

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

November/December 2007

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force Releases Draft Action Plan Update

On November 13 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-led interagency Gulf of Mexico/Mississippi River Watershed Nutrient Task Force made available the [draft 2008 Hypoxia Action Plan](#) for public comment on its web site, and will follow shortly with a Federal Register notice. The 2008 update is the primary interagency management plan for the Gulf's hypoxic zone and will be used to implement soon-to-be-released recommendations from the EPA Science Advisory Board's Hypoxia Advisory Panel. This update was in response to the adaptive management framework established in the original 2001 Action Plan which was called for in the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act (HABHRCA) of 1998. Public comments on the draft plan will be accepted until January 4, 2008. [NOAA has provided extensive scientific support for the Action Plan and the Task Force for well over a decade](#). For more information contact Rob.Magnien@noaa.gov.

New Community Resilience Initiative Launched

A new initiative, the Community Resilience Indicators project, aims to improve the hazard resilience of coastal communities. This initiative, funded by NOAA's Coastal Services Center (CSC), will develop community resilience indicators for three pilot communities in the northern Gulf of Mexico. At the recent opening meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas, representatives from institutions that received pilot-project funding—the University of New Orleans, State University of New York, and Texas A& M University—began collaboration efforts with NOAA's Coastal Services Center and Gulf Coast Services Center. For more information, contact [Tashya Allen](#).

Cross-NOAA Effort Supports Planning and Resilience Project

Alabama's Mobile Bay region is experiencing tremendous growth and is also vulnerable to hurricanes and other natural hazards. In late November, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce hosted four community planning and resilience meetings with business leaders and local and regional officials, including staff members from all NOAA line offices. The meetings, part of a larger planning and resilience project, addressed the area's infrastructure, transportation, environment, and economic development. This project is supported by NOAA's regional collaboration team for the Gulf of Mexico. The NOAA Coastal Services Center and Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium are providing financial and technical support. For more information, contact [Todd Davison](#).

Alabama Volunteers Provide a New Layer to HAB Forecasting

Alabama volunteers sampling at Dauphin Island and Gulf Shores reported low numbers of the toxic dinoflagellate, *Karenia brevis*, to the Southeast Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (SEPMN) in advance of the westward movement of a bloom predicted by the NOAA Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast. The reporting of *K. brevis* observations to state and federal partners is resulting in discussions among various parts of NOAA toward seamless integration of volunteer data into NOAA harmful algal bloom

forecasting. SEPMN enhances the awareness of harmful algae and their impacts and directly engages volunteers in coastal stewardship, with 72 groups monitoring over 104 sites along the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, the Virgin Islands, and Hawaii. For more information, contact Steve.Morton@noaa.gov.

NOAA PORTS® Ocean Observing System Installed in Mobile Bay

November 29, 2007

NOAA announced today that the Port of Mobile, Ala. has become the 14th location in the United States to install the [Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System](#). PORTS®, developed and operated by NOAA, provides accurate real-time oceanographic and meteorological data to mariners that can significantly reduce the risk of vessel groundings and increase the amount of cargo moved through the port. The system will become operational on Dec. 3.

“NOAA is committed to providing real-time environmental data through PORTS® and other integrated ocean observing systems to ensure safe, efficient navigation within our nation’s ports and beyond,” said [John H. Dunnigan](#), NOAA assistant administrator for the [National Ocean Service](#). “NOAA is pleased to add the Port of Mobile to the nationwide PORTS® network.”

Administered by the [NOAA Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services](#), PORTS® measures, integrates, and disseminates observations of water levels, currents, salinity, wind, and bridge clearance. Knowledge of environmental conditions can significantly reduce the risk of vessel groundings and increase the amount of cargo moved through a waterway by enabling mariners to safely utilize every inch of dredged channel depth. Port of Mobile PORTS® data are updated every six minutes and thoroughly quality controlled to ensure accuracy.

“PORTS® gives our shippers, pilots, and regulatory agencies important, real-time information on navigational conditions, which allows for the optimization of cargo carriage and improves safety,” said James K. Lyons, director and CEO of the Port of Mobile. “We are a proud sponsor of this important technology at the Port of Mobile.”

While designed to be of service to the marine transportation community, the data are freely accessible on the Internet at <http://www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/ports>. NOAA PORTS® information users include port authorities, vessel pilots, shipping companies, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, recreational boaters, fishermen, coastal managers, environmental organizations and academia.

The Mobile system brings to 14 the number of PORTS® in operation around the nation. Studies have shown more than a 50 percent decrease in vessel groundings following the installation of PORTS® in other areas. Estimates of economic benefits directly attributed to PORTS® range from \$7 million per year for Tampa Bay to \$16 million per year for Houston-Galveston. The Port of Mobile is the 11th largest in the United States, handling 24 million tons of cargo in 2006, accounting for \$89.5 million in revenue.

Charting the Location of a German Torpedo in the Gulf of Mexico

The Office of Coast Survey (OCS) was recently contacted by British Petroleum Inc. (BP) who, while laying fiber optic cable in 6,300 feet of water in the Gulf of Mexico, found that their cable was within three feet of a World War II-era German torpedo likely used in an attempt to sink an American ship in the Gulf during the war. The torpedo, with over 600 pounds of high explosives, was charted and a local

notice to mariners was issued by OCS to warn of the hazard. OCS worked with the U.S. Coast Guard, BP, and the local deep-water navigation, oil and gas exploration and production industry to deliver the finding and warnings. For more information, contact [Tim Osborn](#).

Discovery of HAB Adaptation to Low Nutrients to Improve Forecasting

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science researchers report findings that should improve forecasting for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and help coastal managers mitigate damage to living marine resources. This discovery reveals that certain HAB species are adapted to low concentrations of the nutrient ammonium, even though blooms of these species occur in environments that often are ammonium-enriched. Low-nutrient adaptation allows these HAB species to outcompete beneficial species of algae during bloom events after ammonium, originally abundant, has been consumed down to very low levels by non-harmful algae. HAB events can persist for months or even years and may adversely impact sea grass beds, clams, and oysters. The low-ammonium adaptation helps explain the longevity of these blooms. Texas brown tide species *Aureoumbra lagunensis* and the Long Island green tide species *Nannochloris atomus* are HAB species shown to be adapted to low ammonium concentrations. For more information, contact Bill.Sunda@noaa.gov.

Analysis of Red Tide Toxins Molecular Mechanisms Improves Understanding of Marine Mammal Mortality Events

Analysis of the molecular actions of brevetoxins by National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science researchers has identified previously unrecognized lethal effects as they target the respiratory system. The results of this analysis will serve to redirect biomedical research of brevetoxin to specific populations of nerve cells and should help wildlife managers and scientists understand how red tide toxins lead to the significant marine animal mortalities in the Gulf of Mexico. Although a prominent action of brevetoxin is to activate nerve cells, the toxins also disrupt breathing by inhibiting nerve conduction in the brain and nerve paralysis in the diaphragm. For more information, contact John.Ramsdell@noaa.gov.

CICEET Awards \$1.9 Million to Advance Coastal Technology

CICEET awarded six grants totaling \$1.9 million for new tools to manage and protect coastal environments as part of its Environmental Technology Demonstration and Development Program. The projects were selected for their potential to transform research into practical, accessible tools that coastal resource managers need to support their communities and protect the environment. Each project focuses on a priority environmental challenge with a direct impact on the wellbeing of those who live in coastal communities. Gulf coast projects that received grants are:

Texas

Building on a previous CICEET project that developed the Sediment Profile Imaging and Microsampling System—a technology that identifies indicators of hydrophobic organic chemicals (HOCs)—researchers are developing passive samplers to characterize the contamination. Once SPIMS ‘sees’ signs of contamination, these samplers will identify its concentration, toxicity rate, and chemical activities.

Louisiana

A team of researchers will investigate the effectiveness of different levels of sediment application as a restoration method as well as the complex relationships that support marsh function. The goal is to predict the optimum level of sediment application in submerged wetlands, thereby increasing the effectiveness of marsh restoration projects.

For more information, visit CICEET online: http://ciceet.unh.edu/stats/etdd_2007.html. Contact: Dwight.Trueblood@noaa.gov, UNH/NOAA Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET)

New NOAA Model Links Mississippi River Nutrient Outflow to Florida Red Tides

November 7, 2007

A new NOAA research model indicates nutrients flowing from the Mississippi River may stimulate harmful algal blooms to grow on the continental shelf off the west coast of Florida. The peer-reviewed hypothesis is being published in a special issue on Florida red tide in the journal "Continental Shelf Research." According to the model, algal blooms form on the Florida coast because of weather and gulf currents. The algae grows offshore, supplied with additional nutrients that appear to have originated from the Mississippi River, in a process driven by normal seasonal wind patterns.

"We found that the concentrations of nutrients needed to start the Florida red tides is much lower than previously suspected," said NOAA oceanographer and lead author of the paper, Richard Stumpf, Ph.D. "The hypothesis means that offshore areas should be examined for both small increases in nutrients and modest concentrations of the algae at the start of the bloom season."

Harmful algal blooms occur in the waters of almost every U.S. coastal state, caused by numerous different species. Their direct economic effects in the United States are estimated to average \$75 million annually, including public health costs, commercial fishing closures, recreation and tourism losses, and in management and monitoring costs.

While outflow from the Mississippi River travels westward most of the year, early summer prevailing winds carry it eastward, bringing nutrients, especially nitrogen, toward Florida. The nutrients then settle into deeper water, where they are taken up by the algae. The blooms, of the red tide species *Karenia brevis*, start on the shelf, and are brought onshore and concentrated by the prevailing wind patterns of late summer and fall. The study has implications for predictions and for monitoring of these blooms, including potential variations in intensity between years and regions. It also finds that even relatively small increases in nitrogen can account for the initiation of the blooms offshore.

NOAA, working in partnership with scientists at [Mote Marine Laboratory](#) in Sarasota, Fla., is already beginning to test the hypothesis through the use of autonomous underwater vehicles carrying instruments called "BreveBusters." The vehicles are checking for the presence of *Karenia brevis* blooms further off the coast in deeper Gulf of Mexico waters.

The new hypothesis links results from several extensive research programs conducted in the Gulf of Mexico over the last decade including the NOAA-funded Florida Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Bloom program. Understanding initiation of red tide should lead to improved monitoring, modeling, and research strategies for these blooms.

Since 2004, NOAA has been providing operational [forecasts of harmful algal bloom](#) impacts in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. The new results offer the potential of providing better forecasts of when the blooms start, allowing for more effective monitoring.

Discovery of HAB Adaptation to Improve Forecasting

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researchers have found that certain Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) species are adapted to low concentrations of the nutrient ammonium, even though blooms of these species typically occur in environments that are ammonium-enriched. This adaptation allows these species to outcompete non-harmful algae, and may explain why HAB events can persist for months or even years, adversely impacting sea grass beds, clams, and oysters. This discovery should improve forecasting for HABs and help coastal managers mitigate damage to living marine resources.

Texas brown tide species *Aureoumbra lagunensis* and the Long Island green tide species *Nannochloris atomus* are the two species shown to be adapted to low ammonium concentrations. For more information, contact [Bill Sunda](#).

First Lady Recognizes NOAA's New Web Campaign

First Lady Laura Bush announced a new multi-agency marine debris initiative during a designation ceremony for the J.L. Scott Marine Education Center in Ocean Springs, MS, on November 2. She spoke of the effects of marine debris she had witnessed on a visit to Midway Atoll (Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument – Northwestern Hawaiian Islands) and about the people's obligation to protect natural resources. Mrs. Bush publicly recognized activities to increase public education on marine debris, including the launch of the new [NOAA Marine Debris Web Education Campaign](#). Titled "Marine Debris 101", the new educational portion of the NOAA Marine Debris Program Web site informs people about the sources of marine debris, impacts marine debris can have on the environment, and solutions to the problem. On this site you can download informative marine debris brochures, posters, fact sheets, guidebooks, and activity books. For more information, contact [Megan Forbes](#).

New HURREVAC Features Provide Storm-Surge Guidance

A new software tool developed by NOAA's Coastal Services Center (CSC) and National Weather Service, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is providing emergency managers and other officials with timely and easy-to-use storm-surge guidance tools. This new software module enables users to view storm-surge guidance up to 24 hours before projected landfall of a tropical cyclone, aiding them in making evacuation plans. An added tool option helps viewers consider hypothetical storm-surge scenarios. It is available on HURREVAC, a decision-support tool used by more than 6,000 government officials. For more information, visit <http://www.hurrevac.com> or contact [Doug Marcy](#).

As 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season Ends, Questions Remain

November 29, 2007

As the [2007 Atlantic hurricane season](#) officially comes to a close on November 30, NOAA scientists are carefully reviewing a set of dynamic weather patterns that yielded lower-than-expected hurricane activity across the Atlantic Basin. As a result, the United States was largely spared from significant landfalling storms. However several noteworthy events took place, including two back-to-back Category 5 hurricanes hitting Central America and the rapid near-shore intensification of the single U.S. landfalling hurricane. As a whole, the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season produced a total of 14 named storms, including six hurricanes, two of which became major hurricanes. NOAA's [August update](#) to the seasonal forecast predicted 13 to 16 named storms – of which seven to nine would be hurricanes, including three to five major hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher. An average season has 11 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes, including two major hurricanes.

"The 2007 Atlantic hurricane season produced the predicted number of named storms, but the combined number, duration and intensity of the hurricanes did not meet expectations," said [Gerry Bell](#), Ph.D., lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at [NOAA's Climate Prediction Center](#). "The United States was fortunate this year to have fewer strong hurricanes develop than predicted.

Normally, the climate patterns that were in place produce an active, volatile hurricane season." The climate patterns predicted for the 2007 hurricane season – an ongoing multi-decadal signal (the set of oceanic and atmospheric conditions that have spawned increased Atlantic hurricane activity since 1995) and [La Niña](#) – produced the expected below-normal hurricane activity over the eastern and central Pacific regions. However, La Niña's impact over the Atlantic was weaker than expected, which resulted in stronger upper-level winds and increased wind shear over the Caribbean Sea during the peak months of the season (August-October). This limited Atlantic hurricane formation during that period. NOAA's scientists are investigating possible climate factors that may have led to this lower-than-expected activity.

All in all, one hurricane, one tropical storm and three tropical depressions struck the United States: [Tropical Depression Barry](#) came ashore near Tampa Bay, Fla., on June 2; Tropical Depression Erin hit southeast Texas on August 16 and [Tropical Depression Ten](#) came ashore along the western Florida panhandle on Sept. 21; [Tropical Storm Gabrielle](#) hit east-central North Carolina on Sept. 9, and [Hurricane Humberto](#) hit the upper Texas coast on Sept. 13.

Also this year, the U.S. was reminded of the dangers of inland flooding. "Texas and Oklahoma experienced deadly flooding when Erin dumped up to 11 inches of rain. Fresh water flooding is yet another deadly aspect of tropical cyclones," said Ed Rappaport, acting director of [NOAA's National Hurricane Center](#).

Other noteworthy statistics of the season include:

- Eight storms formed in the Atlantic Basin during September - tying September 2002 for having the most storm formations during any given month.
- For the first time in recorded history, two Category 5 hurricanes made landfall in the Atlantic Basin during the same season. [Hurricane Dean](#) hit the Yucatan Peninsula near Costa Maya on Aug. 21 with 165 mph winds, followed by Hurricane Felix on Sept. 2, near Punta Gorda, Nicaragua, with 160 mph winds.
- With a central pressure of 906 millibars, Hurricane Dean had the third lowest pressure at landfall – behind the Labor Day 1935 Hurricane in the Florida Keys and Hurricane Gilbert of 1988 in

Cancun, Mexico. Dean is also the first Category 5 hurricane to make landfall in the Atlantic Basin since Hurricane Andrew hit South Florida in 1992.

- Hurricane Humberto grew from a tropical depression with top winds of 35 mph into a hurricane with winds of 85 mph within 24 hours - only three other storms (Celia 1970, Arlene and Flora 1963) intensified faster during a 24-hour period from below tropical storm strength.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center will release an official summary of the 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season in January 2008. NOAA will announce its 2008 hurricane outlooks for the Atlantic, East Pacific and Central Pacific in May.

NOAA's Atlantic and East Pacific hurricane outlooks are official products of its Climate Prediction Center in collaboration with scientists at the National Hurricane Center, [Hurricane Research Division](#) and the [Hydrometeorological Prediction Center](#). NOAA's Central Pacific Outlook is an official product of the [Central Pacific Hurricane Center](#) in Honolulu, Hawaii, and in collaboration with the Climate Prediction Center.

New Tool to Track and Map Groundwater Flow in Coastal Waters

[This entry corrects the October edition, with apologies to the Florida State University.]

In many coastal areas, groundwater is a major pathway for pollution transport that, until recently, has been hard to measure. With CICEET support, a research team from the Florida State University has developed a tool to accelerate collection and analysis of groundwater location data, thereby providing a more efficient method to track and map groundwater discharge zones in coastal waters.

The Radon Seawater Analysis System uses radon as a proxy to track groundwater discharge. It works by extracting radon-enriched dry air from seawater and sending it through a series of high-sensitivity analyzers. Promising field tests conducted in the Apalachicola Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve led to a full-scale radon survey along the Bay's coastline and to the eventual refinement and commercialization of the technology through Durrige, Inc., a private company specializing in instrumentation for environmental radon measurement. The system has been used to map groundwater flows around the country by several organizations. It is also being used abroad in several countries. Contact: dwight.trueblood@noaa.gov.

Other NOAA News

U.S. Coastal Land Cover Maps Available Online

Land cover maps for the coastal areas of the conterminous U.S. are now available online in a standardized database of information used to document regional development trends, habitat losses and gains, changes in sources of pollution or sedimentation, and other factors affecting coastal ecosystem health. The Coastal Change Analysis Program at the NOAA Coastal Services Center spent several years acquiring and processing this information, with 2007 marking the first time the entire set of baseline data has been available. This baseline effort will make future updates easier to acquire and more useful. For more information, visit <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/landcover/> or contact [Nate Herold](#).

NOAA Updates U.S. Drought Forecast

December 20, 2007

Some drought relief is anticipated in parched sections of the United States, but for many areas drought concerns are expected to persist or intensify from January through March 2008, according to the latest [U.S. Drought Outlook](#) issued today by [NOAA's Climate Prediction Center](#).

Drought conditions are predicted to continue in the Southeast from Alabama to the Carolinas. Also, there is the potential for drought to develop along the eastern Gulf of Mexico and in Florida and over the western Plains from northern Texas into southwestern Nebraska.

“In spite of a number of winter storms that affected the nation during the first two weeks of December, much more rainfall is needed to bring wells, lakes, and reservoir levels back to normal in many areas of the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama and parts of Florida,” said Douglas LeComte, NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center drought specialist. “Over the last year or two, the precipitation deficits in these areas have been measured in feet rather than inches”.



U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook through March, 2008.
+ [High Resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

Meteorologists continue to forecast below average precipitation for the southern tier of the nation and above average precipitation over the Pacific Northwest, Great Lakes and Tennessee Valley for January through March. Drought conditions should improve in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, as well as over the Pacific Northwest. Intermittent beneficial rain and snow is expected over the next couple of weeks for California and Arizona, but improvement might be short lived since below average precipitation is expected for the rest of the season.

Overall, the country is likely to see warmer than average temperatures over the next three months. “However, there will be fluctuations of warm weather and more typical winter weather throughout the season,” said Mike Halpert, deputy director NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center.

The winter season can bring all types of significant weather events, from tornadoes and winter storms to flooding and mudslides. [NOAA's National Weather Service](#) has a variety of weather forecasts and safety information online, including information about [NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards](#), to help keep you safe and ahead of nature’s storms. Meteorological winter runs from the first of December through the end of February. The winter solstice begins on December 22. NOAA will announce the U.S. Spring Outlook in March 2008.

New, Interactive Web Site Tracks Drought

The government today unveiled a new Web site for the public and civic managers to monitor U.S. drought conditions, get forecasts, and know how drought impacts their communities or what mitigation measures exist. Called the [U.S. Drought Portal](#), the [www.drought.gov](#) site was developed for the [National Integrated Drought Information System](#) (NIDIS). A seemingly slow and nomadic natural disaster threat, drought blankets about a third of the United States at any given time.

“The new portal site provides all the information that managers need in one location, and delivers

unprecedented access to key operational drought resources to answer the most pressing questions facing policymakers, emergency planners, businesses and the public,” said retired Navy Vice Adm. [Conrad Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Everyone now has the ability to learn facts they need: What are the current drought conditions, its effects and when will it end?”

NIDIS is a collaboration between numerous federal agencies and several state governments to provide a dynamic and accessible drought-risk information system. NIDIS was created in response to extended drought conditions over the past decade, with strong advocacy from the Western Governors’ Association and other groups. NIDIS, led by NOAA, coordinates use of the U.S. Drought Portal for drought risk assessment and management among its federal, state, tribal and local partners.

“The drought-related emergencies in the Southeast and Southern California underscore the importance of having timely, accessible, and actionable information on drought from the national to the local level,” said Chester Koblinsky, director of [NOAA’s Climate Program Office](#). Koblinsky and Donald Wilhite, director of the University of Nebraska’s School of Natural Resources, co-chair the NIDIS Executive Council.

NIDIS is intended to strengthen public and private sector partnerships, foster and support research, create an early warning system to detect drought and raise public awareness about why drought occurs and its impact on humans and nature. The goal of NIDIS is to improve the ability to understand and respond to climate change, natural disasters, and global environmental issues through better observation, data, analysis, models, and basic social science research.

“The U.S. Drought Portal centralizes drought information in an unprecedented manner, and paves the way for planned early warning system development pilots in select watersheds and states across the U.S.,” said Roger Pulwarty, director of the NIDIS program office located on NOAA’s campus in Boulder, Colo.

Pulwarty said the portal also serves as a focal point for the U.S. commitment to cultivating information services for drought-risk management and adaptation internationally through the U.S. Group on Earth Observations (USGEO). USGEO coordinates the U.S. contribution to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems ([GEOSS](#)).

Through the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), the U.S. is working with international partners to enhance drought early warning capacities within and beyond U.S. borders. A [North American Drought Monitor](#) (NADM) program, established by the U.S., Mexico and Canada, is providing operational monitoring of drought conditions across the continent. The NADM and the U.S. NIDIS program are providing a pathway for the development of a global drought early warning system and new opportunities for responding to the growing threat of drought in the 21st century.

Improved Ecosystem Management Tools to Inform Development

On December 17, the NOAA Center in Oceans and Human Health at the Hollings Marine Laboratory presented improved and new management tools to the Ocean and Coastal Resources Management Office of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. These tools include data management frameworks, impervious cover measurements, and a new method to include socioeconomic variables into a sentinel habitat model based on using tidal creeks as sentinels of human health and well-being in coastal communities. These tools will enhance local decision makers’ abilities to plan future coastal development and help determine a “quality of place” that maintains ecosystem health. For more information, contact [Susan Lovelace](#).

Summary of Recent Coastal Zone Management Act Program Evaluations Released

NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) has released a first-of-its-kind report discussing some of the most prominent coastal management issues tackled by state Coastal Zone Management (CZM) programs and National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs) in recent years. The report was developed by analyzing the findings of fiscal year 2006 Coastal Zone Management Act evaluations of CZM programs and NERRS and includes brief case studies of innovative approaches to key issues. OCRM is seeking feedback on this initial effort. For more information, visit <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/success/evaluation.html> or contact [Kim Penn](#).

NOAA Scientist: Human Development is Important Indicator of Tidal Creek Health

A new NOAA study reveals that the level of human development activities, including roadways, sidewalks and roofs, in a watershed has a direct impact on the health of America's tidal creeks and may potentially threaten public health in those coastal areas. The report was issued this week at the Estuarine Research Federation International Conference in Providence, R.I.

"The health of America's tidal creeks provides an early warning of the effects of coastal development on both coastal ecosystems and potential human health and well-being," said Fred Holland, Ph.D., director of NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's [Hollings Marine Laboratory](#) in Charleston, S.C. and lead author of the study.

Non-point source pollutants found in these creeks include chemicals, which could affect human health through the food chain, such as flame retardants and human pathogenic bacteria. Headwater portions of tidal creeks are the first marine ecosystems to respond to land based pollution, and provide early warning of the effects of coastal development on coastal ecosystems and public health.

Tidal creeks are a dominant feature of Southeastern estuaries. These creeks provide nursery grounds for many fish and crustaceans and their watersheds are preferred places for human development. The effects of land-based development, particularly paving which increases pollutant run-off into these creeks, are important to regional and local planners.

The affects of non-point runoff was determined through a comparative ecosystem study assessing coastal development through sampling of tidal creeks that drain watersheds. As a result of this work, a framework was developed that can be used to evaluate and predict how coastal development affects watersheds, ecological processes, and quality of life in the coastal zone. This research was done in collaboration with Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve systems.

Research Points to Bottlenose Dolphins as Environmental Sentinels

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) research has found that levels of trace metals and mercury in the skin of bottlenose dolphins appear to be correlated more with geographic location than with age and length of dolphins. These results, published in *Science of the Total Environment*, provide

further support that bottlenose dolphins may serve as environmental sentinels for contaminant levels, and skin may be used as an indicator for measuring trace elements and mercury accumulation. Differences in several trace element concentrations in skin tissue may also be potentially useful to discriminate between dolphin populations. For more information, contact [Hui-Chen Stavros](#) or [Pat Fair](#).

Educators Interested in Teaching Estuarine Science

Teachers at the K-12 level around the country are interested in incorporating estuarine science into their science classes, as long as the materials meet existing standards and can be accessed with existing resources. These are some of the findings of a [nationwide needs assessment](#) conducted over the summer for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), which is developing curricula for estuarine science to improve awareness of coastal and estuarine science and issues. Nearly 1,000 teachers responded to the on-line survey, which sought to determine what kinds of teachers are interested in teaching estuarine subjects, how estuarine topics fit with current teaching topics and materials, and how to design curriculum materials and professional development efforts to increase the likelihood that they will be used. For more information, contact [Amy Clark](#).

NOAA Launches National Marine Debris Education Effort

November 2, 2007

NOAA today launched a comprehensive effort aimed at reducing dangerous [marine debris](#). The Internet-based educational campaign for marine debris awareness and prevention answers President Bush's call to increase public awareness and understanding of the global problem of marine debris.

"Today I'm happy to announce our government will work to clean our planet's oceans with a new Marine Debris Initiative," said Mrs. Laura Bush today in Mississippi. "The United States will work with international partners and organizations to prevent fishing gear from becoming lost in marine habitats. The centerpiece of this initiative will be our country's Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers. These centers form a network of 20 aquariums, museums, and research facilities, and they include the most prestigious marine facilities in our country, including the J.L. Scott Marine Education Center here in southern Mississippi."

"The most effective way to clean up marine debris is to keep it out of the water in the first place," said retired Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "By educating the public on and around the water, we keep dangerous debris in its place and out of the water."

Titled "[Marine Debris 101](#)" the new NOAA marine debris Web site section www.marinedebris.noaa.gov is part of a multi-agency national campaign to provide the general public, as well as avid beachgoers, boaters, fishermen, students and educators with information on the impacts of marine debris and how they can become a part of the solution to reduce debris in the environment. The average American discards four and a half pounds of trash daily including glass bottles that can take one million years to break down, aluminum cans that take from 80 to 200 years, and plastic bags that take 10 to 20 years to degrade.

The information is easily accessible and is presented as downloadable fact sheets, posters, placards, brochures, guide books from partner agencies, activity books, and an expanded photo database for use by the general public. There is also a section designed especially for educators focused marine debris awareness and prevention curriculum for students K-12.

Joining NOAA in this effort is the Department of the Interior, EPA, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of Transportation as well as various state and non-profit organizations.

Marine debris is an ongoing problem worldwide. With increased use of synthetic materials like plastics, marine ecosystems have suffered from the impacts of marine debris. It is estimated that more than one million birds and 100,000 marine mammals die each year due to ingestion of, and entanglement in marine debris. Most sources of marine debris are from mishandled land-based waste. Successful ocean stewardship and conservation depend on informed policy-makers and an informed public.

NOAA and USDA Accepting Public Comment on Aquaculture Feeds

November 16, 2007

NOAA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are [soliciting information](#) and ideas on ways to lessen dependence on fish-based feeds in the aquaculture industry. This comment period is the first step of a broad, year-long program that will include research projects, scientific consultations and a national workshop aimed at developing new and effective ingredients for aqua-feed.

"Forty percent of the seafood consumed in the United States comes from farmed sources, so we have a keen interest in making sure that aquaculture production is efficient and environmentally responsible," said Bill Hogarth, director of [NOAA Fisheries Service](#). "Our program will identify science needs on alternative feeds for aquaculture to guide federal research funding priorities."

Congress is considering legislation to allow NOAA to permit aquaculture operations in federal waters, three to 200 miles off U.S. coasts. If enacted, the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007 also would authorize a research and development program for all marine aquaculture, which would advance the movement to find additional feed options.

Producers feed pellets to farm-raised fish and shrimp that are made in part from ground-up herring, menhaden, anchovy, and sardines, so-called industrial fish. These small, bony species provide farmed seafood with important protein, fatty acids and essential vitamins and minerals.

The issue of feed ingredients is a challenge facing the expanding global aquaculture industry because industrial fish are under increasing pressure as a commercial fishery worldwide. The cost of fish meal has risen steeply as farming operations have increased. In 2002, 46 percent of fishmeal went to aquaculture uses, while 22 percent went to poultry and 24 percent went to pigs. The amount of available fish meal and fish oil is not likely to increase, so producers must find other sources of feed protein as the aquaculture industry continues to grow.

In response, industry is turning to other feed ingredients such as algae and soybeans, thus reducing the use of fishmeal and fish oil. Studies are helping scientists to better understand the nutritional requirements of fish to ensure new feeds effectively grow seafood that retains nutritional benefits for humans. NOAA Fisheries Service and [USDA's Agricultural Research Service](#) and [Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service](#) are interested in making better use of discarded fish parts from fish processing plants for feeds, in addition to using a variety of potential ingredients from agriculture, including plants. To submit a question, idea, or recommendation on alternative feeds for aquaculture, stakeholders should send an e-mail to: noaa.aquaculture@noaa.gov; send a fax to: 301-713-9108; or, send a letter to: [NOAA Aquaculture Program](#), Alternative Feeds Initiative, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13117, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The deadline for comments is Feb. 29, 2008.

In the Gulf States

Alabama Marine Resources Division Receives \$50,000 For State's Offshore Artificial Reef Program

December 04, 2007

Captain Maurice Fitzsimmons, Tom Steber and Tony Kennon of the Red Snapper World Championship presented Marine Resources Division Director Vern Minton a check for \$50,000 on Nov. 26 at Craft Farms in Gulf Shores, Alabama. The money will be used as match for the Sportfish Restoration monies to continue building offshore artificial reefs.

“Since its inception in 2004, the Red Snapper World Championship has been a very successful tournament and has helped generate a lot of revenue for coastal Alabama,” said Gov. Bob Riley. “Their continued commitment in supporting Alabama’s Artificial Offshore Reef Program is very much appreciated.”

In partnership with the Marine Resources Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), the tournament has donated \$50,000 each year to be used as matching money for the federal SportFish Restoration program. The 3:1 match creates \$200,000 yearly.

“This is a great cooperative effort that has produced a tremendous amount of habitat to the benefit of the fishery resources and the fishermen,” said Minton. “The program has been able to place 864 artificial reefs in the permit area, creating excellent habitat for reef fishes like red snapper and grouper.” Approximately 1,200 square miles of offshore waters are included in the artificial reef general permit areas of Alabama, making this the largest artificial reef program in the United States.

ADCNR Commissioner M. Barnett Lawley said, “We look forward to continuing this successful working relationship in the future and appreciate the opportunity to share in this tremendous tournament.” The Red Snapper World Championship is held each spring in Orange Beach, Alabama. Thousands of anglers from all over the nation participate in the tournament for cash and prizes.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources promotes wise stewardship, management and enjoyment of Alabama’s natural resources through five divisions: Marine Police, Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. To learn more about ADCNR, visit www.outdooralabama.com.

Kickin’ Grass in the Mud Flats

By Curt Chapman, Staff Writer (Created: Monday, November 19, 2007)

Nothing could rattle the 13 members of the Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association (MCWCA) as they gathered Nov. 10 with Randy Roach from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program to plant black needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*) plants on a sand bar in the bay. The possibility of sinking in thick, black mud didn’t phase them. Neither did the activity generated by the FLW Stren Series Fishing Tournament being held nearby. They were people with a purpose, and wouldn’t be distracted. Before all was said and done, 700 of the salt marsh plants were in place and a needed ecosystem was in a good position to spring to life.

The site is a quarter-mile south of the Causeway near the Baldwin-Mobile line and across the Tensaw River from USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park. It was chosen for its salinity, visibility and the lack of similar grasses nearby.

“It never had a lot of vegetation growing on it because it’s spoil,” said Tom Herder, Mobile Bay NEP science communicator. “We gave it a start. We’re going to go back eight times this month.” Herder said it took only 45 minutes to do the job this time, which seemed to surprise him. It went so well that the group plans to set out another 5,000 plants over the next few weeks. Although exposed at low tide, the resulting salt marsh will be a boon for the environment, he said. Salt marshes are known to be among the most productive ecosystems, providing food, shelter, nursery areas and habitat to many estuarine species.



The Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association plant *Juncus* plugs Nov. 10 on an exposed sand bar on the east side of the Tensaw River, near USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park. The planting site, marked by eight PVC poles, is visible from the Causeway. Photo courtesy of Mobile Bay NEP.

“It provides so many services,” Herder said. “It stabilizes the sediment, and could by and by become uplands. It’s a large part of the base of the food chain. It’s habitat for commercial and recreational fish (and shellfish) — gives them a place to take care of themselves. It provides oxygen for the water, and is a place to breed and a place to spawn.” Salt marshes also help improve water quality, Herder said, by removing nutrients from the water column. “If you drive over a bridge and see the grass below you, it doesn’t look very diverse at all,” he said. “But, it rivals anything on the planet, including rain forests.”

The partnership between the MCWCA, Mobile Bay NEP and USFWS ensure the site is monitored. Herder said it is an excellent demonstration of how government agencies and private organizations can work together for salt marsh restoration. Two happy byproducts of the project are its educational and research components. “We could put bulkheads around the whole bay and tell our young’uns what it used to be like,” he said. “(Education) wasn’t necessarily the design. It’s just serendipity.” Asked about plant growth, Herder said, “If we see nothing happen, we’re going to have to ask questions about that. If it is good, we’re going to have to ask about substrate and salinity.” The grasses should experience substantial growth in the spring, he added.

For more information, or to volunteer to help with restoration efforts in the Mobile Bay estuary, call Kara Lankford at klankford@mobilebaynep.com.

Governors Crist, Perdue and Riley Agree to New Water Flow Schedule

TALLAHASSEE – Florida, Georgia and Alabama Governors Charlie Crist, Sonny Perdue, Bob Riley and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today agreed upon a revised schedule to address the short- and long-term needs of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) and Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT) river basins. The agreement came during a day-long meeting of the states at the Florida Governor’s Mansion.

“Water conservation is precious to our three states and I thank my friends for traveling to Florida to discuss this tremendously important issue,” Governor Crist said. “The people of our state have suffered

due to the recent reduction of water flow. Due to recent rainfall, we see increased amounts of water entering Florida that will assist our oystermen. I'm also pleased that we agreed to remove the June 1 deadline imposed by the Army Corps and have agreed to a new date of March 15th to allow state and federal partners to develop improved drought strategies.”

Regarding the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers, the Governors agreed to send a high level staff delegation to Washington, DC in early January to discuss steps needed to move toward a new drought protocol for all three states. It was also agreed that the Governors would meet in February to conclude the tri-state water protocol that would take effect on March 15, 2008.

Representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service also participated in today's meeting to provide factual information on current conditions of both the ACF River Basin and the ACT River Basin (Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa).

The total commercial fishing industry in the Apalachicola Bay is responsible for \$134 million in direct economic output and an additional \$71 million in indirect value-added impacts. The region produces 90 percent of Florida's oyster supply, 10 percent of the nation's oysters, and the state's third-largest shrimp harvest. For more information, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/acf/default.htm

Florida Governor Receives First Report by Action Team on Energy and Climate Change

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today received the Phase One report of the Action Team on Energy and Climate Change. The report includes recommendations regarding Florida's energy policy and incorporating greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies into Florida's energy future. In addition to the report released today, the Action Team will issue a final report by October 1, 2008.

“The Action Team has an important challenge posed to them – creating a strategy to protect our state from the effects of climate change,” said Governor Crist. “I thank Secretary Michael Sole and all team members for their dedication and extraordinary leadership. Together, we are moving Florida forward and ensuring the continued prosperity of her economy and the protection of her beautiful natural resources.” Executive Order 07-128 established the Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change and charged the diverse 21-member appointed group with creating and evaluating comprehensive actions to achieve reduction targets for greenhouse gas reductions specified in Executive Order 07-127.

With 1,350 miles of coastline and most residents living in coastal communities, Florida may be more vulnerable to the worst effects of climate change than any other state. Changes in climate can affect water temperatures and salt levels, disrupting nature's perfect balance in sensitive areas such as America's Everglades and coral reefs. Rising sea levels can jeopardize Florida's water supply as well as nearshore habitats, such as seagrass flats – threatening the state's unique flora and fauna.

“With today's Phase One report, the Action Team has identified 35 initial findings and 30 initial recommendations to better track and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including energy efficiency and conservation targets,” said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Michael W. Sole, who was appointed by Governor Crist as Chairman of the panel.

By compiling findings and recommendations in three distinct sectors - power generation, transportation as well as state and local governments – the report provides a basis for a far-reaching strategy for preserving Florida's environment, economy and quality of life.

"The Phase One interim report is a critical first step in compiling a comprehensive energy policy for Florida," said St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Baker who is serving as Action Team Vice Chairman. "As we move into the second phase of the plan, the findings and recommendations released today will allow the Action Team to develop strategies that address energy security, economic development, and greenhouse gas limits while being mindful of the ultimate cost impact on the consumers of Florida."

Phase Two of the action plan will focus on mitigating impacts to society, public health, the economy and the environment created by greenhouse gas emissions from new growth. The action team will explore carbon capture and storage technologies and will coordinate a long-term public policy focused on reducing greenhouse gases in areas of economic development, university-based research and technology development, energy, environmental protection, natural resource and growth management and transportation. For more information about the action team or to view the Phase One report, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange

Florida's LIFE Program Receives Coastal America Award

On November 15, 2007, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Environmental Education received a Coastal America Award for its Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program. Coastal America established the Awards Program in 1997 to recognize outstanding team efforts to restore and protect the coastal environment. The LIFE Program is an initiative to establish a series of field-based, environmental-science, education programs around the state of Florida. The goal of the LIFE Program is increased student achievement and teacher professional development in science. Content and delivery varies between sites though each utilizes a core set of guiding principles.

Concepts of LIFE are now being implemented in programs located at the Louisiana University Marine Education Consortium and Texas State Aquarium through an EPA Gulf of Mexico Grant related to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. This has increased the LIFE program partnership beyond Florida's boundaries. Greg Ira, Director of FDEP Office of Education, is instrumental to the success of this program. He is also the lead for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Underserved and Underrepresented Populations Working Group.

LDEQ Clean Waters Program Kickoff Meeting Held

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality hosted the kickoff meeting for the Louisiana Clean Waters Program Wednesday. The program is designed to protect, improve and restore water bodies throughout the state. One goal is to improve 80 currently impaired water bodies to allow fishing again and to restore 28 impaired water bodies to allow swimming by the year 2012.

Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco directed DEQ to create a plan for addressing impaired water bodies and reducing their number by 25 percent by 2012. Participation by federal, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, business, industry and the general public is important in reaching this goal. The program will use both regulatory and voluntary methods to achieve improvement.

Chris Piehler, director of the Clean Waters Program, and DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel outlined the preliminary program to a group of interested parties today at DEQ headquarters in Baton Rouge and asked for input in both an onscene discussion and through follow-up discussions with individual agencies to secure their participation in the plan.

“The Clean Waters Program is a vital component of protecting the unimpaired waters of the state, and in improving and restoring the impaired water bodies,” McDaniel said. “There are many programs currently within DEQ and many more that related to the department that are centered on improving water quality. By joining together, we can all aim for the same goal and work together to improve and protect the waters of the state.” For more information on the Clean Waters Program, call Chris Piehler at 225-219-3609.

Ducks Unlimited and Partners Receive \$998,000 for Louisiana Gulf Coast Restoration

LAFAYETTE, La., November 12, 2007 - Ducks Unlimited was awarded a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant to enhance over 1,300 acres of coastal marsh habitat in Cameron Parish. Partners contributed more than \$2.2 million to match the \$998,391 received from the federal grant. The project will restore high priority wintering habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds along the Louisiana Gulf Coast.

"This project represents a continuation of long-term efforts to protect, restore and enhance important wetland habitats along the Louisiana Gulf Coast," said Bob Dew, Ducks Unlimited regional biologist in Louisiana. "Louisiana's coastal marshes provide some of the most important wintering habitat for ducks in North America, but much of this habitat is threatened. Louisiana has already lost 1.2 million acres of coastal wetlands, and another one-half million acre loss is projected by 2050," Dew said. Large areas of wetlands along the Louisiana Gulf Coast have been lost to subsidence, altered hydrology and saltwater intrusion. The overall health of the coastal marshes and the benefits they provide to the wildlife and people that depend on them are in jeopardy.

To help the coastal wetlands continue to fulfill their role, project partners will restore estuarine intertidal marsh by constructing levees and installing water control structures to manage water and salinity levels.

Greater than 75 percent of the North American gadwall population and substantial proportions of northern pintail, American wigeon, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal and lesser scaup populations annually overwinter in the marshes and flooded agricultural fields along the Louisiana and Texas Gulf Coasts. Consequently, top priority has been placed on conservation of winter and migration habitat in this region.

"Like all of our projects, the partners involved in the Gulf Coast wetlands enhancement project make it all possible," Dew said. Ducks Unlimited partnered with BP America, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on this project.

"Louisiana's coastal wetlands are vitally important to the people who live here, the state's economy and the oil and gas industry," said Karl Connor, government affairs director for BP America. "It's important that we work together to restore America's Wetland. We are glad to partner with Ducks Unlimited on this project."

Contact: Andi Cooper, Regional Biologist- Communications; (601) 206-5463; acooper@ducks.org
For more information on NAWCA, go to <http://www.ducks.org/nawca>. For more on DU's coastal restoration efforts, go to <http://www.ducks.org/states/44/news/pub/article1241.html>.

MDMR's Office of Coastal Management & Planning Wins Gulf Guardian Award for Youth Education

BILOXI, MS –The MS Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Office of Coastal Management and Planning has received the Gulf of Mexico Gulf Guardian Award for Youth Education from Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of Mexico Program. All five Gulf States participated in the application process.

At the November awards ceremony in Tampa, Florida, DMR Executive Director Dr. Bill Walker accepted the award for Marker Madness, the first program of its kind on the MS Gulf Coast. The storm drain marker program was an idea generated from the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) Stormwater Education Committee as part of the regional CIAP project, the MS Gulf Coast Stormwater Management Toolbox. Upon completion of the Toolbox, CRMP applied for and received additional funding to assist with the implementation stage of individual programs for the three counties and 11 cities under the Phase II Program of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties and the cities of Waveland, Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, Long Beach, Gulfport, Biloxi, D'Iberville, Ocean Springs, Gautier, Moss Point and Pascagoula participated in the program.



Tina Shumate and Marcia Garcia receive the Gulf Guardian Award for Youth Education.

“I believe the human spirit is enriched when one can contribute to their community and improve the quality of life for everyone,” says Marcia Garcia, Staff Officer with DMR and Project Manager for the program. The pre-Katrina marker program involved local Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, youth environmental clubs, teachers, school children, consultants, elected officials, city and county employees, chamber and community members. State and federal agencies supported and participated in a festival to celebrate the event.

The Phase II jurisdictions are required by EPA to educate their communities and provide guidance on steps and actions the public can take to reduce pollution. For more information, contact you county or city about their stormwater program and remember, only rain down the drain.

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.

MDMR and Beau Rivage Plant Recycled Oyster Shells on Fort Bayou Fishing Reef

BILOXI, Miss. – The Shellfish and the Artificial Reef bureaus of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) teamed up with Beau Rivage Resort & Casino in November 2007 to enhance a low-profile fishing reef using recycled oyster shells. The oyster shells were a byproduct of the casino's regular barge maintenance and were destined for a landfill.

“This is a great example of how a private company is proactive in protecting the environment, giving back to the community which they serve,” said Bradley Randall, DMR Shellfish Bureau Program Coordinator. “We would like to thank Ed Reardon and Jeff Abel of Beau Rivage for coming up with the idea and coordinating the oyster shell plant.”

Over 200 cubic yards of oyster shells were used to enhance 20 acres of fishing reef located in Fort Bayou in Biloxi's Back Bay. The oyster shells were donated and all expenses to deploy the shells were paid for by Beau Rivage.

Proposed Projects List Moves on to Gov. Perry for Approval

AUSTIN — Nearly \$31.6 million worth of coastal grants moved one step closer to approval today announced Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. The Coastal Land Advisory Board, on which Patterson serves as chairman, met Tuesday and voted to approve sending a list of 39 proposed projects to Gov. Rick Perry for approval and public comment. Once the Governor's Office approves the state plan and approves it for posting, the plan will be posted to the Texas Register for public comment.

The projects range from parkland acquisition to erosion control to research. The 2005 Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) was authorized by Congress with the enactment of Section 384 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, amending Section 31 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. The purpose of CIAP is to assist coastal states in mitigating the impacts associated with Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas production. Under the provisions of the Outer Continental Shelf Act, the authority and responsibility for the management of CIAP was vested in the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, who delegated this authority and responsibility to the Minerals Management Service.

The state of Texas was allocated \$48,591,202 in CIAP funds for fiscal year 2007. Of this amount, \$31,584,281 was awarded directly to the state and \$17,006,921 was awarded to the 18 Texas coastal counties. Before these funds can be distributed, the state is required to submit a coastal impact assistance plan that must be approved by the Mineral Management Service. Gov. Perry established the Coastal Land Advisory Board to oversee the state portion of the CIAP program and to draft the state plan.

The entire list of projects that make up the state plan should be posted for comment within the next two weeks. To view the list of projects and to comment on the state plan, please visit www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal.

New Money will Strengthen Texas Shores and Fund Much-Needed Studies

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today announced \$17.3 million to fund Texas' most ambitious effort yet to combat coastal erosion. "Thanks to the Texas Legislature, we now have the tools we need to step up this fight and save our coast," Patterson said. "This \$17.3 million will kick-start 38 projects worth a combined \$50 million. That's what happens when local, state and federal governments work together."

The \$17.3 million represents the fifth — and biggest — funding cycle for the Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act (CEPRA). The list of projects is a major success for Patterson's Coastal Texas 2020 initiative, which seeks to unify efforts to leverage local, state and federal money for large-scale beach renourishment efforts.

Patterson's focus on fewer, but larger-scale projects, is reflected in the fact that of just four projects received \$9.6 million of the total \$17.3 million available. "When it comes to coastal erosion, large-scale projects tend to stand the test of time better than small ones," Patterson said.

The big four projects include \$5 million for the biggest beach restoration effort in Texas history in Galveston, \$2.1 million to renourish more than a mile of beach in South Padre, \$1.1 million for shoreline stabilization in Surfside and a \$1.4 million for shoreline stabilization and beach renourishment project along the Houston Ship Channel.

Other projects funded through the coastal grants include the removal of private houses off the public beach, smaller beach renourishment efforts to patch up storm-ravaged beaches and sand source studies. Also included are vital U.S. Army Corps of Engineers studies to determine the cause and severity of erosion along the Texas coast, and to suggest erosion response alternatives. These studies help Texas qualify for federal funding.

"Texas is still playing catch-up when it comes to fighting erosion, but with these grants, we're making real progress," Patterson said. A complete list of the CEPRA Cycle 5 projects approved for funding is at: <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/news/docs/2007-Releases/110907-Fight-against-erosion.pdf>.

Texas Coastal Management Program Grants Award Environmental Stewardship

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today announced grants worth \$1.7 million to support efforts that improve the Texas coast. "These projects are all a good investment," Patterson said. "These projects will help us better understand, enjoy and preserve a vital part of Texas."

The Coastal Management Program grant funding helps make important projects possible, such as helping coastal communities protect against coastal hazards, improving beach access, enhancing wetlands and developing programs to educate the public. In fiscal year 2007, under Grant Cycle 12, the Coastal Coordination Council funded 20 projects totaling \$1,707,000. These projects included two shoreline access projects, six public education and outreach projects, seven information and data availability projects, four critical areas enhancement projects and one water quality improvement project.

The council selected three individual large-scale projects to receive Cycle 12 funding. These projects are:

- Buffalo Bend Nature Park (\$145,000)
- McAllis Point Acquisition, phase 2 (\$400,000)
- Wetland Habitat Restoration/Enhancement at the Whitmire Unit (\$207,482)

The entire list of the 2007 Coastal Management Program Cycle 12 awards is at:

<http://www.glo.state.tx.us/news/docs/2007-Releases/120507-CMP-2007.pdf>.

The Nature Conservancy Kicks Off New Program for Sea Grass

The Nature Conservancy in Texas has launched a new public awareness campaign to help protect valuable submerged aquatic vegetation, <http://www.saveourseagrass.org/>. The program, developed in the Laguna Madre, will enable recreational boaters in this area to help protect seagrass for future generations through voluntary use of marked preferred access lanes.

Seagrass is the foundation of life in the Gulf of Mexico. It provides habitat to many commercial and recreational species to include fish, shrimp and waterfowl. The declining quantity and quality of these seagrass habitats now represent a serious threat to wildlife, recreation and the economy along the Gulf Coast. TNC is working to expand their program around the Gulf and are engaged in targeting the Mississippi to Florida barrier islands.

The program asks boaters in shallow water to stop their engine, lift the boat's prop, and drift with the wind or troll with a motor or poll. Billboards, marina signage, and brochures have been developed along with a website to support the effort. Partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Coastal Conservation Association, the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and its Seagrass Working Group. Rafael Calderon and The Nature Conservancy have been an active, regional participant in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance.

Other News

Special Journal Issue on Coastal Eutrophication

The [July 2007](#) issue of *Ecological Applications*, an online journal of the Ecological Society of America, is now available to the public online. This special issue of *Ecological Applications* joins a growing body of literature that highlights the problems of, and some potential solutions to, coastal eutrophication. Papers on the Gulf region include a paper by Livingston, which recounts the responses of plankton assemblages and associated coastal food webs to natural and anthropogenic nutrient loading in the Perdido River–Bay system of eastern Alabama and the western Florida Panhandle. And a paper by Rabalais et al. assesses hypoxia of the coastal ecosystem in the northern Gulf of Mexico, where paleoindicators of eutrophication in bottom sediments record recent anthropogenic influence.

Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announce Water Management Decisions and Actions on ACF & ACT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE November 16, 2007

Contacts: Rob Holland, USACE (404) 562-5011, Tom MacKenzie, USFWS (404) 679-7291

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) today released its amended Biological Opinion on the “Exceptional Drought Operations” (EDO) proposed by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers for the Apalachicola - Chattahoochee - Flint River Basin. The Service also announced its concurrence with water management actions requested for the Alabama - Coosa - Tallapoosa River Basin.

The Service supports the key element of the Corps’ plan that does the most to increase storage in Lake Lanier and other reservoirs on the system, namely, the ability to capture and store water in the lake when the rains come to maintain additional water to guard against the effects of a continuing drought. The Service also concurred with a second requested element reducing minimum flows required below Woodruff Dam, first dropping the minimum to 4,750 cubic feet per second (cfs) then to 4,500 cfs at Woodruff Dam later.

The Service determined that the Exceptional Drought Operations with minimum flows reduced to 4,750 cfs and 4,500 cfs at Woodruff Dam does not jeopardize the future existence of any of these species. The Biological Opinion gives the Corps the flexibility to reduce flows to 4,750 immediately.

The Service has been working closely with Corps for several months regarding impacts to listed species while it works to meet the needs of the many users of the ACF and ACT Basins during these extraordinary times.

“Working collaboratively with the Corps, this opinion relies on the best available science and data for its conclusions,” said Sam D. Hamilton, Southeast Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “The Endangered Species Act is flexible, and we have used that flexibility in a way that doesn’t risk extinction of the species. We are using adaptive management, so as new data becomes available and as conditions change, we are assessing the situation and adapting our management to best meet the needs of the many users of the system.”

“The Corps has begun these changes in operations today,” Gen. Schroedel said. “We will closely monitor conditions in the basin daily to assess how these operations are affecting both storage and endangered species. Our monitoring will help us assess what future operational adjustments are necessary.” The modification provides for a pathway to increase composite storage – that is the amount of water stored at Lanier, West Point, and Walter F. George. If the Corps does not hold back some water now, and if extreme drought conditions continue, it is possible there may not be enough water in storage next summer to meet the needs of the users.

“We live here too, and fully understand what is at stake in the negotiation about how to allocate water,” Hamilton said. “As citizens throughout this basin, we are learning that choices have consequences and we cannot outgrow our carrying capacity, living beyond what our region’s natural resources can support.” “While fish and wildlife conservation is only a small part of this balancing act, we approach our role seriously,” Hamilton said. “It is our responsibility to ensure these indicator species, which help us assess the health of the system, are given the best chance possible to ultimately thrive. The better they do, the better we will do. Because if this drought has shown us anything, it has shown us we cannot thrive as a citizenry on an unhealthy river system.”

The Service looked at the affects of the Exceptional Drought Operations on four listed species: Gulf sturgeon and three mussels: purple bankclimber, fat threeridge, and Chipola slabshell. The latter, Chipola slabshell, was included due to the requested EDO changes in the flows.

The species that is likely to be affected the most is the fat threeridge mussel, which could lose up to nine percent of its population. Over the last decade, this species appears to be producing fewer young individuals into the population. Repeated instances of mortality caused by low flows could represent a serious problem for the species in the future. For that reason, the Service is committed to work with the Corps and the states to develop a long-term plan. "Right now, we've analyzed the Corps' proposed action through June 1, 2008, because so much uncertainty exists about what might need to happen after that," Hamilton said.

The Corps has indicated it will work quickly to identify criteria and triggers that may make it necessary to reduce flows to 4,500 cfs. The Service will continue to work cooperatively with the Corps reviewing monitoring data, hydrologic conditions, rainfall, and climate to define those triggers, and will make this information public as soon as it is available. The Corps has agreed to come back into consultation with the Service as they determine what conditions would trigger a reduction to 4,150 cfs.

Background

In recorded history, there have only been a handful of days where flows of the Apalachicola River have been less than 5,000 cfs. The river system is used for many municipal and industrial purposes, including power generation, flood control, navigation, drinking water, pollution dilution, agriculture, habitat conservation, and recreation. Additionally, Apalachicola Bay in Florida requires fresh water to support people, wildlife, and the roughly \$200 million commercial and recreational fishery the Bay supports.

Alabama – Coosa – Tallapoosa River Basin

In a letter today to both FERC and Alabama Power, the Service agreed that returning flows to 1,600 cfs at the Jordan Dam immediately is part of the ongoing Endangered Species Act consultation. In addition, if FERC proposes to authorize those lower flows on an extended basis during the drought emergency, we have pledged to continue consulting on an emergency basis. "We are concerned for the fish and wildlife resources in the ACT basin because Alabama is also under a severe drought," Hamilton said. "This will help Alabama Power and FERC respond quickly to power generation needs while working with us to minimize affects to listed species." Alabama Power Company and FERC requested emergency consultation with the Service to meet an urgent need to temporarily reduce flows in the Coosa River from the Jordan Dam by 20 percent (from 2,000 cfs to 1,600 cfs through December 1, 2007.)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. To learn more about the Service, visit www.fws.gov/southeast.

Report Shows National Wildlife Refuges Provide Economic Boost

Contacts :David Eisenhauer 202-208-5634 or Martha Nudel 703-358-1858

Recreational use on national wildlife refuges generated almost \$1.7 billion in total economic activity during fiscal year 2006, according to a new report released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The report, titled *Banking on Nature 2006: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation* was compiled by Service economists.

According to the study, nearly 35 million people visited national wildlife refuges in 2006, supporting almost 27,000 private sector jobs and producing about \$543 million in employment income. In addition, recreational spending on refuges generated nearly \$185.3 million in tax revenue at the local, county, state and federal level. The economic benefit is almost four times the amount appropriated to the Refuge System in Fiscal Year 2006. About 87 percent of refuge visitors travel from outside the local area.

"We've always known that national wildlife refuges enrich Americans' lives," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall. "This report reveals that the Refuge System, while admirably fulfilling its conservation mission, also repays us in dollars and cents. Those economic benefits go far beyond the system's mandated mission to ensure wild creatures will always have a place on the American landscape."

Using findings from 80 national wildlife refuges considered typical in terms of the nation's recreational interests and spending habits, the report analyzed recreational participation in and expenditures for freshwater fishing, saltwater fishing, migratory bird hunting, small game hunting, big game hunting and non-consumptive activities, including wildlife observation. Calculation of the total economic activity included money spent for food and refreshments, lodging at motels, cabins, lodges or campgrounds, and transportation.

In making its calculations, *Banking on Nature 2006* used the Service's "2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation" and the visitation numbers from the individual refuges. Units with fewer than 1,500 visitors per year and those in Hawaii and Alaska (because travel there is so expensive) were excluded from the final calculations. Therefore, the *Banking on Nature* study estimates that 34.8 million people visited wildlife refuges--a tally smaller than the actual visitation figure of more than 37 million reported by all refuges.

The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses 97 million acres and 548 national wildlife refuges. While the primary purpose of the Refuge System is to conserve native fish and wildlife and their habitat, priority is given to hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, environmental education, and interpretation.

For a copy of the report or to find more information on the National Wildlife Refuge System, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.

Energy

MMS Requests Comments on New Lease Form for Offshore Alternative Energy Activities

Nicolette Nye 703-787-1011 Friday, December 14, 2007

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) is requesting comments on a new lease form through which MMS would authorize and convey limited-term rights to conduct alternative energy data collection and/or technology testing activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). On November 5, 2007, MMS announced the establishment of an interim policy on Offshore Alternative Energy Resource Assessment and Technology Testing Activities, for which the new lease form was developed.

Under the interim policy, MMS may issue limited-term leases authorizing data collection and technology testing subject to compliance with all relevant Federal statutes. The interim policy will be in effect until MMS issues final rules for the Alternative Energy and Alternate Use (AEAU) program, which will regulate all program activities from that point forward. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 authorized MMS to establish the AEAU Program. Form MMS-0001, Lease of Submerged Lands for Alternative Energy Activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), can be viewed in today's Federal Register as part of MMS Information Collection Activity: NEW Information Collection; Lease of Submerged Lands for Alternative Energy Activities on the OCS; Comment Request. MMS will accept comments on the form and the data collection associated with it for the next 60 days (from release date) through the following methods:

Mail: Minerals Management Service

Attention: Cheryl Blundon

381 Elden Street, MS-4024

Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817

Please reference "Information Collection 1010-NEW" in your comments.

Electronically: go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, select "Minerals Management Service" from the agency drop-down menu, then click "submit." In the Docket ID column, select MMS-2007-OMM-0072 to submit public comments and to view any supporting and related materials available.

\$1 Billion in Federal Funds Will Help Six Coastal States to Restore and Protect Their Shoreline Environments

Caryl Fagot, 504/736-2590, Eileen Angelico, 504/736-2595 November 29, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today applauded federal approval of Louisiana's Coastal Impact Assistance Program, calling it a major step forward in providing up to \$1 billion over four years to help Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas producing states restore and protect their shoreline environments.

"I welcome this opportunity to fund these vital projects for the State of Louisiana and 19 of its coastal parishes," Kempthorne said. "Restoring and protecting natural coastal resources is fundamental to the Interior Department's mission."

Created by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Coastal Impact Assistance Program disburses \$250 million annually for four years, 2007 – 2010, to six eligible Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas producing states – Louisiana, Alabama, Alaska, California, Mississippi and Texas. The funding includes \$127.5 million for each of the fiscal years 2007 and 2008, totaling \$255 million, to Louisiana and 19 Coastal Political Subdivisions (parishes) for funding of projects outlined in the plan.

Louisiana became the first state to receive approval from Interior's Minerals Management Service for its Coastal Impact Assistance Program plan when MMS Director Randall Luthi today joined Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco in a signing ceremony at St. James Boat Club along the Blind River in St. James Parish, a project site included in the plan. The approval of Louisiana's plan allows the state to submit grant proposals for Coastal Impact Assistance Program projects involving conservation, restoration, enhancement and protection of natural coastal resources.

With the plan’s approval, MMS will post Louisiana’s Grant Program Announcement on www.grants.gov today. The announcement provides instructions and guidance on the submittal process for CIAP grant applications. Funding is made available to the State and parishes when the grants are awarded.

Louisiana’s plan, which contains 168 projects covering all four years of the program, is the first plan to be approved. All projects must comply with one of five authorized CIAP uses: the conservation, protection, or restoration of coastal areas, including wetlands; mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, or natural resources; planning assistance and the administrative costs of complying with CIAP legislation; implementation of a federally-approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan; or mitigation of the impact of offshore oil and gas activities through funding of onshore infrastructure and public service needs.

The remaining five eligible states--Alabama, Alaska, California, Mississippi and Texas—have until July 1, 2008 to submit their final plans to MMS. “MMS has looked at these projects and is confident that they meet the requirements of the program to further the efforts of Louisiana to restore, enhance and protect its natural coastal resources,” said Kempthorne.

The allocation of the \$127.5 million will be divided with 65 percent of the funding going to the State of Louisiana – \$82.9 million and 35 percent being split among the 19 southern parishes -- \$44.6 million. See below table for parish distribution.

Louisiana Coastal Political Subdivisions	CIAP Fiscal Year 2007 and Fiscal Year 2008 Allocations	Coastal Political Subdivisions (CPS) Percent of Allocation Total Allocation
Assumption	\$ 1,464,263.20	3.28%
Calcasieu	\$ 2,209,951.24	4.95%
Cameron	\$ 2,939,072.41	6.58%
Iberia	\$ 2,250,670.86	5.04%
Jefferson	\$ 3,815,520.53	8.55%
Lafourche	\$ 2,348,997.75	5.26%
Livingston	\$ 1,652,927.20	3.70%
Orleans	\$ 3,773,991.48	8.45%
Plaquemines	\$ 4,554,253.97	10.20%
St. Bernard	\$ 2,307,278.02	5.17%
St. Charles	\$ 1,577,519.47	3.53%
St. James	\$ 1,374,598.90	3.08%
St. John the Baptist	\$ 1,479,903.09	3.32%
St. Martin	\$ 1,607,963.60	3.60%
St. Mary	\$ 1,880,298.83	4.21%
St. Tammany	\$ 2,217,097.81	4.97%
Tangipahoa	\$ 1,675,530.05	3.75%
Terrebonne	\$ 3,364,675.17	7.54%
Vermilion	\$ 2,147,250.92	4.81%
Total	\$44,641,764.50	100.00%

Grant Opportunities

Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) Grants

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced that around \$3 million will be available in 2008 to support community-based partnerships to reduce pollution at the local level through the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program. The program's Request for Proposals (RFP) is now available at http://www.epa.gov/air/grants_funding.html#0802. The program values partnerships between communities and academic institutions. This year the application time line has been extended to 3 months and the deadline is March 17, 2008.

About the CARE RFP

Around \$3 million will be available in 2008 to support community-based partnerships to reduce pollution at the local level through the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program. EPA anticipates awarding CARE cooperative agreements in two levels. Level I cooperative agreements range from \$75,000 to \$100,000 and will help establish community-based partnerships to develop local environmental priorities. Level II awards, ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000 each, will support communities which have established broad-based partnerships, have identified the priority toxic risks in the community, and are prepared to measure results, implement risk reduction activities, and become self-sustaining. In 2007, \$3.4 million in cooperative agreements were made available to more than 20 communities through the CARE program, a community-based, community-driven program that builds partnerships to help the public understand and reduce toxic risks from numerous sources.

Examples of projects include addressing abandoned, contaminated industrial and residential properties in Gary, Ind., dealing with agriculture-related toxics in Yakima County, Wash., and reducing air emissions from diesel trucks and buses in Woonsocket, R.I. Since 2005, the grants to reduce toxics in the environment have reached almost 50 communities in over 20 states.

Applications for the CARE grants are due **March 17, 2008**. Eligible applicants include county and local governments, tribes, non-profit organizations and universities. EPA will conduct three conference calls, Jan. 18, Feb. 11 and 27, for prospective applicants to ask questions about the application process.

Additional information about the CARE program, previous cooperative agreement recipients, and applying for the 2008 grants is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/care>

The CARE program will conduct three national information sessions for cooperative agreement applicants via national Internet seminars, or Webcasts, in January and February 2008.

January 18, 2008	12:30 - 2:00 p.m. eastern time
February 11, 2008	1:00 - 12:30 p.m. eastern time
February 27, 2008	10:00 am 12:00 a.m. eastern time

To register for the upcoming CARE Internet Seminar for any of the above dates, please go to <http://www.cluin.org/studio/seminar.cfm>.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2008 Coastal Program RFP-Florida Panhandle

Coastal Program Objectives:

- To fund projects that effectively restore or enhance degraded coastal wetlands and uplands, estuaries, and riparian corridors within northwest Florida;
- To establish living shorelines as the primary means for protecting eroding shorelines in the coastal areas of northwest Florida where appropriate, thereby steering coastal protection efforts away from hardening;
- To form partnerships with government agencies and private groups to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance coastal resources and habitat.

Focus Area: The majority of available funds will support projects that occur in the following five watersheds: Perdido Bay (03140107), Pensacola Bay (03140105), Choctawhatchee Bay (03140102), St. Andrew – St. Joseph Bays (03140101), and Apalachicola Bay (03130014) (Figure 1). Proposals will also be considered for projects located in all of the following northwest Florida counties: Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington.

Eligibility: Federal, state, and local government agencies, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, non-profit groups, and citizens may apply for funding. Projects may occur on federal, state, local, and private lands.

Up to 10% of 2008 funds may be made available for research on coastal ecosystems, problem identification, or public outreach/education in northwest Florida.

Proposals must be received by **February 15, 2008**, for consideration in 2008. Those received after this date will be kept on file for future consideration. For more information or to discuss proposal ideas, please contact:

Melody Ray-Culp
850-769-0552 (ext. 232)
Melody_Ray-Culp@fws.gov
<http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalProgram/>

NOAA Announces New Funding For Environmental Literacy Projects

NOAA's Office of Education (OED) is requesting applications for environmental literacy projects in support of K-12 education. Funded projects will be between 1 and 5 years in duration and will promote changes in K-12 education to expand the amount of Earth System Science taught in the classroom and improve student learning and application of that subject. Successful projects will catalyze change in K-12 education through development of new programs and materials and/or revision of existing programs and materials and/or by supporting transformative methods that expand or lead to the expansion of the use of Earth System Science in K-12 classrooms. Successful projects will not just increase knowledge of scientific phenomena but will also provide opportunities for the application of that knowledge to environmental issues relevant to the target audience. Projects are encouraged to incorporate NOAA data, data visualizations, and resources and to further the use of Earth System Science concepts related to

NOAA's mission. Projects are also encouraged to collaborate with NOAA entities as partners and/or connect to projects previously funded by NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants. A list of previously funded projects is available at www.oesd.noaa.gov/elg_projects.html. It is anticipated that final recommendations for funding under this announcement will be made by September 15, 2008, and that projects funded under this announcement will have a start date no earlier than November 1, 2008. **Pre-proposals are REQUIRED and are due Wednesday, February 20, 2008. Full proposals are due Wednesday, June 25, 2008.**

Visit http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html for the full announcement and additional information. This funding opportunity's ID on grants.gov is SEC-OED-2009-2001282.

Training and Conferences

Sea Grant to Hold Marine Research Planning Workshops

The Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant College Programs are planning a series of workshops in Gulf states to discuss priorities for a regional marine research plan. The Sea Grant programs are collaborating with federal, state, university, non-governmental and other groups to identify research priorities for the Gulf. A synthesis of more than 115 strategic plans and about 1,500 research survey responses already have contributed to the planning effort.

Workshops locations and dates include Spanish Fort, Ala., Jan. 15; Biloxi, Miss., Jan. 17; St. Petersburg, Fla., Feb. 19; Baton Rouge, La., Feb. 26; and Galveston, Texas, Feb. 28.

Anyone who sponsors or conducts Gulf of Mexico coastal or marine research or uses Gulf research findings is invited to attend a workshop. Early registration is required. There is no registration fee. For more information or to register for a workshop, go to <http://masgc.org/gmrp/workshop.htm> or contact Steve Sempier at stephen.sempier@usm.edu. The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Florida Sea Grant, Louisiana Sea Grant and Texas Sea Grant are leading the project.

2008 Louisiana Environmental Education Symposium

**“Sharing Our Vision” 2008 Environmental Education Symposium
February 15-16, 2008 in Baton Rouge, LA**

Highlights:

- Professional development and active engagement with other educators
- Exhibitors with special emphasis on Environmental Education materials
- Networking opportunities
- Update on statewide Environmental Education programs

General Registration.....\$30.00 (Automatic LEEA membership included)

The deadline for conference registration is **January 28, 2008**. Deadline for conference rate hotel reservations is January 16, 2008. Contact: Tiffany Soileau, Coordinator, Louisiana Environmental Education Office: E-Mail: tiffany.soileau@la.gov; Toll Free 1-877-523-6833

The Ocean Sciences Meeting

March 2-7, 2008 in Orlando, FL

Co-sponsored by the [American Society of Limnology and Oceanography](#), the [American Geophysical Union](#), [The Oceanography Society](#) and the [Estuarine Research Federation](#).

Please join us March 2-7, 2008, in Orlando, Florida, for this event. We especially encourage the submission of poster presentations as a very effective means of facilitating discussion of research. Poster sessions will be scheduled at times when there are no conflicts from oral sessions or scheduled special workshops, field trips, or town meetings. The poster sessions include receptions to provide opportunities to make professional connections in a social setting.

Meeting schedules are now available. See the [Schedule at a Glance](#), [Session List with Schedules](#), and [Workshops](#). For more information, go to <http://www.aslo.org/orlando2008/> or contact by e-mail at orlando2008@sgmeet.com or by phone at 800-929-ASLO or 254-399-9635.

Sea Grant Law and Policy Journal Inaugural Symposium - Mississippi

The National Sea Grant Law center is developing a Sea Grant Law and Policy Journal. It will provide a forum for the timely discussion and exploration of legal topics of relevance to the Sea Grant network of extension agents, researchers, coastal managers and users, and local decision-makers. An inaugural symposium, **March 25-26, 2008** in Oxford, Mississippi, from which the Law Center will invite papers for the publication in June, will focus on coastal resiliency. Relevant topics might include land use planning, insurance, emergency management, risk analysis, and mitigation. For more information, visit: <http://www.olemiss.edu/orgs/SGLC/National/SGLPJ/SGLPJ.htm>.

GreenCoast Conference in Mobile

GreenCoast is the premiere green build conference on the Northern Gulf Coast. Come enjoy springtime in Mobile. Mark your calendar for **April 9-10, 2008**. GreenCoast will feature interactive education sessions on commercial and residential design and construction as well as public topics related to sustainability. You can check out the latest products and services at the Green Expo and have your questions answered from company professionals. A pre-conference workshop will feature in-depth information on LEED® New Construction. GreenCoast 2008 is presented and produced by Smart Coast and the U.S. Green Building Council, Alabama Chapter. For more information go to: <http://www.smartcoast.org/green/index.php>.

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