

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

January 2008

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Warmer Ocean Could Reduce Number of Atlantic Hurricane Landfalls

January 22, 2008

A warming global ocean — influencing the winds that shear off the tops of developing storms — could mean fewer Atlantic hurricanes striking the United States according to new findings by NOAA climate scientists. Furthermore, the relative warming role of the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans is important for determining Atlantic hurricane activity.

The article, to be published on January 23 in *Geophysical Research Letters*, uses observations to show that warming of global sea surface temperatures is associated with a secular, or sustained long-term increase, of vertical wind shear in the main development region for Atlantic hurricanes. The increased vertical wind shear coincides with a downward trend in U.S. landfalling hurricanes.



NOAA [reconnaissance aircraft](#)

“We looked at U.S. landfalling hurricanes because it is the most reliable Atlantic hurricane measurement over the long term,” says Chunzai Wang, a physical oceanographer and climate scientist with [NOAA’s Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory](#) in Miami and lead author on the article. “Using data extending back to the middle nineteenth century, we found a gentle decrease in the trend of U.S. landfalling hurricanes when the global ocean is warmed up. This trend coincides with an increase in vertical wind shear over the tropical North Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, which could result in fewer U.S. landfalling hurricanes.” For the article, Wang worked with Sang-Ki Lee of the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies-University of Miami.

In terms of hurricane strength, Wang notes, “The vertical wind shear is not the only factor affecting Atlantic hurricane activity, although it is an important one.” Other factors include atmospheric humidity, sea level pressure, and sea surface temperature.

This study also suggests that where the global ocean warming occurs is important for determining the vertical wind shear in the Atlantic hurricane main development region — within the 10°-20° North latitude belt that stretches from west Africa to Central America. Whether future global warming increases Atlantic hurricane activity will probably depend on the relative role induced by sustained long-term warming over the tropical oceans.

Observations from 1854 to 2006 show a warming of sea surface temperature occurring almost everywhere over the global ocean, with large warming in tropical regions of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans. Warmer waters in the tropical Pacific, Indian and North Atlantic oceans produce opposite effects upon vertical wind shear; that is, warming in the tropical Pacific and Indian oceans increase vertical wind shear in the Atlantic hurricane main development region, while warming in the tropical North Atlantic

decreases vertical wind shear. Overall, warming in the Pacific and Indian oceans is of greater impact and produces increased levels of vertical wind shear which suppresses Atlantic hurricane activity.

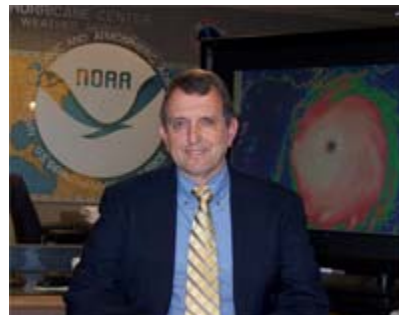
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems ([GEOSS](#)), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

NOAA Selects Bill Read as New National Hurricane Center Director

January 25, 2008

NOAA officials today named Bill Read as the new director of its Tropical Prediction Center, which includes the [National Hurricane Center](#) and two other divisions, in Miami. Read has served as the center's acting deputy director since August 2007.

"Bill has what it takes to be the nation's hurricane center director. He's spent 30 years of his career as a weather professional with NOAA dedicated to protecting lives from severe weather, much of it hurricanes and tropical storms," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Bill has been a trusted consultant to emergency managers in and around Houston and I'm sure he will foster that type of goodwill in communities vulnerable to hurricanes. He will find the job as rewarding as it is demanding."



Bill Read at the National Hurricane Center forecast desk.
+ [High Resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

Tropical storms and hurricanes have frequently played a major role in Read's professional life. Read and his team were at the forefront in July 2003 as Hurricane Claudette made landfall on the Texas coast. He also was part of the Hurricane Liaison Team at the National Hurricane Center in Miami when Hurricane Isabel came ashore on the Outer Banks of North Carolina and raced northeast in September 2003. Read was appointed to direct the Houston/Galveston weather forecast office of [NOAA's National Weather Service](#) in 1992 and led it through the challenges of the National Weather Service modernization and restructuring program in the mid 1990s.

"Bill brings a wealth of experience in meteorology and management to this position. He has a clear understanding of the needs of staff, the emergency management community and the public in fulfilling our mission of saving lives and property," said Jack Hayes, director of NOAA's National Weather Service. "Bill has a proven track record of pulling people together – from the forecaster to the emergency manager – as severe weather threatens."

Prior to joining NOAA's National Weather Service, Read served in the U.S. Navy, where his duties included an assignment as an on-board meteorologist with the Hurricane Hunters. He began his career in 1977 with the National Weather Service test and evaluation division in Sterling, Va., developed his forecasting skills in Fort Worth and San Antonio, Texas; and, served as severe thunderstorm and flash flood program leader at the National Weather Service headquarters in Silver Spring, Md.

NOAA's Tropical Prediction Center contains three divisions – 1.) the National Hurricane Center provides forecasts of the movement and strength of tropical weather systems and issues watches and warnings for the U.S. and surrounding areas, 2.) the Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch issues year-round marine forecasts and warnings over the tropical and subtropical North Atlantic and eastern Pacific, produces tropical cyclone position and intensity estimates, and provides operational support during landfalling hurricane and tropical storm events, and 3.) the Technical Support Branch provides support for the Center's computer and communications systems and develops new techniques for tropical cyclone and tropical weather analysis and prediction.

NOAA and Partners Recognize Newest Business to Join Dolphin SMART Program

January 14, 2008



Bottlenose dolphin. (Credit: NOAA)

[NOAA's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary](#) and its partners today accepted the third charter operator into a new program created to help protect wild dolphins in the Keys. Key West Eco Tours officially joined the Dolphin SMART program after meeting standards that promote responsible viewing of dolphins in the wild.

“We are pleased to welcome Key West Eco Tours as the third participant in this important program,” said sanctuary superintendent CDR Dave Score. “Dolphin SMART’s approach to protecting wild dolphins by working with the businesses that depend on them is an excellent example of the value of partnerships in marine conservation.”

The Dolphin SMART program was developed by the [NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program](#), [NOAA's Fisheries Service](#), Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and Dolphin Ecology Project. The project is funded by NOAA's Fisheries and the “Protect Wild Dolphins” license plate funds through Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution. The acronym “SMART” is a reminder of the basic principles of dolphin viewing etiquette:

- Stay at least 50 yards from dolphins,
- Move away slowly if the dolphins show signs of disturbance,
- Always put your vessel engine in neutral when dolphins are near,
- Refrain from feeding, touching or swimming with wild dolphins,
- Teach others to be Dolphin SMART.

"Key West Eco-Tours is proud to participate in the Dolphin SMART program," owner Carla Bellenger said. "Onboard Java Cat we feel it is important to promote responsible viewing of wild dolphins."

Dolphin SMART-approved charters receive flags and stickers and permission to use the Dolphin SMART logo in their advertising. Each year, participants are evaluated to ensure they continue to meet program standards. By looking for the current year on flags and logos and checking the updated participant list, visitors to the Florida Keys seeking the thrill of seeing dolphins in the wild can ensure the tour operator they select is Dolphin SMART. For more information, visit www.dolphinSMART.org or contact Program Coordinator Celeste Weimer at 305-743-2437, ext. 22.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects 2,896 square nautical miles of important marine habitat, including maritime heritage resources, as well as coral reef, hard bottom, seagrass meadows, mangrove communities and sand flats. NOAA and the state of Florida manage the sanctuary.

NOAA Awards \$200,000 to the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) awarded a \$200,000 grant to the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) to restore aquatic habitats throughout the coastal Southeast. The award kicks off the first year of a three-year restoration effort between the SARP and NOAA to implement habitat restoration projects that benefit NOAA trust resource species in the Southeast.

The SARP received the award in partnership with the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and will work with NOAA Fisheries' Restoration Center and the Southeast Region Habitat Conservation Division (SER HCD) to implement and monitor restoration projects within the nine coastal states that border the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coasts in the region.

“The southeastern United States is home to 34 percent of North American fish species designated as endangered, threatened, or of special concern. For native mussel species, the amount climbs to 90 percent, making this region of particular interest for rebuilding populations,” said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, PhD., NOAA administrator and under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere. “We are proud of our collaborative work with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership. We will be working side-by-side with them in rebuilding these critical populations.”

The SARP and NOAA's SER HCD have taken a leadership role in the development of the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan (SAHP), a tool to guide the region's efforts in the implementation of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP). The NFHAP is a joint US Fish and Wildlife-NOAA initiative to protect, restore, and enhance the nation's fish and aquatic communities through partnerships.

The SAHP will serve as a regional model for other areas of the country to achieve the NFHAP's objectives of protecting all healthy and intact fish habitats by 2015 and improving the condition of 90 percent of priority habitats and aquatic species targeted by the Fish Habitat Partnerships by 2020.

“The Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership is excited about the opportunity to work with NOAA to implement the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan through the Community-based Restoration Partnership. The southeastern US has more miles of coastal shoreline and more coastal marsh than any other region of the country”, said Scott Robinson, SARP coordinator. “We look forward to working with NOAA to protect, conserve, and restore these incredible resources.” He added, “This regional partnership, extending from the inland-most range of diadromous fish species' freshwater habitats through estuaries into Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic waters will be an effective tool for the restoration envisioned by the NFHAP – communities and agencies working together in various geographic areas towards a common, national goal of healthy fish habitats and thriving fish populations.”

The goal of the NOAA-SARP partnership is to promote, facilitate, and implement cooperative habitat conservation and restoration in the Southeast to benefit living marine resources by actively engaging local communities and developing a stewardship ethic that will maintain these resources for future generations. The first year of the partnership will focus on projects in the Altamaha River (GA), Roanoke River (NC), and Pascagoula River (MS) watersheds – priority watersheds in the region. A request for proposals has

recently been distributed. For details on submitting proposals please visit the DMR Web site at <http://www.dmr.state.ms.us> and click on SARP-NOAA Grant RFPs in the right navigation strip under "Public Service Info."

To whom should proposals be submitted? Send completed proposals to Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership at the following addresses. Send electronic copies to moleary@mbolcomm.com by March 1, 2008 and original copies postmarked by March 1, 2008 to 2420 Shadowbrook Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70816.

Diagnostic Kit for Algal Toxin for Broader Environmental Surveillance Applications

A detection method for brevetoxin developed as a partnership between the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) and AgResearch Ltd (New Zealand) is being produced as a diagnostic test kit by Abraxis, a U.S. small business specializing in environmental diagnostics. The detection method, known as a direct formatted enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay, has been in use by NCCOS for two years to quantify brevetoxins in support of NCCOS research and a proof-of-concept project in Florida to biomonitor brevetoxins in marine mammals, turtles, and seabirds during rehabilitation of red tide poisoning. The test kit will be released in early February. For more information, contact John Ramsdell, John.Ramsdell@noaa.gov.

NOAA Assists U.S. Coast Guard in Gulf Intracoastal Water Way

On January 23, the U.S. Coast Guard requested that the Office of Coast Survey's Navigation Response Team 1 (NRT1) conduct sidescan and bathymetric surveys for potential demolition obstructions in a portion of the Gulf Intracoastal Water Way. The request follows several recent incidents of tugboats and barges striking submerged objects in the water during the ongoing construction/demolition of Interstate 45 where it crosses over Galveston Bay to Galveston Island. When the survey is complete, NRT1 will return to its normal operational routine of verifying and updating nautical charts and electronic navigational charts in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. For more information, contact [Alan Bunn](#).

New Lock Provides Safe Harbor in Louisiana

On January 18, NOAA's Office of Coast Survey participated in the South Lafourche Levee District's dedication ceremony of the new Golden Meadow Lock that will replace the existing Bayou Lafourche Floodgate. Constructed with NOAA grant funding, the new lock will provide additional time and ability for more vessels to find safe harbor in Port Fourchon when severe storms and hurricanes approach. Port Fourchon serves as a critical supply port for the offshore production platform community in the central Gulf of Mexico. For more information, contact [Tim Osborn](#).

Offices Partner to Kick Off 2008 Tide and Current Surveys

The Office of Coast Survey (OCS) and the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) have begun implementing a tide and current profile project for Florida's St. Andrews Bay, the Panama City Pass, and offshore areas to support navigation and the operations of deep draft ships to and from the Port of Panama City. Through the deployment of 12 current meter stations for at least 35 days, the project will provide a comprehensive view of the movement of water with tidal cycles and currents through the bay and offshore areas to help update NOAA's nautical charts and future efforts to improve navigation safety in the area. Data collected will also benefit environmental and fishery studies in the area. For more information, contact [Tim Osborn](#) or [Carl Kammerer](#).

FDA Advisory for Fish Caught Near Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

Based on fish samples provided by National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) -funded investigators, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is planning to advise fish processors in the Gulf of Mexico not to sell barracuda and several species of jack caught within 50 miles and certain species of snapper and grouper caught within 10 miles of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. These fish may contain ciguatoxins, which are produced by marine algae and accumulate up the food chain. Humans that consume these contaminated fish can contract Ciguatera Fish Poisoning (CFP), characterized by nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, numbness and tingling around the mouth, reversal of hot and cold sensation, and a variety of other neurological and cardiac symptoms. Investigators were funded through the NCCOS Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms (ECOHAB) program. For more information, contact Quay Dortch, Quay.Dortch@noaa.gov.

Toxin Accumulation Data Improves Understanding of Food Web Impacts of Red Tides on Coastal Ecosystems

Research by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) and Mote Marine Laboratory has yielded valuable comparisons of brevetoxin accumulation among major groups of prey fish, enhancing the current state of knowledge on food web transfer of toxins from their source to apex predators such as bottlenose dolphins. These data complement current research efforts to identify temporal and spatial trends in the coastal ecosystem that augment the impact of harmful algal blooms. For more information, contact Spencer Fire at (843) 762-8574 or Spencer.Fire@noaa.gov.

The National Geodetic Survey Works with Partners on Flood Plain Mapping

NOAA's National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has begun working with the Louisiana Spatial Reference Center and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish guidelines and procedures for verifying the elevations of benchmarks in areas of subsidence. NGS and its partners are using the NOAA-managed Continuously Operating Reference Station network and Real Time Global Positioning System Networks, to provide this critical elevation data verification, which FEMA uses for their flood plain mapping certificates. Presently, passive marks in subsidence areas cannot be used for this purpose. Areas of subsidence, such as southern Louisiana, are vulnerable to flooding and inundation from storms.

Flood zones, and flood insurance, are developed based on elevation data and that elevation data is based on NOAA benchmarks. Providing that data is the primary mission of NGS, and of critical importance to areas where flooding can occur. For more information, contact [Ronnie Taylor](#).

Other NOAA News

Coastal Technology Development in Your Region

The UNH/NOAA Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) has posted fall 2007 progress reports for its environmental technology development projects online. Each project addresses a priority challenge faced by natural resource managers in coastal states around the country. With support from CICEET, researchers from academia, industry, and the public sector are developing tools to monitor Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and coastal water quality, manage nutrient pollution, treat contaminated sediments, restore habitats, and support community resiliency. These reports, submitted by the projects' investigators, detail their progress in gathering data, meeting research objectives, reaching out to coastal management, and soliciting feedback from potential end users. Browse projects in your area at http://ciceet.unh.edu/news/releases/fall07_reports/index.html.

Land Use, Habitat, and Hazards Top List of Coastal Management Priorities

Land use, habitat, and coastal hazards have emerged as the top three priorities for coastal resource managers, according to the recent report: "Strengthening the Application of Science in Coastal Decision Making." The report is the product of a collaboration of the Coastal States Organization (CSO), the Coastal States Stewardship Foundation (CSSF), and the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET).

The report is based on multiple surveys, focus groups, and workshops conducted in coastal regions around the United States. The results of these initiatives have been compiled for the coastal resource management community and the agencies that support it. A synopsis of findings and recommendations related to coastal land use, hazards, and habitat can be found at http://ciceet.unh.edu/news/releases/cso_report/index.html. The entire report is available in PDF format http://ciceet.unh.edu/news/releases/cso_report/pdf/cso_report_07.pdf.

Scientist Develops HAB Lesson Plan for National Distribution

A National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researcher has created a harmful algal bloom (HAB) lesson plan for national distribution at high schools and placement on agency education websites. The lesson plan explains how single-celled algae multiply and develop into toxic blooms. It further describes different HAB species and the various toxins they produce. Possible effects of HABs on humans and marine resources also are explored. In addition, students are directed to NOAA websites to find water temperatures, wind speeds, and directions as well as HAB forecasts. These real data help scientists predict the onset and travel direction of HABs. NCCOS collaborated with scientists at the

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) facility at Wallops Island, Virginia to develop ideas and content for the lesson plan. The NASA project is titled “An Adaptive Sampling Plan for Harmful Algal Blooms.” For more information, contact Pat Tester, Pat.Tester@noaa.gov.

U.S. Climate Change Science Program Issues Revised Research Plan

January 2, 2008

The U.S. [Climate Change Science Program Revised Research Plan Summary](#) is available in the Federal Register and online for review and comment by the public. Comments received by February 26, 2008, will be considered during the preparation of the final revised research plan and the forthcoming scientific assessment.

“This revised research plan represents an update to the 2003 strategic plan of the U.S. Climate Change Science Program. As with any strategic plan we must take into consideration advances in science and changes in societal needs and I encourage the public to participate by providing comments over the next 60 days,” said William Brennan, acting director, Climate Change Science Program, and deputy assistant secretary of commerce for international affairs.

The revised research plan includes an updated statement of vision, goals and capabilities consistent with CCSP's current strategic plan but reflects scientific progress and the evolution of the program based on accomplishments and evolving societal and environmental needs; a description of the relationship of the research plan to the current scientific assessment; highlights of ways in which the program is evolving in the context of the progress made over the years 2003-2007 since the strategic plan was put in place, and a description of the priorities that have emerged as a result; and a description of research plans for the coming years, in order to build upon the work envisioned in the strategic plan and begun over the past four years. Comments should be sent to [Dr. Fabien Laurier](#), Climate Change Science Program Office.

NOAA and USGS Merge Data for Use in Web Applications

A collaborative program involving NOAA and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has merged data and information from both agencies into seamless Web services accessible to agency partners from the science and coastal resource management communities. By accessing real-time observations from USGS sensors, partners can receive information on water temperature, turbidity, discharge, chlorophyll measurements, and other water-quality factors. These observations are made available via an interagency agreement between the USGS and the NOAA Coastal Services Center. This program ensures that critical water-quality information is more widely available to scientists, coastal resource managers, and ocean observing systems throughout the nation. For more information contact [Doug Marcy](#).

In the Gulf States

ADEM Initiative Improves Water Quality in Caney Branch

MONTGOMERY – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently recognized an Alabama watershed restoration project as a Nonpoint Source Program Success Story and posted the achievement on its website. The restoration project, supported by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, resulted in improved water quality in Caney Branch, which is located in Baldwin County. The department utilized \$450,000 in federal funds to install best management practices designed to reduce the effects of nonpoint source pollution. The installation of these best management practices was coordinated by local stakeholders and included the installation of livestock exclusion fencing and the establishment of riparian buffers. In addition, education and outreach efforts such as stream cleanups, school presentations, and public meetings were conducted.

Caney Branch is a tributary of the Fish River, which originates near Stapleton and flows south into Weeks Bay. Prior to the efforts of this project, Caney Branch was identified as being impaired due to pathogens. However, as a result of this project ADEM has removed a five-mile segment of Caney Branch from Alabama’s list of impaired waters. “These improvements in the water quality of Caney Branch will help restore and maintain the integrity of this watershed,” said ADEM Director Trey Glenn. “We are pleased that technology, public awareness, and the hard work of our local stakeholders have combined to achieve this success.”

Nonpoint source pollution occurs when rainfall or irrigation water runs over land picking up pollutants and depositing them into rivers, lakes, and coastal waters causing water quality impairments. Additional information about ADEM’s watershed restoration efforts and how citizens can reduce nonpoint source pollution can be found at www.adem.alabama.gov.

Dr. L. Scott Quackenbush Named Executive Director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab

The Board of Directors of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) has named Dr. L. Scott Quackenbush the Executive Director of the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, the state of Alabama’s marine science education and research institution. Dr. Quackenbush is currently the Director of Humboldt State University’s Marine Lab in northern California, where he is also associate dean for marine science programs. His previous professional experience includes chair of the biological science departments at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and Florida International University. He earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota, his master’s degree at the University of West Florida, and his doctorate at Florida State University.

The DISL was formed in 1971 by the State Legislature to minimize duplication of marine science programs among Alabama’s four-year colleges and to promote the study of marine science. There are currently 21 public and private colleges and universities in DISL’s consortium.

As Executive Director of the DISL, Dr. Quackenbush will be overseeing numerous educational, research and outreach programs that serve the state of Alabama, the region and the nation. The DISL’s educational programs includes students from Ph.D. to kindergarten level; its research initiatives span the disciplines of paleoecology to oceanography to biogeochemistry, in field sites as near as Mobile Bay to as

far away as Antarctica. The DISL also encompasses the Estuarium, a public aquarium that greeted over 66,000 visitors in 2007. The DISL plays a visible role in Alabama's coastal policy as the host of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program.

The Executive Director of the DISL also serves on the Board of Forever Wild, which provides for the purchase of public recreational lands for general recreation, nature preserves and state parks. Since its inception in 1992, over 100,000 acres of lands and wetlands have been purchased.

"I am very pleased that the Board of Directors has asked me to become the next Executive Director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab," Quackenbush said. "[Retired Director] Dr. George Crozier has set an ambitious course for the DISL for the past 30 years, and his accomplishments on behalf of the citizens of the state of Alabama are noteworthy. "I hope to maintain the programs he has developed, and expand additional opportunities for the faculty, students and staff that are the heart of the DISL. In particular, I would like to encourage students and faculty from outside Alabama to participate in the research and educational programs at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. By raising the national visibility of the lab, we can recruit new participation that will benefit the lab and its programs.

"The oceans and marine environments have come under increasing pressure from human activities in the past decades, and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab has been at the forefront of both research and education to help understand these changes. I look forward to a bright future for the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and the participating universities to continue their leadership in these areas for the benefit of Alabama and the nation," he concluded. Dr. Quackenbush plans to commence work at the DISL in July 2008. Dr. John Dindo is currently serving as Interim Director.

Two US Navy Facilities Receive Clean Marina Designation

--Environmental commitment a top priority for marinas--

PENSACOLA – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), together with the Clean Boating Partnership, today recognized Bayou Grande and Sherman Cove Marina, both of Naval Air Station Pensacola, as designated members of the Florida Clean Marina Program. Located in Escambia County, the two facilities are the 157th and 158th designated Clean Marinas in the state.

"By meeting the Clean Marina criteria, these facilities demonstrate stewardship and a dedication to protect Florida's natural resources," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "We are proud of the Navy's leadership and initiative. Its commitment serves as another example to the industry, encouraging other facilities to join in the protection of our waterways."

Florida Clean Marina Program facilities are required to meet a variety of best management practices to receive designation. These practices include, but are not limited to, properly storing and disposing of used oil, using fertilizers and pesticides according to directions, and using cleaning methods that prevent the release of pollutants.

"The Clean Boating Partnership congratulates these two marinas for their commitment to Florida's environment," said the Partnership's Chair John Naybor. "The dedication and hard work from the Navy's leadership and managers in becoming a Clean Marina is an accomplishment these facilities can be proud of and we welcome them to our growing Clean Marina family."

The Clean Boating Partnership is a consortium of industry leaders who contribute time and input to the Clean Marina, Clean Boatyard, Clean Marine Retailer and Clean Boater programs, which DEP

administers, to protect Florida's waterways. The partnership includes DEP, Marine Industries Association of Florida, Florida Sea Grant Program, United States Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary.

With more than 1 million registered motorized vessels in Florida, environmental education within marine industries is the first step towards safeguarding the state's natural resources. By providing "green" education and alternatives, the Florida Clean Marina Program helps ensure a sustainable future for the environment and the billion-dollar marine industry. For more information about the Florida Clean Marina Program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/cleanmarina.

Shaping the Future of Marine Research

Planning effort to focus on information needs in Gulf of Mexico

People along the Gulf of Mexico are discussing what they think are the most important marine-related issues for future research. About 60 participants took part Jan. 15th in the first of five Gulf of Mexico marine research planning workshops in Spanish Fort, Ala. Another 70 research-minded people gathered Jan. 17th in Biloxi, Miss., to discuss what the region's top priorities should be. The workshops are part of a regional project to create and implement a strategic plan for marine research. Others are scheduled for Baton Rouge, La., Galveston, Texas, and St. Petersburg, Fla.

The four Sea Grant College Programs along the Gulf are spearheading the effort to create the regional research and information plan. They recently received a \$600,000 grant to create a Gulf-wide research plan. The majority of the funding will come from the National Sea Grant Office, an agency of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The five-year project, "Planning, Prioritizing, and Implementing Gulf of Mexico Regional Marine Research and Information Needs," began in the summer of 2006. The Sea Grant College Programs are collaborating with federal, state, university, non-governmental and industrial groups to identify research priorities. A synthesis of more than 115 strategic plans and about 1,500 responses to a research prioritization survey already have contributed to the planning effort.

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, the Florida Sea Grant College Program, the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, and the Texas Sea Grant College Program, all university-based networks that support marine-related research, are leading the project. But, the research plan will belong to all groups in the region and will not be specific to Sea Grant programs, said Steve Sempier, who is coordinating the planning effort.

The regional research plan is in line with the commission's recommendation that federal agencies dealing with ocean and coastal issues improve regional coordination and use their funding to focus on regional priorities. "Regional cooperation was addressed in the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's report," said LaDon Swann, director of the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. "A regional research plan will help bring groups together to identify and prioritize research needs and build collaborative funding agreements." The Gulf regional marine research plan was one of eight regional planning projects that are under way across the United States. For more information about the Gulf project, go to masgc.org/gmrp.

“Smart Growth” Publication Examines Planning Issues

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Legal Program has announced the publication of “Smart Growth,” an 18-page document that explores smart-growth planning strategies and analyzes the zoning ordinance in Dauphin Island, Ala. The publication uses a checklist generated by the American Planning Association to help the Dauphin Island community identify ways to maximize its smart growth potential. The concepts in this publication are applicable other towns and cities across the country. “Smart Growth” can be downloaded at <http://www.olemiss.edu/orgs/SGLC/MS-AL/smartgrowth.pdf>. For more information on the study, contact Stephanie Showalter, director, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Legal Program, (662) 915-7775.

GNDNERR and USM’s Gulf Park Campus and USM Gulf Coast Research Lab’s Marine Education Center Join the Largest Teach-in in U.S. History

BILOXI, Miss. – On Jan. 30, Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GNDNERR) hosted two viewings of the 2% Solution, a webcast sponsored by Focus The Nation, an unprecedented teach-in model on global warming solutions. Focus The Nation centers this model on the three most essential pillars for today’s youth, community members and decision-makers to embrace solutions to global warming: education, civic engagement and leadership. The 2% Solution refers to the creation of a national policy that would reduce global warming pollution in the United States by 2 percent each year for the next 40 years. This webcast will revolve around the question: Can we as a nation resolve to take actions to reduce global warming pollution by 2 percent a year for the next decade, and if so, what will it take?

“We are in a time where critical decisions need to be made on global warming. This means that today’s leaders and the youth who will inherit the crisis need serious education on the issue,” said James “Gus” Speth, Dean, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. “Focus The Nation is our country’s foremost model to create that level of education and interaction with law makers.”

“We are thrilled to be a part of this initiative. This activity will enlighten participants and allow them to make informed, proactive choices,” said David Ruple, Manager of the GNDNERR. “The viewing of the 2% Solution will demonstrate the enormous power that our citizens can have when they use their education and work together to create positive change in the world.”

The GNDNERR is located near the community of Pecan in southeast Jackson County and includes wild lands and waterways from Bangs Lake to the Alabama state line. A major purpose of the reserve is to provide research coordination and dissemination of scientific data to the community and local decision-makers to provide sound information on which to base management decisions.

Focus The Nation is an unprecedented educational initiative on global warming solutions for America that occurred at more than 1,000 universities and colleges and in all 50 states on Jan. 30-31, 2008. As the largest teach-in in U.S. history, Focus The Nation is preparing millions of students to become leaders in the largest civic challenge any generation has faced. For more information, please visit www.focusthenation.org.

Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and Mississippi Coast Audubon Society Host a Birding Adventure in Celebration of World Wetlands Day

BILOXI, Miss. – On Saturday, Feb. 2, 2008 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., the [Mississippi Coast Audubon Society](#), the Department of Marine Resources/Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GNDNERR), and the Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge are hosting a “Sparrow Sweep” through the pine savanna wetlands of the refuge in Southeast Jackson County in honor of “World Wetlands Day.” The theme of this year’s international event is “Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People.”

This Citizen Science field trip is a free outdoor “Adventure Quencher” activity for community members of all ages. During this activity, participants, led by ornithologists Dr. Mark Woodrey and Jake Walker of the GNDNERR, will walk through selected wet pine savanna habitats of the refuge flushing rare Henslow’s and LeConte’s Sparrows, Yellow Rails and other secretive grassland birds in order to observe, band and collect data on them.

“Wet pine savannas along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico provide important winter habitat for probably 60 to 70 percent of the world’s population of Henslow’s Sparrows,” Dr. Woodrey said. Participants in this popular activity will also learn about the importance of conserving and maintaining the health of our coastal wetland habitats and their inhabitants. For more information on World Wetlands Day, see http://www.ramsar.org/wwd/8/wwd2008_index.htm.

LRA Chairman Issues Statement Regarding Governor Jindal's Executive Order to Expedite Hurricane Recovery Decision-Making in Government

NEW ORLEANS (January 16, 2007) - Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) Chairman Norman C. Francis and Executive Director Paul Rainwater issued the following statements regarding the Executive Order issued by Governor Bobby Jindal yesterday which directs the LRA to be responsible for the state's actions with regard to FEMA's Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs.

"Yesterday Governor Jindal sent a clear message that the LRA's role in the recovery has evolved, said Francis. "With the responsibility and authority we have assumed as a result of the Executive Order, we must shift our focus from Washington to Baton Rouge—from getting the resources to ensuring that the resources are being invested quickly, strategically and efficiently. By making this one of his first acts in office, Governor Jindal has sent a strong signal that he understands the ongoing importance of our recovery and he's committed to streamlining programs and removing roadblocks to ensure that in the end we are safer, stronger and smarter than before."

"I look forward to working with GOHSEP and our Federal partners at FEMA to identify ways to streamline the Public Assistance process and improve efficiency," said Rainwater. "With the ultimate goal of cutting in half the length of time that applications and other paperwork spend in the process, I have no doubt we can work together to cut red tape and eliminate duplicative efforts."

On Governor Jindal's first day in office, he called his cabinet together for their first cabinet meeting at the Governor's mansion. Following the meeting, Jindal held a press conference to announce his signing of this and three other Executive Orders. Highlights from this Executive Order include:

SECTION 1: The Louisiana Recovery Authority shall set priorities and offer broad direction to the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness relating to the use of funds made available to the state for recovery and redevelopment efforts through the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, and special congressional appropriations for the Public Assistance Program and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

SECTION 2: The Executive Director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority shall serve as the Governor's Authorized Representative for Louisiana's Public Assistance Program associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Executive Director shall be afforded all duties and responsibilities conferred upon the Governor's Authorized Representative in the state's Public Assistance Administrative Plan.

SECTION 3: The Louisiana Recovery Authority shall serve as the State Hazard Mitigation Team for the recovery associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita for purposes of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

SECTION 4: The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness is authorized and directed to cooperate in the implementation of the provisions of this Order.

Louisiana Speaks Releases GIS Database to Public

BATON ROUGE, LA (JANUARY 9, 2008) - The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) and the non-profit Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) are distributing an extensive database of spatial information on South Louisiana. The data was collected as part of the Louisiana Speaks regional planning process and is available to planning organizations and members of the public with GIS capabilities.

Nationally renowned consultants partnered with local experts to develop the database, which was compiled from existing data clearinghouses such as the Louisiana State University (LSU) Atlas and the LSU Hurricane Katrina and Rita Clearinghouse Cooperative; state agencies including the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD); metropolitan planning organizations; and parish and municipal planning organizations.

"Comprehensive data is a cornerstone to sound planning," said Donna Fraiche, chair of the LRA's Long Term Community Planning Task Force. "Providing this information furthers a Louisiana Speaks goal of increasing the state's planning capacity and builds upon two years of planning initiated in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita."

GIS (Geographic Information System) technology is a tool that allows users to analyze and edit data, as well as create maps for specific uses. The Louisiana Speaks GIS data is organized within the following categories:

- Post-Katrina and Rita Recovery-Related Data
- Hazard-Area Data
- Land-Use and Demographic Data
- Landscape Data
- Infrastructure Data
- Future Community Growth and Transportation Options
- Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan

"For example," says Camille Manning-Broome, Principal Planner for CPEX, "GIS technology might allow emergency planners to easily calculate emergency response times in the event of a natural disaster, or it may assist communities that want to plan the way their land is used and developed." Certain software, such as ArcGIS or ArcView, is required to run GIS data. Eventually Louisiana Speaks wants to provide resources so that GIS technology can be accessed by the general public, such as companies that want to site a new business that takes advantage of an underserved market, or by home builders who want to place structures on high ground. Louisiana Speaks and its partners are exploring this next phase of this GIS project.

The Louisiana Speaks Strategic Implementation Plan, Section Four: Technology Transfer and Geographic Information Systems, provides more information on the contents of the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan Geographic Information System database, potential uses of the database, and the resources required to use it. The paper is available on www.louisianaspeaks.org, or by [clicking here](#).

To obtain a copy of the GIS data, contact the Center for Planning Excellence by email at laspeaks@c-pex.org, or by phone at 225.267.6300. In order to use this data, organizations and individuals must agree that they will never sell it or charge other groups for its use. More information on the GIS database and Louisiana Speaks can be found at www.louisianaspeaks.org.

Texas General Land Office's Adopt-A-Beach Program and KHOU-TV Team Up to Clean up Texas Beaches

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today announced a new partnership with Houston's KHOU-TV to clean up Texas beaches. "Working together, we can turn the tide against trash on our Texas beaches," Patterson said. "We can fix this problem if everyone helps just a little. But the people at KHOU-TV/DT have really stepped up and helped a lot and I salute them for their community spirit."

KHOU-TV Community Affairs worked with the Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Program to produce a series of Public Service Announcements aimed at educating the public about the impact litter has on the Texas coast. David Paul, a meteorologist at 11 News, stars in six 30-second spots examining the lasting impact of cigarette butts, tires, fishing line, plastic bags, glass bottles and aluminum cans on the beach. "Left on a Texas beach, this cigarette takes at least five years to disintegrate. And Texas beachgoers drop thousands of them on our beaches every day," Paul says in one of the six spots shot on Galveston beaches. "Never leave trash on Texas beaches and never toss garbage into storm drains, creeks or rivers.

Let's make clean beaches our gift to future generations. Help the Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Program and Channel 11 turn the tide against trash. Caring for our community in the spirit of Texas." Since the Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Program began 22 years ago, more than 365,000 Adopt-A-Beach volunteers have picked up more than 6,900 tons of debris from Texas beaches. At first, about 75 percent of the trash picked up came from offshore rigs and ships dumping their trash into the Gulf of Mexico.

Data collected from Adopt-A-Beach volunteers helped end offshore dumping. Now, the majority of the trash — nearly 70 percent — is left behind by beachgoers. The KHOU-TV/DT PSAs aim to prevent littering by educating the public. "It is vital that Texas beaches are clean and environmentally safe for residents and visitors," said Susan McEldoon, President and General Manager of KHOU-TV/DT. "We want to educate viewers about the kinds of things that have a lasting, damaging effect on our coastline."

Energy

OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Programmatic EIS

Record of Decision Available Online

The United States Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service (MMS) announces the availability of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Alternative Energy Development and Production and Alternate Use of Facilities on the Outer Continental Shelf.

The ROD, as well as the Federal Register Notice of Availability of the ROD are available at the following Web page: <http://ocsenergy.anl.gov/documents/index.cfm>. For more information about the Programmatic EIS, visit the OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Programmatic EIS Information Center at (<http://ocsenergy.anl.gov>), or ocsenergywebmaster@anl.gov.

Grant Opportunities

NOAA Accepting Grant Applications for K-12 Environmental Literacy Project

January 16, 2008

[NOAA's Office of Education](#) is now accepting applications for environmental literacy projects to promote changes in K-12 education in effort to expand the amount of Earth system science taught in the classroom and improve student learning of the subject. In total, approximately \$4 million in grants will be awarded. Projects should be designed to increase knowledge of scientific phenomena and provide opportunities for the application of that knowledge to environmental issues relevant to the students. Projects may incorporate NOAA data, data visualizations, and resources and to further the use of Earth System Science concepts related to NOAA's mission goals.

Pre-proposals are required and are due Wednesday, February 20. Full proposals are due Wednesday, June 25. Please visit our Web site for the [full announcement](#) and additional information. This funding opportunity is located on grants.gov with the ID number of SEC-OED-2009-2001282.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems ([GEOSS](#)), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

Training and Conferences

Gulf of Mexico Alliance to Hold Nutrient Sources, Fate, & Transport Workshop in Galveston, TX

Excess nutrients in coastal waters are a common problem around the Gulf of Mexico. The States participating in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) are each charged by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with establishing nutrient criteria for coastal waters. The GOMA intends to design a common monitoring framework to provide the information needed to understand the transport, fate, and effects of nutrients. This approach will assess nutrients and associated water quality factors as they are carried from coastal drainages through estuaries and nearshore waters into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Nutrient sources, Fate, & Transport Workshop will bring together expertise from state and federal agencies and universities to develop a regionally coordinated monitoring design framework to support state nutrient criteria development for coastal and estuarine waters. There is no registration fee to attend; however, due to space limitations, an RSVP to Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov is requested by Feb 12th.

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance
Nutrient Sources, Fate, & Transport Study Design Workshop
February 19-21, 2008
NOAA Fisheries Lab, Galveston, Texas
4700 Avenue U
Galveston, TX 77551**

For a copy of the agenda and logistical information, go to the Upcoming Events section at <http://www2.nos.noaa.gov/gomex/nutrients/welcome.html>.

Gulf Council to Conduct Public Hearing on Aquaculture Amendment

Tampa, Florida – January 15, 2008 - The Gulf of Mexico South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils will hold a joint public hearing February 19, 2008 in Islamorada, Florida to solicit public comment on a draft Aquaculture Amendment. The draft Aquaculture Amendment will require persons to obtain a permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in order to construct and operate an aquaculture facility in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico. Each application for permit must comply with a litany of permit conditions related to recordkeeping and operation of the facility. These permit conditions will assure the facility has a minimal affect on the environment and on other fishery resources.

Compliance with the conditions will be evaluated annually for the duration of the permit as the basis for renewal of the permit for the next year. Public input is an important part of the amendment process. It offers the public an opportunity to have ideas heard and possibly included as alternatives presented to the Council for consideration. Therefore, the Council strongly encourages public participation. The meeting begins at 6:00 p.m. and will conclude no later than 9:00 p.m. at the following locations:

Tuesday, February 19, 2008

The Islander, 82100 Overseas HWY, Islamorada, FL 33036
305-664-2031

Copies of the draft Amendment and other related materials can be obtained by calling 813-348-1630.

Law and Policy Symposium to Focus on Coastal Resiliency

The University of Mississippi and the National Sea Grant Law Center will present the Sea Grant Law and Policy Journal Inaugural Symposium, “Coastal Resiliency” on March 25 and 26 at The University of Mississippi in Oxford.

Resiliency refers to the capacity of a community to restore functioning after a disaster, such as a hurricane. Speakers at the symposium will focus on legal and policy issues, such as management options to address sea level rise, local regulation of fertilizer application through ordinances to improve water quality, the impact of coastal property owners’ access and visual rights on restoration projects and litigation under the National Flood Insurance Program.

The symposium is geared toward coastal managers, local officials, law students, attorneys and others working with coastal communities on environmental issues and disaster preparedness. The Law Center has applied for approval by the Mississippi Commission on Continuing Legal Education for a maximum of 5.25 hours of credit. The cost is \$35. Go to

<http://www.olemiss.edu/orgs/SGLC/National/SGLPJ/SGLPJ.htm> for more details and to download the application form. Call Stephanie Showalter at (662) 915-5267 to register.

Register Now for the Ninth Annual Smart Growth Conference for Southern Mississippi to Be Held May 5-6

BILOXI, Miss. – The ninth annual Coastal Development Strategies (Smart Growth) Conference will be held May 5-6, 2008 at the Historic Saenger Theatre in Biloxi. Conference attendees will learn about possible solutions to build sustainable communities, spur economic development and improve the quality of life in southern Mississippi. The conference is hosted by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Office of Coastal Management and Planning CRMP Program and conference partner the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce. CRMP is a program within the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR). CRMP’s mission is to develop a plan to sustain Mississippi’s coastal resources while providing a healthy economy in the region.

Two full days of conference will feature speakers and breakout sessions. Topics under discussion by the conference planning committee include sustainable development, clean energy and energy efficiency, insurance strategies, building resilient communities, heritage tourism, sustainable gardening, building in the watersheds, economic development, green building, linking housing and transportation to land use, transfer of development rights, and community citizen stewardship.

“We are proud to host this annual event,” said Tina Shumate, DMR Office of Coastal Management and Planning director. “The conference is an excellent opportunity to share ideas as we keep current with national Smart Growth trends and build for the future of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.”

This multidisciplinary event draws elected officials, city and county staff, contractors, developers, bankers, planners, zoning officials, realtors and appraisers, engineers, landowners, industry, students, federal and state agencies, boards of supervisors, lawyers, private and corporate entities, environmentalists, resource managers and other committed to rebuilding the Gulf Coast. Real estate agents and appraisers can earn 10 hours of continuing education credit by attending the eighth annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference, and receipts will be provided to all other professions—such as, engineers, teachers and architects—to submit for credit to their respective organizations.

The deadline for pre-registration is April 25, 2008 and is \$125 per person (\$80 for students). After April 25, the registration fee will be \$155 (until May 4) and on-site registration is \$175. Conference fees include two breakfasts, refreshment breaks, two lunches and conference materials. Lunches and all exhibits will be housed in the Nativity Sacred Heart Center.

For more information or to register for this year's conference, contact the DMR at (228) 374-5000 or the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce at (228) 604-0014, or visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms.us or the Coast Chamber at www.mscoastchamber.com.

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