructs use of shoreline-friendly stabilization methods and has facilitated and participated in shoreline stabilization and submerged aquatic vegetation projects.

LLPS monitors, opposes, and works to modify development projects which could impair the Lagoon and its watershed. We partner with MBNEP as a member of their Management Conference Community Action Committee. The Society meets as a group at least quarterly and invites citizens to join our efforts to preserve and protect one of Alabama's finest crown jewels. Our next membership meeting will be October 16 at the Adult Activity Center in Gulf Shores at 6 p.m.

## ***New Fertilizer Rule Will Protect Florida's Water Quality***

**LAKE OKEECHOBEE** – The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services today adopted the final statewide Urban Turf Fertilizer Rule. The rule limits the phosphorus and nitrogen content in fertilizers for urban turf and lawns, significantly reducing the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus applied in urban areas and limiting the amount of those compounds reaching Florida's water resources, including Florida's Liquid Heart, Lake Okeechobee.

"We are committed to protecting Florida's water resources," Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) Commissioner Charles H. Bronson said. "By establishing responsible nitrogen and phosphorus use rates statewide, Florida's citizens can continue to care for their lawns and landscapes without sacrificing water quality."

DACS expects a 20 to 25 percent reduction in nitrogen and a 15 percent reduction in phosphorus in every bag of fertilizer sold to the public. The new rule requires that all fertilizer products labeled for use on urban turf, sports turf and lawns be limited to the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus needed to support healthy turf maintenance. It was developed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services with input from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the state's five water management districts, the Florida League of Cities, Florida Association of Counties, fertilizer manufacturers and concerned citizens.

“Implementation of the new fertilizer rule is vital to Florida’s continuous efforts to protect our water and will especially be beneficial to Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries’ water quality through source control,” said Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole. “The new rule will enhance land management practices, improve water quality and protect the health of the Southeast’s largest lake and America’s Everglades.”

As a component of the \$200 million Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery (LOER) Plan, the new rule is an essential component to improve nutrient control through a statewide approach based on sound science and the best-available technology. Water managers will continue to research nutrient application rates to refine the limits and ensure healthy turf while at the same time minimizing the impact of urban land use on the environment. Launched in 2005, LOER is expanding water storage areas, constructing treatment marshes and expediting environmental management initiatives to enhance the ecological health of the lake and downstream coastal estuaries.

“This rule compliments the numerous efforts that are currently underway to address excess nutrients in the Northern and Southern Everglades,” said South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Executive Director Carol Wehle. “We look forward to working with the Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Protection as we expand our efforts, integrate new technology, and achieve this important undertaking.”

Since the 2000 Florida Legislature passed the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act, DACS, DEP and SFWMD, working with local governments, landowners and the federal partners, have reached notable milestones to restore the lake and its tributaries:

- Adopting a Lake Okeechobee Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to achieve phosphorus reductions
- Constructing the Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough Stormwater Treatment Areas in partnership with the federal government
- Completing conservation and nutrient management plans for over 400,000 acres of agricultural lands in the watershed
- Investing \$7.5 million in individual projects to reduce phosphorus from dairy farms, restore isolated wetlands, treat urban stormwater and enhance water storage and habitat on ranchlands
- Treating more than 32,000 acres of exotic and invasive vegetation

Restoring America’s Everglades is reviving habitat for more than 60 threatened and endangered species, establishing a reliable supply of water for millions of Floridians and providing flood control consistent with the restoration. To date, Florida has invested more than \$2 billion to restore and preserve America’s Everglades and \$140 million to improve the health of Lake Okeechobee. For more information visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/evergladesforever).

Floridians can help protect water quality through proper application of fertilizer. Floridians should fertilize plants only to maintain health and should not exceed recommended amounts. For more information visit [www.floridayards.org](http://www.floridayards.org).

## **Florida Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change Holds First Meeting**

~ 21-member panel starts work to meet first report deadline of November 1 ~

**TALLAHASSEE** – Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole today welcomed the other twenty members to the first meeting of the Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change. The team, appointed earlier this month by Governor Charlie Crist, will develop strategies to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"I am confident the action team will be both prudent and pro-active in shaping Florida's energy policy in the face of global climate change," said Governor Crist. "This diverse group of stakeholders will identify the long-term solutions to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions—it is just good environmental protection of our precious resources," said DEP Secretary Sole, who the Governor appointed as Chairman of the Action Team.

The Governor's Action Team is one component of a series of initiatives outlined in three Executive Orders Governor Crist signed at the **Serve to Preserve Summit** on Global Climate Change. Other activities include developing a carbon scorecard for all state agencies and making state buildings and vehicles more energy efficient. The action team will work to strengthen existing public-private partnerships and voluntary industry participation through programs such as DEP's Green Lodging Program and Clean Boating Partnership.

Future meetings are tentatively set for September 18, and for days during the first and fourth weeks of October (weeks of October 1 and October 22) – all in Tallahassee. More information will be posted at the web site area as dates are confirmed. Public comment will be taken on September 18, and the public is invited to submit public comment through the Web site at any time. To sign up for free email alerts about Florida's current climate change activities and for more information, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange).

## **Florida DEP Unveils Climate Change Area of Web Site Focused on Governor's Action Team**

*--Web site includes an email sign-up feature and Florida's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions--*

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today unveiled a new section of its web site covering climate change providing immediate access to information on the new Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change whose members were announced this week. The first meeting of the team is August 29 in Tallahassee.

"Florida's economy, the health of our people, and the quality of our environment will be shaped by the bold action steps taken by Governor Crist to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "The Serve to Preserve summit in Miami in July marked a new day and a new chapter in Florida's history and we look forward to building upon that leadership as we move quickly from the 'why' to the 'how' and 'when' through the collegiality and consensus-building of the Action Team's contributions."

On July 13, Governor Charlie Crist signed a groundbreaking set of Executive Orders at the "Serve to Preserve: A Florida Summit on Global Climate Change," which brought together academic experts,

scientists, environmentalists and governmental and private sector leaders to discuss Florida's energy future. . The three Executive Orders represent the Governor's commitment to addressing global climate change, and a promise to reduce Florida's greenhouse gases, increase energy efficiency and pursue renewable energy sources.

DEP Secretary Sole was appointed by the Governor on Monday to serve as the Action Team's Chairman, and DEP is providing staffing support to the panel. DEP's Web site has detailed information on the Executive Orders and how the Department is implementing the actions outlined in the Orders. In addition, the Web site contains an e-mail signup feature allowing citizens to receive updates regarding meetings, workshops and events. For more information, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange>.

## **Florida DEP'S Clean Marinas Celebrate National Marina Day**

--Special events offer entertainment and information about 'Clean Marinas'--

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's *Clean Marinas* will celebrate National Marina Day on August 11. Facilities across the state are hosting special events to highlight the importance of protecting Florida's waterways by establishing environmentally-friendly marine facilities. "Safeguarding our state's natural resources takes a dedicated commitment that *Clean Marinas* exhibit on a year-round basis," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole.

Since 2001, the second Saturday in August has been recognized as National Marina Day. With the primary mission being public education, National Marina Day emphasizes the importance of the marine industry as a family-friendly gateway to our rivers, lakes and oceans and highlights the importance of being a steward of the environment. Recognizing the importance of waterways, designated *Clean Marinas* are providing environmental information and memorabilia in Punta Gorda, St. Petersburg, Hollywood and Miami. In addition, several *Clean Marinas* will be recognizing National Marina Day with events and activities.

"Of the thousands of marinas in Florida, *Clean Marinas* stand out in the industry as environmental leaders," said John Naybor, Chairman of the Clean Boating Partnership.

With more than one million registered vessels in Florida, environmental education within the marine industry is the first step towards safeguarding the state's natural resources. In response, the Clean Boating Partnership developed the *Clean Marina*, *Clean Boatyard*, *Clean Marine Retailer*, and *Clean Boater* Programs to protect Florida's waterways. The Clean Boating Partnership to date has designated 144 *Clean Marinas*, 26 *Clean Boatyards* and four *Clean Marine Retailers*.

The Clean Boating Partnership includes DEP, marina and boatyard owners and operators, Marine Industries Association of Florida, Florida Sea Grant Program and the United States Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary. The Partnership targets four main areas: boaters, marinas, boatyards and marine retailers. Through sponsored workshops, technical assistance, conferences and dedication ceremonies, the partnership educates the boating community about pollution prevention. By providing "green" education and alternatives, the Clean Boating Partnership helps ensure a sustainable future for the environment and the billion-dollar marine industry.

For more information on DEP's *Clean Marina* Program, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/law/clean/default.htm>. For more information on the Clean Boating Partnership, contact Brenda Leonard at (850) 245-2847.

## ***Tampa Bay Estuary Program Promoting Regional Visioning Through “Reality Check” Exercise***

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program was among the premier sponsors of a regional visioning exercise that recently brought together 300 community leaders in Tampa to brainstorm how to accommodate the population and job growth expected by the year 2050. “Reality Check Tampa Bay” asked participants to find room for the 3.2 million additional residents and 1.5 million new jobs projected to arrive in West Central Florida by the year 2050 by stacking Legos representing new homes and jobs on large table-size maps.

Working in small groups, the 300 community leaders – including elected officials, developers, corporate executives and community activists – plotted where in the 7-county area stretching from Hernando to Sarasota new homes and jobs should go, along with the transportation corridors to link them.

Each workgroup had to decide upon three major guiding principles that they endeavored to follow in laying out their growth scenarios. Three top principles emerged: Create an integrated multi-modal transportation system using cars, buses, light rail and even ferries to bridge the bay; cluster housing close to work, shopping and entertainment; and preserve Florida’s natural habitats and water supplies.

ULI Tampa Bay and the Tampa Bay Partnership Regional Research & Education Foundation helped coordinate the effort. Dan Mahurin, president and CEO of SunTrust Bank, TampaBay was co-chairman of Reality Check with Don Whyte, chairman of the ULI District Council and president of Newland Communities southeast division. Other major sponsors included the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Now that Reality Check is over, sponsors seek to continue the momentum, through an initiative called “One Bay” that will promote regional implementation of the key principles agreed upon by Reality Check participants. To follow progress in implementing the Reality Check recommendations, visit <http://www.myonebay.com>.

## ***Louisiana Sea Grant Extension Agents Receive National Recognition***

Three Louisiana Sea Grant Extension/LSU AgCenter agents are the recipients of the Superior Outreach Award from the national Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders (ASGEPL) for their response and continuing recovery work following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The three receiving the national award are Albert “Rusty” Gaudé, associate area agent for St. Bernard, Plaquemines and Orleans parishes; Kevin Savoie, area agent and fisheries agent for the Southwest Louisiana Region; and Mark Schexnayder, area fisheries agent and hurricane program coordinator for Southeast Louisiana. In March, the trio received the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea Grant Extension Network’s Outstanding Group Achievement Award.

“Their work is a magnificent example of what a few dedicated Sea Grant people can accomplish working in a Sea Grant fashion – addressing a critical need in a timely, professional manner, and enlisting and involving multiple agencies and citizens’ groups,” said Jack Thigpen, ASGEPL chair. “What distinguishes their work from the other truly excellent nominees from the Sea Grant network this year is that the Louisiana project was conceived, started, and carried out while the agents themselves were in extremis due to the personal impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on them.”

The 2005 hurricane season brought unprecedented devastation to the U.S. Gulf Coast. Despite all three agents being displaced by either Hurricanes Katrina or Rita, they quickly returned to assist their constituents, most notably fishermen and local governments. Among the trio's recovery efforts were: soliciting a Marine Travelift from Valdez, Alaska, to get commercial fishing boats back into the water; aiding operators of critical seafood processing facilities in reopening; acquiring industrial ice machines to serve the needs of fishermen in southeastern and southwestern coastal parishes; aiding in the relocation of a displaced Lake Pontchartrain Commercial Fishermen Association fleet; and storm debris marking and removal on Calcasieu Lake.

Many of their efforts are chronicled in a short documentary titled *Sister Storms: A Louisiana Sea Grant Response*. The film is available for viewing at [www.laseagrant.org/comm/media.htm](http://www.laseagrant.org/comm/media.htm).

"The agents were innovative and adaptive in their methods, particularly since the world as they and coastal residents had known it had been shattered by the storms," said Thigpen. "The significance of their effort is two-fold. It has profound implications on the ability of the commercial fishery and coastal communities to rebound in Louisiana. It also is a working demonstration of the significance of Sea Grant extension work."

The Assembly of Sea Grant Extension Program Leaders facilitates communication and interaction among the Sea Grant Extension programs and with others in and outside of the Sea Grant network, and improves the delivery of science-based information to constituent groups at the local, regional and national levels in support of the Sea Grant mission.

## ***Louisiana DEQ to Begin Bayou Lafourche Project Aug. 13***

BATON ROUGE - The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality will begin a water quality project targeting the Bayou Lafourche Watershed beginning on Aug. 13. The project includes a survey of all permitted and unpermitted discharges contributing to the Bayou Lafourche Watershed. This is pilot project for what will soon be DEQ's Clean Waters Program. The Clean Waters Program will be the state's first watershed-based inspection approach to ensure that water bodies throughout the state will meet their designated uses – such as drinking water, swimming and fishing.

The Bayou Lafourche project was brought about because DEQ's Drinking Water Protection Program found that the bayou is threatened by increased development and increased discharges into the bayou. "The bayou is a drinking water source," said Howard Fielding, manager of the Drinking Water Protection Program. "We want to raise public and industry awareness about the water quality in the bayou and this survey will be very beneficial."

Jeff J. Dauzat, environmental staff scientist and project leader for the Bayou Lafourche project, said the project is monumental and an unprecedented effort for the department. "This is 99 mile stretch of bayou that will be surveyed," Dauzat said. "This is important because the bayou is impaired for primary contact recreation for a variety of reasons and our goal is to ensure that the bayou meets the requirements for recreational use. The first step is to locate and document all discharges into the bayou. Also, this project will set the tone for projects statewide."

## ***LRA Releases Updated Report on Katrina, Rita Impact on Louisiana Businesses***

**BATON ROUGE, La. (August 17, 2007)** - Today, the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) released an updated report that examines the impact Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had on Louisiana businesses during the 3rd and 4th quarter of 2006 (hereafter referred to as 2006Q3 and 2006Q4 respectively). The updated study, which was conducted by Louisiana State University (LSU) researchers on behalf of the LRA, Louisiana Economic Development (LED) and Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL), revealed the state had 892 (or 0.9%) fewer employers by 2006Q4 than before the Hurricanes. This represents a significant recovery from an initial loss of 5,192 employers immediately following the Hurricanes and also shows progress over 2006Q3.

The study, known as the updated Louisiana Business Recovery Report, also revealed that the state as a whole had an overall business failure rate of 20.87% from 2005Q2 to 2006Q4, while the Southeast and Southwest regions had failure rates of 28.31% and 18.63% respectively.

"Although this report shows some positive signs in terms of businesses returning statewide, it also clearly indicates that there have been and continue to be serious losses in our business community," said Andy Kopplin Executive Director of the LRA. "In particular, Cameron, Orleans and St. Bernard parishes continue to remain well below their pre-hurricane level of employers even 16 months after the disasters. Increases in the construction industry can mask losses in other key industries, particularly in the service sectors, that rely on a viable infrastructure, solid population base and access to a qualified workforce. The bottom line is that this report confirms our work on the ground which shows us that many businesses in the most devastated areas are still struggling to recover, and they continue to need our help." Other key findings include the following:

### **Southeast Region**

The five parishes that compose the Southeast region had 2,591 fewer open employers (9.3%) in 2006Q4 than before the storms. However, the net gain of 1,364 (5.7%) in quarter 4 was the largest since the Hurricanes and represents concrete evidence of the recovery. Orleans Parish lost 1,983 of its employers (20.7%). This was the largest post-Hurricane loss in the state, but with a net gain of 618 employers Orleans also showed the fastest fourth quarter gain of any Parish. St. Bernard Parish had the largest decline in percentage terms - a 50% loss. The fourth quarter net gain of 14 employers was also smaller, both in numerical and percentage terms, than Orleans parish and the region. Unlike the other parishes in the region, St. Tammany Parish showed an increase in the number of firms with a net gain of 371 employers (7.3%).

### **Southwest Region**

The Southwest region was within 0.4% (22 employers) of its pre-storm employer level by 2006Q4. Cameron Parish was the most affected in the region, losing 22.5% of employers as of 2006Q4.

### **Business Size and Sectors**

Small businesses experienced the highest failure rates. Through 2006Q4, 25.3% of employers in the state that had 1-5 employees in 2005Q2 failed while only 16.3% of those with more than 50 employees failed.

[Click here to download the full report.](#)

The report, which was prepared by LSU's E.J. Ourso College of Business- Division of Economic Development, examines the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the number of firms, employment, and wages in Louisiana. The results consist of comparisons of Quarterly Census of Employment and

Wages (QCEW) data from the third quarter of 2005 through the fourth quarter of 2006. QCEW data from the second quarter of 2005, prior to the storms, is also used to benchmark pre-hurricane levels. Louisiana firms are required, by law, to report employment and wage data quarterly to the LDOL for the purpose of determining their unemployment insurance taxes.

Researchers studied the change in the total number of firms by parish and industry in Louisiana to measure and analyze the number of firms could be "verified open." This report captures data for about 96 percent of companies in the state. In an effort to determine the status of Louisiana employers, and track their post-hurricane recovery, research is ongoing and additional reports will be issued on a quarterly basis. The study was primarily funded by LED, through grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Through the LRA's Business recovery Grant and Loan program, more than \$100 million in grants and about \$38 million in zero-interest loans are being awarded to small business owners impacted by the hurricanes. The program, managed by Louisiana Economic Development, is intended to give small businesses a fighting chance in a post-hurricane marketplace. LED awarded the first round of grants this spring, with the second round set to begin later this summer.

For additional information about Louisiana's economic recovery, or to download a complete copy of the updated Louisiana Business Recovery Report, visit [www.lra.louisiana.gov](http://www.lra.louisiana.gov).

## ***Governor Barbour Releases Katrina Two-Year Report***

The massive destruction of Hurricane Katrina has been well documented. Even if we were able to forget the images of disaster seen with our own eyes, visuals of rubble have continually been portrayed on television, in print and on the Internet. For those whose lives were thrown upside down on August 29, 2005, including those Mississippians who lost everything they had, the past two years have been a whirlwind. But yet we are assured that every dark cloud has a silver lining.

Two Years After Katrina: Progress Report on Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal details recovery efforts that state government has made in the past 12 months. In some instances, activities from the first year are included, but the report "One Year After Katrina: Progress Report on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal" should be consulted for an explanation of year one events (this report can be downloaded at [www.governorbarbour.com/recovery](http://www.governorbarbour.com/recovery)). Also, a summary of the work of the federal government, local governments, nonprofit entities and the private sector are included. The accomplishments and assessments of the following areas will be described in this report:

- Housing
- Public Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Education
- Human Services
- Environmental Restoration and Marine Resources

This comprehensive look at Mississippi's renewal efforts is meant to serve as a guide to citizens, governments, organizations and media as they determine post-Katrina successes and failures, both now and in the future.

## ***SGA's 2007 Meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi- A Tremendous Success***

Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour hosted his fellow Southern governors, SGA's Corporate Affiliate members and others interested in the future economic prosperity and improved quality of life in the Southern region during the 73rd annual convening of the Southern Governors' Association. The meeting was conducted August 25 - 27 at the Beau Rivage Resort in Biloxi.

The three-day meeting included plenary sessions that brought the presidents of the Federal Reserve Banks of Atlanta, Dallas and St. Louis together with SGA member governors to discuss regional economic growth and workforce pressures in a globalized economy. Attending governors also had the opportunity to discuss the South's increasing obesity epidemic with a panel of leading health experts. Coinciding with the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, governors and leading insurance industry executives discussed strategies that can be employed to stabilize residential and commercial insurance markets in both pre- and post-event scenarios.

The meeting concluded with a roundtable discussion between governors and a distinguished panel of energy and workforce experts to identify and probe possible steps that states can take to help produce the skilled workforce required to support the South's future energy needs. West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin III accepted chairmanship of the organization from Governor Barbour, and invited attendees to join him for the 74th Annual Meeting to be held at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs on August 9 - 11, 2008. [Click here](#) for SGA 2007 ANNUAL MEETING MEDIA COVERAGE

## ***Moss Points Adopts Safer Future with Floodplain Ordinance***

BILOXI, Miss. -- For the city of Moss Point, key to sound rebuilding is economic redevelopment and planning. For Mayor Xavier Bishop, sound rebuilding also includes preparing for future disasters. Bishop and his community leaders have fostered a good partnership with state and federal officials to guide the community prudently as they rebuild after Hurricane Katrina. Moss Point recently adopted a floodplain ordinance tailored specifically to meet the city's needs. The ordinance will protect the city in future disasters and serve as a foundation for rebuilding.

For the mayor, adopting the flood ordinance and taking other mitigation measures was a no-brainer for the welfare of his constituents. "Our first priority for the community is public safety. Adherence to flood elevation standards only underscores our commitment to the safety of the community. In fact, we were one of the first communities on the Coast to adopt the ABFE [Advisory Base Flood Elevations]," said Bishop. "We thought it was important to send a clear signal and remove any doubt, hesitation or confusion. Any delay to adopt those standards would've resulted in an unclear message."

Bishop and city engineer Jim Elliott worked with mitigation officials from the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for nearly nine months to finalize the plan. "I can't stress enough how this is a lifesaver for us. Without the help we received from MEMA and FEMA, we would have had our backs against the wall regarding further economic development," said Bishop. "The downtown building plan plays a key role in our rebuilding effort and in terms of taxes and bringing in businesses..."

Elliott wrote the city's original floodplain ordinance more than 30 years ago. He used a template provided by MEMA's Floodplain Management Branch to draft the city's updated version. The city council approved the ordinance in June. "The process was a lot of give and take - we had a lot of discussions with

Mr. Russo. But we needed to restore the city's tax base and get businesses to return," said Elliot. "We got a new ordinance and a window of opportunity for people to rebuild before the new maps come out."

Tim Russo, a Floodplain Manager for FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and Charles Stallings, MEMA Floodplain Management Branch deputy director, coordinated efforts to achieve the best possible results for Moss Point residents and resolve special issues in their area. "The MEMA and FEMA floodplain management team always strives to assist communities in assessing their needs and floodplain management goals," said MEMA director Mike Womack. "This partnership effectively served Mayor Bishop and the city to produce a document that addressed both the city's commercial development needs and protected its citizens' lives and property through floodplain management."

An enforceable floodplain ordinance gives more protection to residents. Moss Point's participation in the NFIP means the community may receive federal or financial assistance in the event of another declared disaster. "The mayor and city manager have really pushed this project," said Russo. "The state and FEMA have to be on the same page. As far as floodplain management, we have a great working relationship." "Our floodplain management specialists are here to assist the communities with any questions they may have about the National Flood Insurance Program and to show them how to make mitigation work for them," said Womack.

The city also will receive a grant of more than \$188,000 from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to hire more building inspectors and upgrade the city's computer systems. More inspectors will ensure the city uses correct construction methods, buildings meet proper codes and standards, and poor workmanship is identified. These precautions can aid in preventing significant building and structural damage and reduce subsequent repair costs during future storms.

In 2006, Moss Point made another investment in its future by updating its hazard mitigation plan. The plan, approved by FEMA and MEMA, will help the city address additional hazards and identify ways to minimize damages in future disasters. Bishop said other communities in neighboring Harrison County asked him to share what mitigation measures could be adopted in their cities. He referred them to Russo and Stallings.

Bishop plans to continue using mitigation techniques in his community rebuilding and expansion efforts. "Economic development is a key component to our city's rebuilding. In this area, we can use mitigation. In the area of housing, we feel it would be to our advantage to utilize mitigation techniques. Moss Point has redefined itself as an ecotourism spot; we want residents and visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of our city. We can even use local flora as a mitigation technique; we will use it and enjoy it. It's all about striking the right balance between nature and development." To learn more about the NFIP and how to make floodplain management work for your community, visit [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov).

## **Governor Barbour Announces Grant of \$9.4 Million for 23 Harrison County Projects**

*Constructed projects will total \$229 million*

(JACKSON, Mississippi) – Governor Haley Barbour announced today that the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has approved a grant to the Harrison County Utility Authority for planning and engineering costs for 23 infrastructure projects in Harrison County. The grant of \$9.46 million for the projects is anticipated to be increased after the planning and engineering phase to a total of \$229,082,005. The funds provided for these projects are part of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding allocated by Governor Barbour for water and wastewater enhancements in

the Gulf Coast Region for hurricane recovery.

“Improving and expanding our regional water and sewer system infrastructure is an important component toward recovery and rebuilding on the Gulf Coast. These funds are vital to support both existing and future growth patterns especially for new housing construction. New and improved infrastructure is a positive step for future storm preparedness and will also promote economic development,” Governor Barbour said.

“We appreciate the efforts of the Harrison County Utility Authority and other local officials who have worked with us on the planning for these needed projects. We anticipate moving through the planning stage and entering the construction phase as quickly as possible,” said Trudy Fisher, MDEQ Executive Director.

The projects included in the grant are:

- Central Harrison County Regional Water Supply;
- Pass Christian Water System Improvements;
- Western Harrison County Regional Water Supply;
- Long Beach Water System Improvements;
- North Gulfport-Lyman Regional Water Supply;
- Gulfport-VA Area Water Supply Improvements;
- South Gulfport Regional Water Supply Project;
- Eastern Harrison County Regional Water Supply;
- Biloxi Broadwater Water System Improvements;
- A Demonstration Project on the Beach to Improve Water Quality;
- Saucier WWTF and Riverbend-Robinwood Forest Transmission System;
- East Central Harrison County Regional Wastewater Transmission Facility;
- DeLisle Wastewater Transmission Facility and Long Beach-Pass Christian Transmission System;
- Pass Christian Wastewater System Improvements;
- West Gulfport Regional Interceptor;
- West Gulfport Regional Transmission System;
- Long Beach Wastewater System Improvements;
- Gulfport-VA Area Wastewater System Improvements;
- South Gulfport Regional Transmission System;
- South Woolmarket Wastewater Transmission Facility and Transmission Mains;
- D’Iberville Wastewater Transmission Facility and Transmission System;
- Biloxi Broadwater Wastewater Transmission System Improvements; and
- D’Iberville Waterfront Wastewater System Improvements.

These projects are part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan that provided recommendations for the use of \$641 million in disaster recovery funds to enhance water and wastewater infrastructure in Pearl River, Stone, Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties. Governor Barbour and Mississippi’s Congressional Delegation obtained appropriations of more than \$5 billion through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in hurricane recovery. The Mississippi Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan was prepared by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality for improvements intended to support existing and future growth patterns, particularly as realized through new housing construction, and to promote economic development.

## **MDEQ Approves Grants of \$15.3 Million for Twelve Hancock County Projects**

*Constructed projects will total \$111 million*

(JACKSON, Mississippi) – Governor Haley Barbour announced today that the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has approved two grants to the Hancock County Utility Authority for planning and engineering costs for twelve infrastructure projects in Hancock County. The first grant of \$10 million for seven projects is anticipated to be increased after the planning and engineering phase to a total of \$75,451,650. The second grant of \$5.3 million for five projects is anticipated to be increased after the planning and engineering phase to a total of \$35,747,647. The funds provided for these projects are part of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding allocated by Governor Barbour for water and wastewater enhancements in the Gulf Coast Region for hurricane recovery.

“Hancock County was dealt a severe blow by Hurricane Katrina and improving and expanding their water and sewer system infrastructure into a regional approach is an important component toward recovery and rebuilding. These funds are vital to support both existing and future growth patterns in the region especially for new housing construction. I am pleased these projects are moving forward,” Governor Barbour said.

“The approval of these grants is great news for Hancock County. We appreciate the efforts of the Hancock County Utility Authority and other local officials who have worked with us on the planning for these needed projects. We anticipate moving through the planning stage and entering the construction phase as quickly as possible,” said Trudy Fisher, MDEQ Executive Director.

The projects included in the first grant are:

- Kiln Water Distribution System;
- Eastern Hancock County Regional Water Supply System;
- Improvements for the Waveland-U.S. Highway 90 Water System;
- Northern Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility and Transmission System;
- Kiln Wastewater Collection System;
- Improvements for the Bay St. Louis Cedar Point and I-10 Wastewater System; and
- Beach Stormwater Demonstration Project.

The projects included in the second grant are:

- Pearlinton-Port Bienville Regional Water Supply System;
- Pearlinton Water Distribution System;
- Hancock County Water and Sewer District Water Distribution System;
- Western Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility; and
- Pearlinton Wastewater Collection System.

These projects are part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan that provided recommendations for the use of \$641 million in disaster recovery funds to enhance water and wastewater infrastructure in Pearl River, Stone, Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties. Governor Barbour and Mississippi’s Congressional Delegation obtained appropriations of more than \$5 billion through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in hurricane recovery. The Mississippi Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan was prepared by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality for improvements intended to support existing and future growth patterns, particularly as realized through new housing construction, and to promote economic development.

## **MDEQ Approves Grants of \$9.5 Million for Jackson County Projects**

Grants for constructed projects will total \$9.5 million

(JACKSON, Mississippi) – Governor Haley Barbour announced today that the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has approved two grants totaling \$9.5 million for planning and engineering costs for fourteen projects in Jackson County.

A grant of \$9,178,357 to the Jackson County Utility Authority for seven projects is anticipated to be increased after the planning and engineering phase to a total of \$94,035,531. A second grant of \$339,239 to the City of Pascagoula for seven projects is anticipated to be increased after the planning and engineering phase to a total of \$5,522,853. The funds provided for these projects are part of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding allocated by Governor Barbour for water and wastewater enhancements in the Gulf Coast Region for hurricane recovery.

“I am pleased that these grants have been approved for these vital projects in Jackson County. New and improved infrastructure is a positive step for future storm preparedness and will also promote economic development. The continued recovery and rebuilding efforts on the Gulf Coast require enhanced and expanded regional water and sewer system infrastructure,” Governor Barbour said.

“The approval of these grants is great news for Jackson County and the City of Pascagoula. We appreciate the efforts of the Jackson County Utility Authority, Pascagoula officials, and other local officials who have worked with us on the planning for these needed projects. We anticipate moving through the planning stage and entering the construction phase as quickly as possible,” said Trudy Fisher, MDEQ Executive Director.

The projects included in the grant to the Jackson County Utility Authority are:

- Western Jackson County Regional Water Supply;
- Eastern Jackson County Regional Water System;
- Improvements for W. Jackson Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility & Transmission System;
- Improvements for the Gulf Park and Ocean Beach areas Transmission System;
- North Jackson County Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Facilities;
- Improvements for the Gautier Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility; and
- Improvements for the Escatawpa Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility.

The projects included in the grant to the City of Pascagoula are:

- Improvements for the River Park Water Transmission System;
- Improvements for the Chipley Water Transmission System;
- Improvements for the Beach Boulevard Water Transmission System;
- Improvements for the River Park Wastewater Transmission System;
- Improvements for the Shortcut Road Transmission System;
- Improvements for the Chipley Wastewater Transmission System; and
- Improvements for the Beach Boulevard Wastewater Transmission System.

These projects are part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan that provided recommendations for the use of \$641 million in disaster recovery funds to enhance water and wastewater infrastructure in Pearl River, Stone, Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties. Governor Barbour and Mississippi’s Congressional Delegation obtained appropriations of more than \$5 billion through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in hurricane recovery. The Mississippi Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan was prepared by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality for

improvements intended to support existing and future growth patterns, particularly as realized through new housing construction, and to promote economic development.

## ***MDEQ Announces Grant for Gautier Projects***

***Grants for constructed projects will total \$4.5 million***

(JACKSON, Miss.) – The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has approved a grant totaling \$225,003 for planning and engineering costs for two projects in the City of Gautier. The grant is anticipated to be increased after the planning and engineering phase to a total of \$4,518,223. The funds provided for these projects are part of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding allocated by Governor Haley Barbour for water and wastewater enhancements in the Gulf Coast Region for hurricane recovery.

“This grant is great news for the people in Gautier. Last week Governor Barbour announced grants of \$9.5 million for fourteen projects in Jackson County, and we are pleased that this grant for Gautier has also been approved. We anticipate moving through the planning stage and entering the construction phase as quickly as possible,” said Trudy Fisher, MDEQ Executive Director.

The projects included in the grant to the City of Gautier:

- Improvements for the Gautier Water Transmission System; and,
- Improvements for the Gautier Wastewater Transmission system.

These projects are part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan that provided recommendations for the use of \$641 million in disaster recovery funds to enhance water and wastewater infrastructure in Pearl River, Stone, Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties. Governor Barbour and Mississippi’s Congressional Delegation obtained appropriations of more than \$5 billion through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to assist in hurricane recovery. The Mississippi Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan was prepared by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality for improvements intended to support existing and future growth patterns, particularly as realized through new housing construction, and to promote economic development.

## ***Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve’s August Adventure Quencher Features Blacklighting for Bugs at Twilight***

BILOXI, Miss. – The Department of Marine Resources’ (DMR) Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR) is reviving its series of **free**, family-oriented, outdoor activities at the reserve. This monthly series of activities will feature hands-on programs designed to introduce community members to the wonders that our coastal resources have to offer.

The Adventure Quencher for August, “Blacklighting for Bugs,” is scheduled for Friday, August 24 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. or until the bug action or participants give out! During this adventure, Dr. David Held, entomologist at Mississippi State University’s Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi, will be the guest adventure guide. Participants who arrive at the beginning of the event will be able to make a bug net of their own to capture insects with. Once the nets are completed, the participants will participate in several “Bug Sweeps” of the area before the sun goes down. Dr. Held will demonstrate how to identify what is caught.

After dark is when a different type of exciting adventure begins. The blacklights will be turned on, and everyone will get a chance to see what kinds of nocturnal bugs are attracted to the areas where the lights are located. We are hoping to catch some never-before-documented insect species on the Reserve during this activity!

This activity will take place at the Reserve's headquarters located at 6005 Bayou Heron Road in southeast Jackson County. Prepare yourself in advance for this adventure. The ground could be wet, so, wear old, closed-toed shoes, long pants and long sleeves. Also, bring at least one flashlight for your group. If possible, bring an old broom stick or dowel to serve as the handle for the bug net you will make.

For more information on the "Adventure Quenchers" program or other activities sponsored by the GBNERR contact Jennifer Buchanan at (228) 475-7047. **Although not required, participants in each of these scheduled events are encouraged to call the reserve office and pre-register.** Visit the reserve's website at [www.grandbaynerr.org](http://www.grandbaynerr.org) to learn more about the habitats and wildlife of the reserve.

The GBNERR is located near the community of Pecan in southeast Jackson County and includes wild lands and waterways from Bangs Lake to the Alabama state line. A major goal of the reserve is to provide for research coordination and dissemination of scientific data to the community and local decision-makers to provide sound information on which to base management decisions. The 18,000-acre reserve is home to several rare or endangered plant and animal species and serves as an essential nursery habitat for numerous important commercial and recreational fish species. GBNERR is managed through state-federal partnership between the DMR and its local partners—Mississippi Secretary of State's Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mississippi State University and The Nature Conservancy— and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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

## ***Gov. Barbour Declares Sept. 15 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Day***

Volunteers in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties are needed for the 19th annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup to be held from 8 a.m. – 11 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 15, in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup—the planet's largest volunteer cleanup effort on behalf of the marine environment. Governor Haley Barbour recently signed a proclamation in support of the annual event. "Marsha and I appreciate the thousands of Mississippians who are willing to take the time to help clean up our beaches and shorelines during the 19th annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup on September 15," Governor Barbour said. "It is important that we protect our coastal habitats and estuaries, which provide productive nursery areas for many marine and aquatic species. We encourage as many people as possible to join in this effort."

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup is a Take Pride in America event. Part of the President's USA Freedom Corps call to service, the Take Pride in America program is a national partnership established by the U.S. Department of the Interior and is an excellent opportunity for citizens and communities to demonstrate local pride, initiative and stewardship.

*Registration deadline for the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup is September 3. Register on-line at [www.mscoastalcleanup.org](http://www.mscoastalcleanup.org). During the 2006 International Coastal Cleanup, more than 358,000 volunteers in 68 countries removed 7 million pounds of debris from the ocean, rivers, lakes and waterways. Volunteers will pick up marine debris at more than 50 designated coastal cleanup sites (zones) in all three counties and the barrier islands.*

## ***Griffin to Serve in Sea Grant Outreach Role***

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and the Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center have hired Hugh Griffin as an administrator of outreach programs. Griffin will work with businesses, agencies and the public through marine education and marine-related programs. He will be involved in coastal aquatic habitat and species management, protection and restoration programs. He also will work with the Alabama-Mississippi Clean Marinas Program, rip currents awareness efforts and the Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project. "Mr. Griffin will work directly with industry leaders, agencies and interested citizens to provide science-based information on the wise use of coastal resources," said Rick Wallace, Sea Grant Extension Program leader. "As the population continues to grow in the coastal regions of Alabama and Mississippi, citizens will need good information in order to make informed decisions on the many natural resource issues that confront our communities."

Griffin's office will be located at Auburn Marine Center in Mobile, Ala. Prior to joining the Sea Grant Extension/Auburn Marine Center staff, Griffin worked in Rosenberg, Texas, as a county extension agent in agriculture and natural resources for the Texas Cooperative Extension Program. He provided oversight for a number of ecotourism and community enhancement projects. He also has worked as a soil research laboratory technician for the Cooperative Agricultural Research Center in Prairie View, Texas. Griffin has a bachelor's degree in animal science from Prairie View A&M University.

"In addition to my love for the Mississippi-Alabama outdoors and coastal areas, I took this job because I have a strong background and interest in ecotourism, wildlife management and conservation and natural resources management," Griffin said. "I believe that I can really help to make a positive impact using my background experience and education."

## ***Patterson Orders Removal of Abandoned Barge Environmental Hazard Cleaned up Before it Becomes a Crisis***

**AUSTIN** — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, has ordered the removal of an abandoned barge in the Arroyo Colorado. The barge is about a half mile south of the FM 106 bridge in Rio Hondo and about two miles north of Port Harlingen. The barge is a navigational nuisance and could become an even greater environmental hazard in it were moved by a storm, Patterson said.

Derrick Construction Co. is under contract for the removal and disposal of the barge, which is about 60-foot long and 30-foot wide. Work is set to begin on Tuesday, Aug. 21. Land Office personnel are working to determine who owns the barge. The owner of the barge remains liable for the cost of its removal and cleanup. The barge's owner may also be subject to fines, penalties and fees.

Cost of the cleanup is expected to be about \$35,000. The cleanup will be paid for with funds from the state's Coastal Management Program. The purpose of the Texas Coastal Management

Program (CMP) is to improve the management of the state's coastal natural resource areas and to ensure the long-term ecological and economic productivity of the coast. The Coastal Coordination Council oversees the program. To learn more about the state's Coastal Management Program, visit: [www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/cmp.html](http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/cmp.html).

## **21<sup>st</sup> Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Fall Cleanup set for September 22**

*26 sites up and down Texas coast to be cleaned by volunteers*

AUSTIN — The 21st Texas General Land Office AdoptABeach Fall Cleanup will take place Saturday, September 22nd at 26 sites along the Texas coast announced Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. The all volunteer event is coordinated through the AdoptABeach Program of the Texas General Land Office. Additional cleanups are scheduled for the winter and spring. Volunteers can register at any of the checkin sites from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. on September 22nd, and will be given data cards, gloves, pencils and trash bags. Volunteers are advised to wear closed toe shoes, bring sunscreen and plenty of drinking water.

"Seventy percent of trash found on Texas beaches is left behind by average beachgoers," Patterson said. "Humans created this problem, and humans have a responsibility to fix it. I urge all my fellow Texans to join me at the beach and help turn the tide against trash."

This year, Texans who are not able to attend the cleanup can help keep Texas beaches clean by making a tax deductible donation online. There are several different AdoptABeach sponsorship levels ranging from \$25 to \$25,000, allowing both individuals and corporations to contribute to this major cleanup effort.

Texas beaches receive large amounts of marine debris due to a convergence of currents in the Gulf of Mexico. Since 1986, more than 355,000 AdoptABeach volunteers have picked up more than 6,700 tons of this debris, some of it originating from as far away as Greece. Volunteers record data on the trash to learn more about the causes of marine debris and to help mitigate pollution along Texas' 367 miles of coastline.

The success of the AdoptABeach Program is made possible by the generous efforts of dedicated volunteers and the strong support of community leaders and sponsors across the state. The GLO's AdoptABeach Cleanups are held rain or shine! For a complete listing of cleanup sites for the upcoming Fall Cleanup, to learn how you can participate, or for additional information on the AdoptABeach Program, please visit [www.texasadoptabeach.org](http://www.texasadoptabeach.org), or contact the GLO at 1877TX COAST.

## **Texas General Land Office Holds First-ever Event to Promote Coastal Conservation**

*Texas Coastal Expo Sept. 15 on the Kemah Boardwalk*

AUSTIN — The first-ever Texas Coastal Expo is set for Saturday, Sept. 15 on the Kemah Boardwalk announced Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. This free and family friendly event runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and aims to promote one of our state's most precious resources: Texas beaches and coastal areas. Coastal experts with the Texas General Land Office have planned a day of fun in the sun with games and learning for all to enjoy. Hands-on

educational exhibits including wildlife petting tanks, treasure hunts and games will capture the attention while teaching about the importance and history of our beaches and bays.

The day's activities will even include a special puppet show by Captain Clean Crab, the creator of a popular anti-litter campaign all the way from South Padre Island. The Texas Coastal Expo will also explore Kemah-area history and the role that real-life pirates played in the settlement of Galveston. "The more Texans know about our coast, the more they'll be interested in joining me to protect it," Patterson said.

## ***Texas Opening Day Shrimp Boat Count Lowest On Record***

AUSTIN, Texas — Aerial counts of bay and bait shrimp boats working the Texas coast were conducted Aug. 15 after the commercial shrimp season opened. There was good weather for the count, although the coast was bracing for Tropical Storm Erin, which made landfall the next day. A total of 180 boats were counted coastwide, the lowest number since TPWD began opening day surveys in 1994. Last year, TPWD counted 213 boats active on opening day for the 2006 fall season. Galveston Bay showed a decrease from 122 boats last year to 91 boats this year, a 25 percent decline.

In contrast, Corpus Christi Bay showed an increase from seven boats last year up to 22 boats this year, a 68 percent increase. "One factor at work here is the TPWD shrimp license buyback program, which is nearing our goals in the program," said TPWD Coastal Fisheries Division Director Larry McKinney, PhD. Other factors obviously contributing to the reduction in shrimping effort seen is the continued low shrimp prices and the higher costs for fuel."

The inshore shrimp license buy-back program was established with the limited entry program in 1995 by the Texas legislature. The legislative initiative was designed to more effectively deal with the issue of over-shrimping through capping the sale of new licenses and allowing for a buy-back program to retire licenses from voluntary and willing sellers.

## ***Texas Paddling Trails***

[Texas Wetland News](#) *By: Shelly Plante, Melissa Parker, Lisa Korth*

The Texas Paddling Trails is a new program to develop public inland and coastal paddling trails throughout the state and support these trails with maps, signage and other information. These trails provide well-mapped, accessible day trips in a variety of settings and for all levels of paddling experience. There are currently seven coastal paddling trails and four inland paddling trails, with several communities preparing their trails for fall debuts.

With more than 3,700 named streams, 15 major rivers and some 3,300 miles of tidal shoreline along the Gulf Coast, Texas offers many opportunities for paddling adventures of all types. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, kayaking participation nationwide doubled between 1998 and 2004, with recreational and sit-on-top kayaking the fastest-growing segment of the sport. Participation in canoeing also remains very strong, so the Texas Paddling Trails program is a great program for local communities, TPWD, liveries, river authorities and especially paddlers!

Texas Paddling Trails are an exciting way for landowners and communities to partner with Texas Parks and Wildlife to conserve habitats while providing recreational opportunities for the traveling public. The

paddling trails of Texas promote sustainable economic development and build public support for conservation of waterways and wildlife.

As Texas becomes more urbanized, it becomes ever more important that there are public places to enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities, such as canoeing and kayaking. The Texas Paddling Trails program provides these opportunities while also helping to conserve rivers and bays. This program offers communities in Texas a way to partner with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the purpose of benefiting their own areas while also helping build an extensive network of paddling trails across the state to be enjoyed by Texans and out-of-state tourists for many generations to come. TPWD continues to seek partnerships with communities interested in developing a paddling trail in their area. Please see the information on the next page for information on the responsibilities of TPWD and partner communities.

If you have an interest in developing a Texas Paddling Trail in your community, please contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's nature tourism coordinator, Shelly Plante, by phone (512-389-4500) or by e-mail ([shelly.plante@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:shelly.plante@tpwd.state.tx.us)). Visit us on the Web to learn more about our first 11 Texas Paddling Trails. New trails will be added soon, so check back frequently!  
[www.tpwd.state.tx.us/paddlingtrails](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/paddlingtrails).

## Energy

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### ***FERC Issues Final EIS for Proposed Calhoun LNG Terminal and Pipeline Project***

The FERC staff has prepared a [final environmental impact statement](#) (EIS) for the Calhoun LNG, L.P and Point Comfort Pipeline Company, L.P.'s (collectively referred to as Calhoun Point Comfort) proposed Calhoun LNG Terminal and Pipeline Project (Project).

The proposed Project would include the construction and operation of a new LNG receiving terminal capable of accommodating about 120 LNG vessels per year, two full containment LNG storage tanks, associated LNG vaporization and processing equipment, approximately 27.1 miles of 36-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline, two approximately 0.5-mile-long 8- and 16-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline laterals, ten natural gas pipeline interconnects, and associated pipeline facilities. These proposed facilities would be constructed and operated in Calhoun and Jackson Counties, Texas and LNG vessels utilizing the terminal would traverse approximately 22 miles of the Matagorda Ship Channel.

The purpose of the proposed Project is to provide facilities necessary to import, store, vaporize, and transport on average about 1.0 billion cubic feet per day of LNG to local industrial customers and existing interstate and intrastate natural gas pipelines. This final EIS was prepared to satisfy the requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act and was prepared in cooperation with the: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Coast Guard; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service; and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

## ***Drilling Activity Hits New High in Ultra-Deep Gulf of Mexico***

**NEW ORLEANS** – A record number of drilling rigs are currently working in ultra-deepwater in the Gulf of Mexico. “For the first time, 15 rigs are drilling for oil and gas in 5,000 feet of water or greater in the Gulf,” MMS Director Randall Luthi announced today. “The continued increase in drilling activity is a show of confidence in the resource potential of the Gulf’s ultra-deepwater frontier.”

While drilling activity in deepwater remains strong, advances have also been made in the production area. In July 2007, gas production started on Independence Hub, a semi-submersible platform located in 8,000 feet of water and operated by Anadarko. The deepest production platform ever installed and also the world’s largest offshore natural gas processing facility, Independence Hub project will produce natural gas from 15 subsea wells when fully operational. Before Independence Hub’s start-up, the production facility in the deepest water depth was the Na KiKa floating production system located in 6,340 feet of water, operated by Shell and BP.

Currently, 70 percent of the Gulf’s oil production comes from leases in water depths greater than 1,000 feet while 40 percent of the natural gas production in the Gulf comes from leases in those same water depths. As of April 2007, the Gulf’s daily production was estimated at 1.3 million barrels of oil per day and 7.7 billion cubic feet of gas per day.

As the industry continues its exploration in deeper waters, the availability of technology capable of operating in deeper water depths and more extreme conditions becomes an important issue. Several new drilling rigs are being built for use in the deepwater Gulf. These rigs under construction range from drill ships to semi-submersibles and will be capable of operating in water depths up to 12,000 feet. Some of these new rigs will be ready as early as summer 2008 and others are expected to be operational by the second half of 2009. “The offshore oil and gas industry is facing frontier-like conditions and developing advanced technology to explore the ultra-deep Gulf waters in order to secure the nation’s energy production,” noted Luthi.

## ***MMS Sponsors International Energy Ocean ‘07 Conference***

***Agency Presents Update on Alternative Energy Program for U.S. Offshore Waters, Recognized for Energy Education Excellence***

**WASHINGTON** - The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) will join government agencies, academia, industry and members of the international community in addressing the future of marine-based energy projects in the U.S. and abroad at the August 20-23, 2007 Energy Ocean Conference. The conference will be held in Oahu, Hawaii and is sponsored by the State of Hawaii, the U.S. Commercial Service, the MMS, the Marine Technology Society and 17 additional co-sponsors.

“As the U.S. moves closer toward harnessing offshore alternative energy opportunities, the MMS recognizes the importance of regional and international collaboration,” said Maureen Bornholdt, MMS’s Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Program Manager. “The Energy Ocean ’07 Conference provides an exciting opportunity for MMS to continue to strengthen its domestic and international coordination in sharing best practices and lessons learned in areas of offshore alternative energy technologies, regulatory oversight and environmental research. The MMS looks forward to sharing information on its efforts in developing a comprehensive and transparent regulatory framework for alternative energy projects in U.S. offshore waters.”

In addition to co-sponsoring the four-day conference, the MMS will present an update on the development of the Nation's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Program, as mandated under the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The MMS will discuss the status of its programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and its effort to develop new regulations for the oversight, inspection, research, monitoring, and enforcement of offshore alternative energy projects in U.S. waters.

The MMS is also nominated for a conference Education Pioneer Award in recognition for its contribution toward educating the public about Ocean Energy uses, feasibility, benefits and/or suitable locations for implementation of the technologies. Additional nominees include:

- Ocean Renewable Energy Group (OREG), representing Canada
- European Ocean Energy Association (EU-OEA), representing the European Union
- Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI)/Ocean Energy Program, representing the U.S.

For information on the Energy Ocean '07 Conference, go to <http://www.energyocean.com>. The Minerals Management Service is responsible for managing the Nation's offshore energy and mineral resources and the collection and disbursement of revenues associated with energy and mineral resource production from Federal and Indian lands. Under authority of Section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the MMS will regulate alternative energy projects on the Outer Continental Shelf. Alternative energy includes wind, wave, ocean current and solar. For additional information on MMS's Alternative Energy and Alternate Use program, go to: [www.mms.gov/offshore/RenewableEnergy/RenewableEnergyMain.htm](http://www.mms.gov/offshore/RenewableEnergy/RenewableEnergyMain.htm).

## ***MMS Issues Final Notice of Central Gulf Lease Sale 205***

### ***New Boundaries Enlarge Area Offered***

**NEW ORLEANS** — Approximately 28.5 million acres of submerged land in federal waters offshore Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama will be available for lease in October as the Minerals Management Service (MMS) holds the first Central Gulf of Mexico (GOM) lease sale in its 2007 – 2012 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program. MMS estimates the lease sale could result in the production of 0.776 to 1.292 billion barrels of oil and 3.236 to 5.229 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Lease Sale 205 encompasses about 5,000 unleased blocks located in the newly configured Central GOM OCS Planning Area in areas ranging from three to about 224 miles offshore. Water depths range about 12 feet (four meters) to more than 11,200 feet (3,400 meters). The Final Notice of Sale (FNOS) was published in the Federal Register, and the public reading of bids received for the sale will be on October 3, 2007 at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel.

The following revised provisions are fully outlined in the FNOS package:

- New Administrative Planning Area Boundaries
- Deepwater Royalty Rate Increase
- Deepwater Royalty Suspension Price Threshold Changes
- Lease Term Extension for Deep Drilling
- Escalating Rental Rates

The FNOS, which contains the full terms and conditions for the sale and new official leasing maps and protraction diagrams, is available on the MMS Website at: <http://www.gomr.mms.gov>. To request a copy of the document write to: MMS Gulf of Mexico Regional Office, Public Information Unit 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard New Orleans, Louisiana 70123 or call 504-736-2519 or toll free 800-200-4853(GULF).

## Other News

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### ***Double Issue on Katrina in National Wetlands Newsletter***

On August 29, 2005, Hurricanes Katrina wrought devastation of historic proportions on the Gulf Coast and its people. It's been two years yet many questions remain: what lessons have we learned, how should we restore the Gulf Coast's wetlands, and are we headed in the right direction? The dozen articles presented in the September-October 2007 double issue of the [National Wetlands Newsletter](#) shed light on these questions and look at what steps have taken place since the storms. While the articles primarily focus on the Gulf Coast, they offer insight as to how wetlands should be managed and protected in a world where our natural and built environments increasingly collide.

### ***Katrina, Two Years Later***

*Statement by Gil Jamieson, Associate Deputy Administrator for Gulf Coast Recovery*

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita came crashing ashore two years ago. Those memories are still vivid in my mind, as they are with most Americans - and with much of the world. This nation has never seen destruction of that magnitude on its own soil. Much has been accomplished in the past 24 months. Since that day in August of 2005, FEMA has funded the removal of over 111 million cubic yards of debris. This staggering amount of rubble, enough to fill 20 Superdomes, had to be removed before rebuilding could begin.

More than 120,000 households were provided temporary housing units. Temporary units sheltered many who had nowhere else to turn, but also allowed many thousands more to stay closer to home and get started on the grueling job of rebuilding. Thankfully, over half of those families are now out of their trailers and have moved back to permanent housing.

In addition, FEMA provided approximately \$7.6 billion to over 1.4 million households who suffered damage or, in many cases, lost everything - homes, cars and all their belongings. This is money used to make 185,000 damaged homes habitable again. For homes beyond repair, it is money used to rebuild, replace or relocate, and to re-acquire many necessary items lost in the disaster. This money has also given rental assistance to over 720,000 households.

At the same time we were addressing the longer term needs of families and communities, we were also making great strides to rebuild a battered society. So far, FEMA has obligated \$8.3 billion to repair or replace hospitals, schools, police and fire stations, government buildings, roads, bridges, airports, utilities and virtually every other form of public infrastructure damaged or destroyed in the storms.

These numbers demonstrate FEMA's steadfast commitment to rebuilding the Gulf region - and rebuilding it stronger. We still have a ways to go, but real progress is being made and we are deeply committed to that recovery until the job is done. Our primary mission all along, and will continue to be, is to help families recover and communities rebuild.

#### **More Information:**

[Gulf Coast Recovery Office](#)

## **2 Years Later: Federal Funds for Gulf Coast Recovery Exceed \$8.3 Billion**

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- Two years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, communities in the Gulf Coast states are rebuilding with more than \$8.3 billion in Public Assistance grants provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). State and local governments in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas are using the \$8.3 billion for a variety of projects ranging from repair and reconstruction of hurricane-damaged schools, roads, utilities and other public infrastructure to removal of storm debris.

"FEMA and our state and local partners have been aggressive in our commitment to rebuild what Hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed," said Gil Jamieson, FEMA's Associate Deputy Administrator for Gulf Coast Recovery. "The \$8 billion is a significant accomplishment for FEMA and our partners. It is more than what FEMA provided for Public Assistance after Hurricanes Hugo, Andrew, Georges, Ivan and the Northridge Earthquake combined. It also demonstrates FEMA's continued commitment to the citizens of the Gulf Coast."

Funds provided by FEMA are obligated for projects and placed in the respective state's designated account. The state administers the FEMA grants and disburses the funding to the grant applicants. FEMA is providing 100 percent of the eligible costs of the projects.

Jamieson notes that FEMA has documented damages and funded over 69,000 projects in the four states. "It's extremely gratifying that more than \$8.3 billion is in the hands of the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas to pay for rebuilding their communities," Jamieson said.

Through the Public Assistance Grant Program, FEMA reimburses state and local governments and certain eligible private nonprofit organizations for the actual costs for work required because of the disaster. Eligible projects include damaged roads and bridges, water control facilities, public buildings and their contents, publicly owned utilities and parks and recreation areas. The Public Assistance Grant Program also includes funds for emergency services and eligible debris-removal costs related to the disaster.

Public Assistance funds have been paid to each state as follows:

**Alabama:** PA funds obligated to state: \$113.37 million

**Louisiana:** PA funds obligated to state: \$5.05 billion

**Mississippi:** PA funds obligated to state: \$2.27 billion

**Texas:** PA funds paid to state: \$930 million

The Gulf Coast Recovery Office coordinates FEMA's recovery and mitigation programs in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas as they recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

## **Corps Releases New Risk Maps for the New Orleans Area**

*Powell Releases New Costs for 100-Year Hurricane Protection*

**NEW ORLEANS (August 22, 2007)** – Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding Donald E. Powell and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Director of Civil Works Maj. General Don T. Riley today detailed the improved hurricane protection that will be provided to New Orleans area residents once the city's levees are built to the 100-year level. In addition, Powell announced \$6.3 billion of further funding needed for improved protection for the New Orleans area and the Administration's plan to secure necessary funds to complete the work by 2011.

Powell also announced the Administration will work with Congress to fund a \$1.3 billion network of interior drainage projects to ensure the New Orleans area has a more complete hurricane protection system. The 100-year protection, in addition to the drainage component, ensures the greater New Orleans area has a hurricane and flood protection system that far exceeds what existed before Hurricane Katrina. "Today's announcement restates President Bush's continued commitment to a Gulf Coast rebuilding effort that prioritizes the safety of the people of this area," said Powell.

"The risk maps released today by the Corps show exactly how the new 100-year system will provide far superior hurricane protection for greater New Orleans than at any time in the city's history. Safety is the top priority for the Administration and one of the main roles for the Federal government in long-term rebuilding."

As part of ongoing efforts, Corps officials also released information compiled by the Interagency Performance Evaluation Taskforce (IPET), an independent team of more than 150 international and national experts from more than 50 different government organizations, universities, and private industry, that shows maps of how this planned hurricane protection will reduce the risk of flooding once the construction is complete in 2011. This groundbreaking scientific and engineering study demonstrates a significant reduction in flooding compared to the system in place prior to Hurricane Katrina. This is the first time anyone has had a model that could provide a system wide risk assessment. The use of this model is a pioneer effort, demonstrating the state of the art risk assessment technology the Corps is using to improve the hurricane protection system in New Orleans.

"Increased public safety and communication of risk continue to be the Corps' top priorities for the New Orleans metropolitan area," said Maj. Gen. Don T. Riley, USACE Director of Civil Works. "The risk maps being released today are another important piece of information the citizens in the New Orleans area need to help them make well-informed decisions about where and how they choose to live and work." "The maps clearly show that the New Orleans metropolitan area will have reduced risk of flooding in the future from major storm events as the comprehensive system is constructed."

The Corps currently has sufficient funding to continue scheduled repairs and improvements until Fiscal Year 2009. The request to Congress to provide funding to complete 100-year protection and additional drainage will be made by the Administration as part of the FY 2009 budget process since the need for this additional funding will not arise until the October 2008 timeframe.

Further, Powell stated that there would be a local sponsor cost share component on the work to ensure that localities have a stake in the decision-making process and incentives to keep costs down. The standard cost-share for water projects nationally is 65 percent Federal and 35 percent local. Powell indicated the Administration will review the historic cost-share arrangements and expressed a willingness to consider options for the non-federal sponsors to meet their cost-share obligations.

With this announcement of the additional cost estimate of \$7.6 billion, the total levee repair and enhancement costs for the New Orleans area now totals almost \$15 billion. Based on continued engineering analysis, rigorous hydraulic modeling, design criteria and expected market conditions, additional funds are necessary to complete the system.

Contacts: (HQUSACE) Gene Pawlik 202-761-7690 (USACE) Rob Brown 504-862-2126

## ***Plans, Priorities Pave Way to Mississippi Recovery***

BILOXI, Miss. -- Two years ago it would have been difficult to find a Gulf Coast resident who could visualize anything positive emerging from Hurricane Katrina's destruction. Today, residents and leaders are facing brighter prospects. Reconstruction and economic plans are materializing, steadily making a Pilgrim's Progress from those dark days of destruction to a shining, more promising future.

"We are sorry about the damage and the deaths caused by the storm," said D'Iberville Mayor Rusty Quave. "But we have a new beginning now. This will be a different Gulf Coast - a better one." D'Iberville, a city of 7,900 sitting on the north side of the Biloxi Back Bay, is brimming with opportunities: expansion through annexation, construction of its first casino, a nearly completed master plan that includes a French-themed market along the waterfront, hundreds of new townhouses and condos and interest in developing additional casinos. "We have to look at this as an opportunity, otherwise we won't survive," said D'Iberville City Manager Richard Rose. "Our houses will look different, our lives will be different. It will be better."

Most residents agree. An onlooker can sense it when neighbors visit Quave's store and restaurant to share progress reports with the mayor as he drinks his morning coffee. One is excited about a building permit, another is looking forward to moving out of a trailer into a new or repaired house. Quave, in his fourth term as mayor, may be the most ebullient as he simultaneously hails each visitor and jumps out of his chair to look for a copy of a master plan in the works.

"We [city council] approved an overlay district," said Quave as he points to an aerial map of the city's undeveloped waterfront. An overlay district is an area typically developed before or along with the preparation of a comprehensive land-use plan. "And, we're going to use SmartCode."

The brainchild of Miami-based urban theorist Andres Duany and his associates, SmartCode, is a design and development model to keep towns' compact and rural landscape open while preventing urban sprawl through zoning. Since Katrina, many of the 11 Mississippi Coast cities have embraced the model for their evolving master plans.

"We participated in the charettes [design process] where we learned about the possibilities of redesigning the city," said Quave. "I've learned over the years that you have to start at the bottom. We went through every process... we've just about got our plan and we've all accepted the concept." The plan is nearly in place but paying for it is the next hurdle. City Manager Rose is optimistic. The city is in good financial shape and sales tax revenue will help. Several high profile retailers are eyeing sites near D'Iberville's I-10 interchange. Federal and state money is also on the way.

In addition to state grants, the proposed plan for the city's Old Town district will be paid for with grants totaling between \$20-\$30 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). The funds will repair or replace storm-damaged infrastructure. During the next few years, annexation of land north of the city will add to the population and expand the tax base. A \$10 million grant from FEMA and MEMA will help build a new high school in D'Iberville, replete with a state-of-the-art storm shelter and a reinforced classroom building that will make it one of the safest schools in the United States

The future looks bright to Quave, Rose and residents of D'Iberville. "We'll create a new sphere of influence along the Coast," Rose said. "But we don't want to lose site of our history and our values." Moss Point Mayor Xavier Bishop doesn't want to lose sight of the individual needs of his city of 16,000. Lying in the shadow of Pascagoula's port, Moss Point has a different set of problems than does its 10

coastal neighbors. There's no gambling in Jackson County, no easy economic solutions woven into this city's recovery plans. City leaders started discussions on downtown redevelopment two decades ago, when a highway expansion project cut off traffic, stifling economic activities along the main thoroughfare.

In office only six weeks before the storm, Bishop set out to make things happen, to jumpstart the old redevelopment discussions. But then Hurricane Katrina and her aftermath took center stage. "The storm compelled us to rethink plans for the city," said Bishop. Downtown used to be the focus of redevelopment talks, Bishop said. Since the storm, the waterfront has become an essential part of the plans drawn up by HOK Architects, SmartCode advocates. They've helped create a marketable document to present to potential developers.

The plan is for the waterfront to serve as a public, pedestrian-friendly, multi-use space but also as a buffer when a future storm threatens. Katrina's surge overflowed bayous and creeks, destroying city government buildings. Vessels from a shipbuilder were shaken from moorings; they chaotically set sail under the power of the storm's 120 mph winds, ramming piers and other ships. The waterfront has long been the focus of the Moss Point economy, supporting ship building, seafood processing and a paper mill. But that began to change when International Paper, operating in the city since 1928, closed in 2001, eliminating more than 300 jobs. The seafood industry is still recovering from Katrina and a key player in its shipbuilding industry canceled plans to expand after the storm. The proposed plan is to revitalize the riverfront, drawing new business interests and industry.

Funding for Moss Point's projects will come from different sources. FEMA in partnership with MEMA will provide millions to replace city government buildings and infrastructure. The city also will receive a state grant. Additional funding will be needed. Bishop is juggling a full plate of needs. "We can't prioritize as a city could under normal circumstances," said Bishop. "We have to address economic development along with housing, along with infrastructure now. We can't isolate one need. If someone walks in with a need, that's the priority of the moment."

Bishop said his challenge is to help individuals meet their needs while trying to launch the city's new master plan. He said he can use all the help he can get – and not necessarily money. "We need technical assistance and advisors just as states and the federal government use. If Katrina happened in my home town of Chicago, there would be no shortage of advisors." Moss Point recovery would make an enormous case study, Bishop added. "We'd like to be left in a better position to deal with another disaster." It's not just the future of Moss Point that Bishop is concerned about. "The future of the entire region is at stake," he said. The future will depend, in part, on successfully balancing priorities and plans. The other side of the recovery equation is funding and obtaining the right advice and technical assistance to make it happen.

## ***Corps Works with State to Develop Hurricane Protection and Coastal Restoration Alternatives for Louisiana***

**NEW ORLEANS** – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in full partnership with the State of Louisiana in producing the State Master Plan, continues to work through the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LACPR) project to develop a suite of recommendations for a comprehensive coast-wide protection and restoration plan. The effort builds on the vision of the State's Master Plan to identify the maximum level of Federal participation possible in a report that will enable lawmakers to make informed decisions.

The Corps and State have been working with stakeholder groups, agencies and the public to make informed recommendations. Under consideration are coastal, non-structural and structural measures. Study objectives focus on people, property, the environment and cultural heritage. In designing to achieve these objectives, the Corps analyzes dimensions of a storm, to include wind speed relationship with other storm characteristics, such as radius to maximum winds, central pressure, forward speed, and land falling location/conditions.

These additional factors are critical to determining potential surge and wave elevations. Based on these factors, which can be observed in storms, the 1,000-year hurricane flood event is generally equivalent to a high Category 5 and the 400-year event could be considered roughly the equivalent of a low Category 5. LACPR is designing for both of these events. Both the LACPR and the IPET Risk & Reliability roll-out effort are currently providing information to the public concerning the importance of these additional design factors.

To date, there have been no official dollar figures put to any of the alternatives. Preliminary cost estimates have been developed so that stakeholders can take them into account in providing feedback of evaluated plan. The alternatives, as well as costs, will be reviewed both internally and through external peer review at the appropriate time.

The draft report with appropriate environmental documentation is scheduled to be delivered to Washington in December 2007 to meet the Congressional directive. A final report is scheduled to be completed in July 2008 and submitted to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works for action. The final decisions will then lie with the Administration and Congress to authorize a plan and appropriate funding for that plan.

## ***Environmental Assessment: Fort St. Philips CWPPRA by the New Orleans District is Available for Review***

The purpose of the proposed action is to promote the formation of emergent marsh through the introduction of fresh water and sediment to the system. The proposed action consists of excavating a diversion channel through the bank at approximate Mississippi River mile 21.6-L above head of passes (AHP) and using the dredged material to create marsh (Figure 2). The diversion would be situated on an unrevetted point bar, between the Neptune and Olga revetments. The riverbank fronting this location is a fairly flat sand bar. The diversion channel would allow flow of fresh river water (3,000 cubic feet per second (cfs)) and sediments into the shallow open water areas beyond the diversion. The excavation of the diversion channel would be performed by hydraulic cutter head dredge. The entire project area is 1,918 acres. The direct impact would be from the creation of wetlands (43 acres) using the dredged material from the diversion opening. Compared to the No Action Alternative, an additional 455 acres of emergent marsh would result from the diversion during the 20 year project life. This would be an increase in 261.39 AAHUs.

Copies of EA #405 and the draft FONSI are available upon request. Please contact Mr. Nathan Dayan; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division; Environmental Planning and Compliance Branch; CEMVN-PM-RS; P.O. Box 60267; New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267; to request a copy. Request also can be made by calling (504) 862-2530, by E-Mail to [nathan.s.dayan@mvn02.usace.army.mil](mailto:nathan.s.dayan@mvn02.usace.army.mil), or by fax to (504) 862-2088. The public review and comment period for EA #405 will end 30 days from the date of this letter (Aug. 30, 2007).

## ***World Water Monitoring Day***

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the International Water Association (IWA), invited citizens and organizations from around the globe to give their local water bodies a check-up. Held annually between September 18 and October 18, the World Water Monitoring Day™ program encourages communities around the world to perform basic monitoring of their watersheds. An easy-to-use test kit tests for a core set of water quality parameters including temperature, pH, clarity, and dissolved oxygen. To register for this event and obtain test kits, please visit the [World Water Monitoring Day™](#) website.

## **Grant Opportunities**

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### ***Community-based Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Grant Opportunity***

In cooperation with the NOAA Restoration Center, the Marine Debris Program is offering another funding opportunity. This grant is provided to catalyze the implementation of locally driven, community-based marine debris prevention and removal projects that will benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and NOAA trust resources, including anadromous fish. The NOAA Restoration Center funds projects directly and through partnerships with national and regional organizations. Applications are due October 31, 2007. For more information, visit <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/funding/welcome.html>.

## **Training and Conferences**

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### ***Texas Sea Grant Researcher Conference***

**October 10, 2007**

The Texas Sea Grant College Program is holding the Sea Grant Researcher Conference on October 10, 2007. The conference speakers will be researchers who are currently supported by the Texas Sea Grant College Program. Results of ongoing research will be presented in a public forum. Faculty, staff and students with interests in marine science from universities throughout the state, as well as other interested parties are welcome to attend.

Location: University of Texas Marine Science Institute, Port Aransas, Texas, USA  
Contact Information: Peggy Foster  
Phone: 979-845-1245  
Email: [pfoster@neo.tamu.edu](mailto:pfoster@neo.tamu.edu)

## **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Border Energy Forum to be Held in San Diego, California October 18-19, 2007**

AUSTIN — Government and private sector leaders from the U.S.-Mexico border region will gather in San Diego, California for the 14th annual Border Energy Forum from October 18-19. This year's forum — always held in a border state — will focus on renewable energy potential in the Southwest United States and Northern Mexico. Other key issues on this year's agenda include the future of energy policy, water and energy efficiency, border energy infrastructure, transportation fuels, financing energy projects, energy production and the environment, and natural gas production and markets.

The forum will begin with an opening reception on the evening of October 17, and a special energy tour of San Diego will be provided at the conclusion of the conference. The Border Energy Forum brings together leaders from industry, government, educational institutions and environmental organizations to develop cutting edge strategies well grounded in economic reality. The forum has gained a strong reputation as a neutral ground to discuss energy-related challenges common to both sides of the border. The forum has always encouraged energy decisions and policies that take into account the twin goals of economic development and environmental protection.

## **ASBPA-GLO Fall Coastal Conference October 21-24, 2007**

The American Shore & Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) and the Texas General Land Office (GLO) announce their 2007 fall coastal conference: "Caring for the Coast: Preserving, Enhancing, Protecting". ASBPA recognizes that the shores, beaches and other coastal resources of America provide important quality-of-life assets within the reach of the largest possible number of people in accordance with the ideals of a democratic nation. This Association is dedicated to preserving, protecting and enhancing the beaches, shores and other coastal resources of America.

Location: Galveston Island Convention Center, Galveston, Texas  
Abstract/Proposal Submission Deadline: May 31, 2007  
Contact Information: Email: [abstracts@asbpa.org](mailto:abstracts@asbpa.org)  
Home Page URL: [http://www.asbpa.org/conferences/conf\\_fall\\_07.htm](http://www.asbpa.org/conferences/conf_fall_07.htm)

## **Louisiana DEQ Announces Water Quality Conference Oct. 29-31, 2007**

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette will host "Louisiana Water Quality Conference: Watershed Issues 2007." The conference will be held in Lafayette, , at the Lafayette Hilton Hotel.

The conference will focus on nonpoint source pollution control and watershed management. Nonpoint source pollution is a type of water pollution that is not generated from a distinct place, such as a discharge pipe or sewage treatment plant. It is generated during rainfall events. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters, and even our underground sources of drinking water. According to EPA, states have reported that nonpoint source pollution is the leading remaining cause of water quality problems.

The conference will offer a boat trip down Vermilion River, informative sessions, lunch and a banquet. For more information contact Alicia Walsh, DEQ environmental scientist at 225-219-3487 or Dr. Durga Pudel, with ULL at 337-482-6163. For more information and to register, visit [www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/69/Default.aspx](http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/69/Default.aspx).

## **Clean Gulf 2007**

**November 15-16, 2007**

Join with key professionals from regulatory agencies, the federal government, state government and private industry for the 17th Annual CLEAN GULF. From pre-spill planning through final clean up and disposal, CLEAN GULF remains focused on the real challenges, trends and solutions that affect the energy industry and its responders. The products, services and technologies that make these solutions possible will be on display in one of the largest indoor exhibitions of its kind. With over 175 displays showcasing the top spill prevention and response, maritime and port security, cleanup and salvage firms serving the energy industry, the CLEAN GULF exhibition is a one-stop solutions event for today's busy oil and hazmat spill prevention and response professional.

Location: Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, Florida

Contact Information: Laura Liptak, [laural@tradefairgroup.com](mailto:laural@tradefairgroup.com); 832-242-1969 x310

Home Page URL: <http://www.cleangulf.org/>

## **Sea-Level Rise in Florida**

*A Conversation Between Scientists and Journalists*

**February 5-6, 2008**

Join leading scientists and journalists at University of South Florida St. Petersburg and the Poynter Institute for a day-long workshop that will offer scientists and journalists practical skills for learning to communicate better with each other—and with the public.

Keynote speaker Robert Bazell, NBC's science correspondent, begins the conference on Tuesday evening. Wednesday's activities include a series of panel session "conversations" related to communicating the impacts of sea-level rise on Florida's fresh water supply, regional ecology, public health and social and economic welfare.

For more information see [www.scienceandthemediamedia.org](http://www.scienceandthemediamedia.org) (Registration required. Limited enrollment.)

The Rookery Bay and Apalachicola Research Reserves in Florida are partnering on this effort to support the Gulf of Mexico Alliance by engaging the media and increasing public awareness of critical scientific issues. Feel free to contact me if you have questions. We hope you will join us.

Tabitha Stadler, Coastal Training Coordinator  
Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve  
300 Tower Road  
Naples, FL 34113  
239-417-6310 ext. 209  
[Tabitha.stadler@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:Tabitha.stadler@dep.state.fl.us)  
[www.rookerybay.org](http://www.rookerybay.org)

## **2008 Ocean Sciences Meeting**

**March 2-7, 2008**

The biennial Ocean Sciences Meeting, a gathering of more than 3000 aquatic scientists, will be held in at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando next March. The meeting is an important venue for scientific exchange across broad marine-science disciplines, including physical, biological, chemical and geological oceanography, all branches of limnology, hydrology, and multidisciplinary topics ranging from evolution to climate change. In keeping with the theme of the meeting, proposals for topical sessions on these subjects and others that reflect new and ongoing research on watersheds, the global ocean and society, including science education, outreach and public policy, are welcome.

Early Registration Deadline: February 1, 2008

Abstract/Proposal Submission Deadline: October 2, 2007

Contact Information: Email: [orlando2008@sgmeet.com](mailto:orlando2008@sgmeet.com)

Home Page URL: <http://www.aslo.org/orlando2008/>

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

