

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

February 2008

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Increased Hurricane Losses Due to More People, Wealth Along Coastlines, Not Stronger Storms, New Study Says

February 22, 2008

A team of scientists have found that the economic damages from hurricanes have increased in the U.S. over time due to greater population, infrastructure, and wealth on the U.S. coastlines, and not to any spike in the number or intensity of hurricanes.



Hurricane Katrina, August 28, 2005.
+ [High Resolution](#) (Credit NOAA)

“We found that although some decades were quieter and less damaging in the U.S. and others had more land-falling hurricanes and more damage, the economic costs of land-falling hurricanes have steadily increased over time,” said Chris Landsea, one of the researchers as well as the science and operations officer at [NOAA’s National Hurricane Center](#) in Miami. “There is nothing in the U.S. hurricane damage record that indicates global warming has caused a significant increase in destruction along our coasts.”

In a newly published paper in *Natural Hazards Review*, the researchers also found that economic hurricane damage in the U.S. has been doubling every 10 to 15 years. If more people continue to move to the hurricane-prone coastline, future economic hurricane losses may be far greater than previously thought.

“Unless action is taken to address the growing concentration of people and property in coastal hurricane areas, the damage will increase by a great deal as more people and infrastructure inhabit these coastal locations,” said Landsea.

The *Natural Hazards Review* paper, “[Normalized Hurricane Damage in the United States: 1900-2005](#),” was written by Roger A. Pielke Jr. (University of Colorado), Joel Gratz (ICAT Managers, Inc.), Chris Landsea, Douglas Collins (Tillinghast-Towers Perrin), Mark A. Saunders (University College London), and Rade Musulin (Aon Re Australia).

The team used two different approaches, which gave similar results, to estimate the economic damages of historical hurricanes if they were to strike today, building upon the work published originally by Landsea and Pielke in 1998, and by Collins and Lowe in 2001. Both methods used changes in inflation and wealth at the national level. The first method utilized population increases at the county coastal level, while the second used changes in housing units at the county coastal level.

The results illustrate the effects of the tremendous pace of growth in vulnerable hurricane areas. If the 1926 Great Miami Hurricane were to hit today, the study estimated it would cause the largest losses at \$140 billion to \$157 billion, with Hurricane Katrina second on the list at \$81 billion.

The team concludes that potential damage from storms – currently about \$10 billion yearly – is growing at a rate that may place severe burdens on exposed communities, and that avoiding huge losses will require a change in the rate of population growth in coastal areas, major improvements in construction

standards, or other mitigation actions.

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 Announces Winners of Coastal and Ocean Management Awards

February 20, 2008

NOAA has selected the recipients of the 2008 Walter B. Jones Awards and NOAA Awards for Excellence in Coastal and Ocean Management. These biennial awards recognize coastal stewards, graduate students, state and local government, and non-governmental organizations for their outstanding efforts in coastal and ocean management.



"From coast-to-coast, remarkable people and organizations are making a difference," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator, in making the announcement. "NOAA is proud to honor the coastal and ocean shining stars who dedicate countless hours and energy to conserving coastal resources and improving coastal communities."

North Carolina National Estuarine
Research Reserve.
+ [High Resolution](#) (Credit NOAA)

The awards were created to honor the late 11-term Rep. Walter B. Jones of North Carolina. As chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, the congressman was a strong supporter of the [National Marine Fisheries Service](#) and coastal zone management.

The NOAA Excellence Awards recognize exceptional work in ocean and coastal resource management, business leadership and efforts by a non-governmental organization.

The winners of the 2008 Walter B. Jones Awards and NOAA Awards for Excellence in Coastal and Ocean Management are:

Walter B. Jones Awards:

- Coastal Steward: Lynne Z. Hale, The Nature Conservancy
- **Local Government: Nueces County, Texas**, and Carteret County, N.C., Shore Protection Office
- **Coastal and Marine Graduate Study: Jill Hendon, University of Mississippi**; Catherine McNally, University of Rhode Island; Anirudh Ullal, North Carolina State University, and Heather Ward, East Carolina University.

NOAA Excellence Awards:

- Susan Snow-Cotter Award for Excellence in Ocean and Coastal Resource Management: Kathleen Leyden, Maine State Planning Office; Brian Baird, California Resources Agency
- Excellence in Business Leadership: J&B Aquafood, North Carolina
- Non-Governmental Organization of the Year: Island Institute, Maine

Modifying Agricultural Practices Could Reduce Flow of Nutrients to Gulf of Mexico

New findings suggest agricultural methods practiced since the 1950s have increased the carbon flux in the Mississippi River Basin by 40 percent and river discharge by nine percent. The Mississippi River flows into the Northern Gulf of Mexico, where there is a large area of hypoxic bottom water known as the "Dead Zone," a recurrent feature in the Gulf during the summer. Hypoxic (low oxygen) waters in the Gulf of Mexico can cause habitat loss, stress and even death to marine organisms, affecting commercial harvests and ecosystem health. These new findings suggest that changing agricultural practices in the watershed could reduce the amount of nutrients flowing into the Gulf of Mexico. For more information, contact [Libby Jewett](#).

One-NOAA Event Discusses Pressing Issue of Sea Level Rise in Coastal Alabama and the Florida Panhandle

Local, state, and federal entities, including a large number of NOAA offices, came together for a unique information exchange about the impending risk of sea level rise in coastal Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. The group gathered at the Gulf Ecology Division Laboratory of the Environmental Protection Agency in Gulf Breeze, Florida January 23-24 and discussed the scientific, management and modeling information needed to understand and mitigate the effects of Sea Level Rise on this area. The Ecological Effects of Sea Level Rise Workshop was organized by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (CSCOR) with assistance from the Coastal Services Center's Gulf Coast Services Center, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve. The National Geodetic Survey, the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, and the Coast Survey Development Lab all contributed information. The knowledge gained through this workshop will form the basis of the expansion of CSCOR's Ecological Effects of Sea Level Rise (EESLR) program to this region. For more information contact Carol Auer at Carol.Auer@noaa.gov.

Understanding Local Impacts of Mercury Improved by One-NOAA Partnership Establishing Monitoring Station

On January 18, scientists from NOAA's Air Resources Laboratory completed final upgrades and installation of ambient air mercury monitoring equipment at a permanent site within the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, near Pascagoula, MS. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science provided partial funding for vital infrastructure support and state-of-the-art monitoring equipment. The station will collect continuous measurements of mercury, carbon monoxide, ozone, and nitrogen. Long-term measurements provide essential information needed to better quantify atmospheric loadings to local watersheds, discern natural versus anthropogenic sources of mercury, and elucidate source-receptor relationships from known or suspected emission sources. The mercury monitoring station at the Grand Bay NERR constitutes one of the first such stations in an emerging multi-agency national mercury network. The collected data will facilitate a more thorough evaluation of NOAA's mercury models. These models are key to establishing clear linkages between atmospheric processes (emission, atmospheric chemistry, deposition) and aquatic and biochemical processes that govern the incorporation and migration of mercury through the food web. For more information, contact Russell Callender at Russell.Callender@noaa.gov, or Winston Luke at Winston.Luke@noaa.gov.

NOAA and Shell Oil Company Launch Enhanced Ocean Observations Project in Gulf of Mexico

February 13, 2008

NOAA and the [Shell Oil Company](#) have signed a cooperative agreement to place meteorological and oceanographic observation sensors on seven Shell oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. Once installed, the suite of observation equipment will become a vital component of the [Integrated Ocean Observing System](#) (IOOS), providing valuable data for use in hurricane research, forecasting, and coastal resource management.

"IOOS is all about unlocking the secrets of our oceans and coastal waters. Thanks to Shell's commitment we'll be able to gather additional data that may help us understand how tropical cyclones develop in the Gulf region, learn more about coastal flooding, harmful algal blooms and the processes behind dead zones, becoming better stewards of our valuable coastal resources," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

Deepwater oil and gas platform operators in the northern Gulf of Mexico are required under federal regulations to collect and transmit current profile observations to [NOAA's National Data Buoy Center](#). However, this agreement will surpass those requirements and calls for the following enhancements:

Upgrade all weather stations on four Shell platforms to include direct transmission to NOAA's geostationary satellites (GOES), and emergency power ensuring an uninterrupted stream of information even if the platform is evacuated.

Upgrade ocean wave and current instrumentation on Shell's "Auger" platform to include GOES transmission and emergency power supply in order to supply oceanographic information to NOAA continuously.

Ocean heat measurements will be collected from the Shell "Brutus" platform to better quantify the role of upper level thermoclines in hurricane intensity.

Collect and share meteorological information from two new continental shelf locations off Louisiana that are currently not monitored.

Installation of high frequency radar transmitters on a Shell platform off the Texas coast. This system will be able to calculate the speed and direction of the surface current – vital information for weather forecasting and dispersion modeling.

"Shell is proud to be part of this collaboration, which leverages complementary strengths – NOAA's scientific expertise with significant Shell offshore experience and infrastructure," said John Hofmeister, president, Shell Oil Company. "The Gulf of Mexico is a critical resource and plays a vital role in delivering a secure energy supply to the U.S. Shell believes this information will benefit everyone living along the Gulf Coast and its customers across the country. For Shell, this information could help to protect our people and assets."

Installation of the equipment will start in spring 2008 with completion of all projects anticipated in late 2009. Shell Oil will acquire and install the devices while NOAA will provide quality control of the data and make it available in real-time to [National Weather Service](#) forecast offices, [NOAA's National](#)

[Hurricane Center](#) and the public. NOAA also will provide technical expertise in high frequency radar. Data from these projects also will be made available for input to environmental prediction models.

Gulf of Mexico HAB Operational Forecast System Ends Fourth Bloom Season

NOAA's operational forecast system for harmful algal blooms (HABs) in the Gulf of Mexico has successfully concluded its fourth, and unusually prolific, bloom season. Over the past four months, HAB analysts at NOS' Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) have tracked and forecasted transport, extent, intensification, and coastal impacts associated with three unique *Karenia brevis* blooms affecting four regions of Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. The analysts disseminated 78 bulletins to more than 190 coastal resource managers representing 50 government agencies and academia over the 19 week active period. The "Conditions Report" webpage (www.csc.noaa.gov/crs/hab/) received more than 1,700 hits. For more information, contact [HAB](#) or [Kathleen Fisher](#).

Task Force to Finalize Updated Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan

The Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force (<http://www.epa.gov/msbasin/taskforce/>) intends to finalize its updated Action Plan during the group's 16th meeting on February 28-29, 2008 in Chicago, IL. The 2001 Action Plan was developed by the Task Force to address the Nation's largest recurring hypoxic zone that threatens a \$2.8 billion fishery in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

The updated 2008 Action Plan (http://www.epa.gov/msbasin/taskforce/pdf/2008draft_actionplan.pdf) reiterates the Task Force's commitment to the framework of the original plan, including continued encouragement of voluntary, incentive-based actions, and maintaining the coastal goal of reducing the size of the hypoxic zone to 5,000 km² by 2015. It also highlights emerging issues such as changes in agriculture due to increased demand for biofuels, reauthorization of conservation programs within the Farm Bill, and the loss of coastal wetlands. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science remains committed to working with its partners on the Task Force and others to implement substantive management measures to reduce nutrient loadings to the Gulf of Mexico. For more information, contact Alan Lewitus at Alan.Lewitus@noaa.gov.

Florida Residents Pack the House to Learn about Red Tide Research

A standing-room-only crowd of over 200 concerned residents attended a February 8 educational forum in Englewood, Florida to learn about the harmful algal bloom (HAB) sometimes called Florida red tide. A National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science researcher explained current scientific research that helps coastal managers detect, assess, predict, and mitigate Florida red tide. Residents also learned about complex conditions that lead to red tide formation, movement, and landfall. A question and answer session focused on when, where, and why these blooms occur. A toxin produced by this HAB species, *Karenia brevis*, can kill fish and other marine life, and endangers the health of coastal residents and visitors. The blooms occur almost every year on Florida's West Coast. The Sierra Club and the Englewood chapter of START (Solutions to Avoid Red Tide) sponsored the forum. For more information, contact Pat Tester at Pat.Tester@noaa.gov.

NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Receives Coastal America Partnership Award

February 7, 2008



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

+ [High Resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

[NOAA's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary](#) office received the 2007 Coastal America Partnership Award for its Coral Protection and Restoration Program at a ceremony held at the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center in Key West, Fla. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary personnel and partners formed the Coral Protection and Restoration Program after recognizing potential threats to corals from seawall construction and repairs sites, marinas and dock development, and shoreline stabilization projects.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Timothy R. E. Keeney, NOAA's deputy assistant secretary for oceans and atmosphere, and Virginia K. Tippie, director of [Coastal America](#), were among the dignitaries who participated in the presentation.

Since its inception in 2003, the Coral Protection and Rescue Program has rescued more than 7,000 coral colonies, which are relocated to restore depleted areas, used to educate the public, or used for research to protect coral reefs for the future. Some of these specimens have been moved to coral nurseries that will eventually be used to replenish other sites. In other cases, corals are used in the development of baseline genetic banks for use in

experiments and comparisons of corals from different geographic regions.

Major partners in the program include the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the United States Navy, the United States Coast Guard, the Florida Aquarium, the University of Florida, Mote Marine Laboratory, Continental Shelf Associates and local aquaculturist Ken Nedimyer.

Formally established in 1992, Coastal America is a 12 member federal partnership dedicated to sustainable development and coastal ecosystem protection and restoration. Partners at every level — government and nongovernment — commit to shared ideas, expertise, technology, funding and natural laboratories in which resourceful solutions to coastal concerns are inspired, tested and expedited. In 1997, Coastal America established an awards program to recognize outstanding team efforts to restore and protect the coastal environment. Since then, the Coastal America Partners have presented Partnership, Spirit and Special Recognition Awards on an annual basis.

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, sea grass meadows, mangrove communities and sand flats.



Healthy seagrass with a jack in the background.

+ [High Resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

Bioluminescent Algal Bloom Observation by Texas Volunteers Helps to Track Movement of a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB)

Texas volunteers sampling at Port O'Connor reported the first coastal observation of the HAB dinoflagellate, *Noctiluca scintillans*, to the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's Southeast Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (SEPMN) as this bloom migrated westerly from offshore. *Noctiluca* is a bioluminescent dinoflagellate linked with fish mortality events worldwide. This volunteer observation provided new insight into the westerly movement of this *Noctiluca* bloom from offshore to inshore waters where blooms have not been monitored. SEPMN enhances the awareness of harmful algae and their impacts, and directly engages volunteers in coastal stewardship, with 103 groups monitoring over 72 sites in 9 coastal states. For more information, contact Steve Morton at Steve.Morton@noaa.gov.

Special Publication Features NCCOS-funded Research on Florida HABs

The much-anticipated January issue of *Continental Shelf Research* is now in print, featuring harmful algal bloom (HAB) research funded by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science. The special publication contains 11 articles describing collaborative projects focused on the HAB species *Karenia brevis*, also known as Florida red tide. Projects were conducted through the Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms Program in Florida (ECOHAB-FL). The issue contains information about important processes for modeling initiation and transport of red tide blooms. It also provides new information about the biology and behavior of *K. brevis*, nutrient requirements, and potential nutrient sources for the blooms. *Karenia brevis*, found off the Florida coast, produces potent toxins that can kill fish, poison humans and cause respiratory problems in humans and marine mammals. ECOHAB coordinates field, laboratory, and modeling studies to manage the growth, distribution, and impacts of HAB species. ECOHAB-FL was a catalyst for 55 other published studies. The work involved 22 senior investigators representing 12 institutions, including five universities, the State of Florida Marine Research Institute, Mote Marine Laboratory, three NOAA Labs, the United States Geological Survey, and the United States Department of Agriculture. For more information, contact Pat Tester at Pat.Tester@noaa.gov, or Quay Dortch at Quay.Dortch@noaa.gov.

Other NOAA News

The University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center 2007 Annual Report Online

Produced in partnership with the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET), the [University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center 2007 Annual Report](#), contains performance data on the ability of stormwater treatment systems to treat water quality and manage water quantity.

To manage stormwater in a way that prevents flooding, protects infrastructure, and safeguards human and environmental health, coastal communities require science-based, independent information on the performance of stormwater treatment systems. The CICEET-sponsored UNH Stormwater Center is

unique in its ability to conduct such evaluations in a side-by-side setting. Its field site is designed to test a range of stormwater treatment systems, from low impact development approaches to manufactured devices.

This report is one of several tools the center uses to communicate the results of its research to coastal communities interested in designing stormwater projects that protect water resources and improve resilience in a time of rapid development and more frequent and intense storms.

In response to stakeholder feedback, the 2007 report includes information on the land use settings in which the evaluated systems are typically deployed, the type of application to which they are best suited, installation costs, and maintenance.

If you have a suggestion for improving next year's report, please take a few minutes to fill out this online survey: http://survey.unh.edu/surveycat/surveys/survey406_unhsc2007.htm

CICEET is a partnership of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of New Hampshire. CICEET is dedicated to fostering the development of tools for clean water and healthy coastal environments nationwide. <http://ciceet.unh.edu>

“Risk-Wise” Initiative Helps Local Decision Makers

Last week, representatives from nonprofit organizations and federal agencies met to discuss “Risk-Wise,” an initiative to reach local decision makers with risk-reduction information related to climate and weather concerns. Local officials often are unaware of the public- and private-sector resources available for making decisions that address climate- and weather-related concerns. The “Risk-Wise” partners intend to reduce disaster-related risks and losses by leveraging resources and sharing informational tools with local officials. For more information, contact [Sandy Eslinger](#).

Video Surveillance Helps Predict Boat Wake Impacts on Estuaries

A video surveillance system that films boats on the Intracoastal Waterway will help ecologists assess the impact of boat wakes on estuaries. National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science researchers installed the solar-powered surveillance system January 18 to document the type, size, speed, and wake of boats traveling along the Waterway. The motion-activated device works in conjunction with an underwater sensor that detects boat wake height. Researchers will use these data to calibrate a boat wake model that interacts with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. The model will be used to evaluate shoreline impacts at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. For more information, contact Mark Fonseca at Mark.Fonseca@noaa.gov.

Wave Exposure Software Now Available Online as New Forecasting Tool

Wave Exposure Model (WEMo) software is now available to researchers and coastal managers for analyzing wave impacts on enclosed and semi-enclosed waterbodies, on shorelines and on the seafloor. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) developed the interactive software, which is now available for download at the Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research website. WEMo calculates wave height, wave energy, and wave period data, and combines the data using Global

Information Systems (GIS) technology. Information about WEMo and related publications is provided on the web page. WEMo users must have ArcGIS 9.1® or higher to use the application. See WEMo online at <http://www.ccfhr.noaa.gov/stressors/extremeevents/wemo.html>. For more information, contact Amit Malhotra at Amit.Malhotra@noaa.gov, or Mark Fonseca at Mark.Fonseca@noaa.gov.

Aquaculture Workshop Identifies Solutions for Improving American Competitiveness

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's Hollings Marine Laboratory cooperated with the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the NOAA Aquaculture Office to host a workshop, "Enhancing Competitiveness of Sustainable Marine Aquaculture in the United States; Addressing Measurement Barriers to Technological Innovation," on February 13-14, 2008 in Lake Buena Vista, FL. 120 participants representing commercial, academic, and government interests discussed and prioritized technical gaps to innovation in order to move U.S. aquaculture forward in its productivity. The discussions resulted in a draft white paper with priorities for short, medium, and long-term research and development efforts that support sustainable aquaculture industries within the U.S. The two-day workshop was associated with the Aquaculture America Conference. For more information, contact Susan White at Susan.White@noaa.gov, or Susan Lovelace at Susan.Lovelace@noaa.gov.

IOOS Regional Workshop Summary Is Now On-Line

A summary of last autumn's workshop in which stakeholders from across the country came together to take a critical step forward in developing the regional associations for the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) is now available online at www.csc.noaa.gov/IRCW/. Attendees advanced data management and communication plans for the regions and agreed that the regional associations would develop a conceptual design template for the regional ocean observing system. Workshop organizers were the NOAA Coastal Services Center and IOOS Program, National Federation of Regional Associations, and Ocean.US. Effective coordination of the regional associations is a critically important element of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, a "system of systems" that provides quality-controlled information on the current and future states of the oceans and Great Lakes. For more information, contact [Dave Easter](mailto:Dave.Easter@noaa.gov).

In the Gulf States

Sea Grant Awards Research Funding

Fuel from seafood-processing waste products, population growth's effects on ecosystems and stronger construction materials for homes are just a few topics of research projects that recently received funding from the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium (MASGC). From a field of 18 proposals, MASGC selected nine research projects to fund for its 2008- 2010 budget cycle. MASGC also has teamed up with Sea Grant programs in Florida, Louisiana and Texas to fund two regional projects.

The following projects received funding through the peer-reviewed, competitive funding process. Funding amounts include Sea Grant funds and required matching funds.

- Todd French, Rafael Hernandez and Hossein Toghiani of Mississippi State University will determine the most effective process for converting the carbon in seafood processing waste into a biodiesel feedstock that could be a source of biofuel. This process could reduce processors' operational costs by eliminating some waste disposal costs and providing income streams from the sale of products generated from shrimp processing waste. \$195,356.
- Latif Kalin, Charlene LeBleu, Rebecca Retzlaff, Pan Susan and B. Graeme Lockaby of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences of Auburn University will assess the effect of land use/cover on the water quality of the Fish River, a major water supplier. They plan to develop population projections and zoning maps that will aid local authorities in making science-based decisions regarding environmental and ecosystem health. \$281,833.
- Using acoustic technology, Eric Hoffmayer, James S. Franks and Bruce H. Comyns of the Department of Coastal Sciences at The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Laboratory will identify and map the spawning habitats of one of the most highly prized inshore game fish throughout the northern Gulf of Mexico: spotted seatrout (better known as speckled trout). This project, to be conducted in the Mississippi estuaries of Grand Bay and Biloxi Bay, will complement a spotted seatrout stock enhancement project currently under way and will help fishery resource managers develop improve supervision of the species. \$212,407.
- R. Douglas Watson of The University of Alabama at Birmingham's Department of Biology will study the possibility of using a cloned blue crab molting gland receptor that could induce molting in blue crabs. The process could provide an abundant and predictable supply of soft-shelled crabs and could benefit economies in states with existing or potential soft crab fisheries. \$100,000.
- D. Allen Davis and Luke A. Roy of Auburn University's Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquaculture, will work to provide west Alabama shrimp farmers with information about salinity and temperature tolerance of post-larval and early juvenile state shrimp. The information will help increase survival, growth and production of inland low-salinity farms. The information will help provide income to a depressed region of Alabama and will be applicable to other cultured species that can survive in waters in a wide range of salinity. \$211,535.
- Julia A. Cherry of The University of Alabama and Christopher A. May of the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve will address the lack of understanding of the effects of prescribed burning, a common management practice for many ecosystems. The findings will provide insight into the effectiveness of prescribed burning as a management strategy and the relative importance of biogenic accretion for the maintenance of marsh habitat. The data can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of fire for removal of debris after severe storms. \$160,289.
- Because wastewater treatment plants account for more than 30 percent of shellfish area closures in the United States and more than 70,000 acres in Mobile Bay, Ruth H. Carmichael of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab will collect data that will examine the relationship between shellfish habitat, wastewater treatment plants and human health. This data will enhance coastal economies by helping to maintain and restore local shellfish populations, increase the area of land available for shellfishing and help processors learn to determine if shellfish is safe for consumption. \$99,995.

- Kevin S. Dillon and Richard Fulford of the Department of Coastal Sciences of The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Laboratory will study samples of spotted sea trout taken from Mississippi's Bay of St. Louis and Biloxi Bay to understand how changes in fish diet may be reflected in different sites and seasonal variances. These samples will be compared for differences, season and tissue type. The project will provide a baseline dataset for analysis of larger stable datasets collected to address specific questions about coastal ecosystems. \$25,766.
- Mark T. Hamann and Jiangnan Peng of The University of Mississippi are working to develop milder techniques to inactivate contaminants to extend the shelf life of oyster products and reduce the transmission of seafood-borne infectious diseases. They will test the use of dense phase carbon dioxide to treat oysters infected with Vibrio bacteria. \$24,130.
- Using state-of-the-art technology, high-strength fiber composites and a unique full-scale testing facility, Arindam Gan Chowdhury of Florida International University will work to remedy hurricane-induced losses brought about from insufficiently built residential structures. The proposed research aims at the use of high-performance fiber composites in construction to form a barrier to winds of up to 140 mph. The proposed system would work by transferring wind forces from the building envelope to the frame and then to the foundation. \$300,000 (regional project).
- Nina Lam of Louisiana State University will develop models for post-Hurricane Katrina business return in New Orleans. By developing models and using first-hand survey data set collected after the storm, her findings could be useful in planning and policy development for economic recovery in the Gulf of Mexico. The models also will be beneficial to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Louisiana Recovery Authority and local planning agencies. \$300,886 (regional project).

MASGC is one of 30 university-based Sea Grant College Programs, which are of part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Department of Commerce. Sea Grant is a federal, state and local partnership that helps communities apply practical solutions to coastal issues through competitive research, extension and outreach, graduate student training and K-12 education. MASGC works to foster a sustainable economy and environment.

Derelict Crab Trap Removal Project Saves Marine Life

By JEFF DUTE, Outdoors Editor

Volunteers are needed Saturday to help with the annual derelict crab trap removal program on the lower Mobile-Tensaw Delta. The project is a joint effort of the Mobile Bay National Estuary program and Alabama's Marine Resources Division but also relies heavily on volunteers from the Alabama Coastal Foundation, the Coastal Conservation Association and Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association.

MCWCA president Roger Guilian said the project is important to his group because the impact derelict crab traps have on the marine environment. "Once abandoned, crab traps become perpetual killing machines incapable of discriminating among the numerous marine creatures that get inside them seeking food," Guilian said. "Once inside, the newly trapped marine creature cannot escape due to the nature of the trap itself and it, in turn, starves and dies, thus enticing the next opportunistic creature inside to feed off it. They don't need to be baited to work; Mother Nature provides her own bait."

Guilian said this cycle repeats itself perpetually or as long as the trap is in the water. "Abandoned traps roll and tumble with the tides and storms and wind up in all manner of errant locations where they begin anew their destructive cycle of attract-trap-attract-trap," he said.

Conservation commissioner Barnett Lawley issued an order closing the crabbing season Saturday in those waters along the Causeway to facilitate the project. "While it will be lawful to remove all crab traps left in closed waters, only those clearly abandoned crab traps like those without floats, buoys, fresh bait, name tags, etc. are typically targeted by conservation volunteers," Guilian said. "No one wants to put anyone out of business here. The only things we are trying to put out of business are the destructive 'ghost traps' that are no longer the object of anyone's attention."

Kara Lankford, who coordinates the program for the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, said volunteers should wear old clothes, waders or knee boots if possible and bring other items like tarps to protect a truck bed or boat, work gloves, sunscreen, insect repellent, hammers, rope, first-aid kit, a hat and a VHF radio or phone.

"They should also prepare to get muddy," Lankford said. She said volunteers should plan on using shallow-draft boats to travel on the flats where many of the traps are located. Grappling hooks will be provided. Lankford said volunteers should meet by 7 a.m. Saturday at the public launch just east of the Raphael Semmes Bridge across the Tensaw River, where they will be able to pick up data sheets to record information about the traps they remove. Volunteers will be able to get rid of traps they remove at dumpsters at the Tensaw River public launch and Meaher State Park.

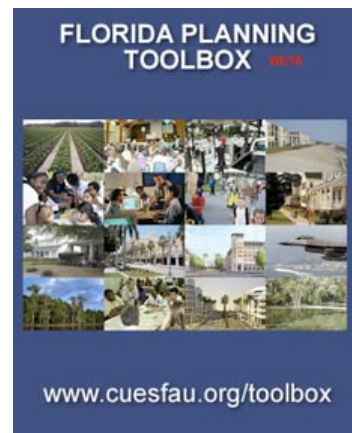
Lankford said CCA will be treating volunteers to a free barbecue at Meaher from about 1 to 3 p.m., depending on when volunteers begin returning. For more information, call Lankford at 251-431-6409.

State, FAU Center Create Toolbox to Assist Florida Communities

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Department of Community Affairs and Florida Atlantic University's Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions (CUES) are pleased to announce the release of The Florida Planning Toolbox.

Made possible by a grant from the Department, the toolbox provides descriptions and examples of planning tools designed to help Florida's local governments create distinctive communities and a diverse, sustainable economy. The toolbox, developed by CUES, also establishes an integrated and enduring process to protect and improve the environment; and provide access to the highest quality education and healthcare, and a rich cultural heritage.

"The toolbox can be a desktop resource for all Florida communities. It highlights the broad range of planning tools used in our state to preserve our natural resources, promote a strong and resilient economy and plan for the future livability of Florida's communities," said Community Affairs Secretary Tom Pelham.



The toolbox contains "how-to" tools that will help Florida communities more effectively address the wide range of issues facing Florida communities. Tools are included that provide a way for communities to conserve agricultural land, address climate change, protect their coasts from inappropriate development,

diversify their economy, provide for greater social and economic equity, and address affordable housing needs.

It also contains tools that can be used to understand the fiscal impact of development proposals, conserve natural systems, promote infill and redevelopment, plan transportation improvements that improve pedestrian safety and achieve local goals for community character, and protect water resources. One chapter of the toolbox is devoted to tools that enable a high level of public involvement in planning processes. Another chapter contains benchmarking tools that can be used to measure progress on community goals.

"CUES plans to work with its public and private partners to continue to expand this planning toolbox and make it an enduring resource for Florida communities," said James Murley, director of CUES. CUES created the toolbox as part of its mission to work with policy makers and the public in their pursuit of options for managing growth while preserving natural systems, promoting a strong economy and planning livable communities. The toolbox was prepared by CUES Senior Fellow Jean Scott, under the guidance of Murley and Robert M. Jones, director of the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium at Florida State University and the University of Central Florida.

The Department of Community Affairs helps meet the needs of Floridians by investing in communities and working with them to plan and manage growth. To download a free copy of the toolbox or to use the searchable online version, visit www.cuesfau.org/toolbox.

Florida Building Commission Recommends Stronger Structures for Florida Coast

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Building Commission today recommended to the Legislature that new buildings along Florida's coast that will be insured by the state-run Citizens Property Insurance Corporation be built to stronger standards than current building codes require. The recommendations, which incorporate "Code-Plus" standards, come in response to the Legislature's direction for the Commission to examine the hurricane risks to structures built close to the Florida coast. The proposed requirements would apply to structures built within a half-mile of Florida's coasts beginning next January 1.

"These buildings are exposed to the strongest winds and pounding surf of oncoming hurricanes, and the risk of building damage and insurance claims to the state-backed insurance provider is enormous," said Raul L. Rodriguez, AIA, who serves as chairman of the Florida Building Commission. "We considered the risks and the latest science in developing the recommendations and concluded that state-insured buildings should be required to withstand a stronger hurricane than those mandated by the state code."

The Legislature last year directed the Commission, which is housed within the Department of Community Affairs, to recommend Code-Plus criteria for Citizens-insured buildings constructed after January 1, 2009, within 2,500 feet of the coast. The Commission selected a standard based on a 500-year event, which can carry winds approximating the worst storms on record, such as Hurricane Andrew. Citizens-insured coastal buildings would be built to withstand winds 5 to 25 mph stronger than the code requires, depending on where the building is located along the coast.

In addition to wind speed, the recommendations call for buildings to be elevated 1 to 6 feet higher than current requirements and to meet the stringent wind-borne debris protection requirements for the High Velocity Hurricane Zone.

Wind-driven rain damage occurs to building interiors when roof coverings are blown off, windows are broken or other parts of the structure fail. These are major causes of insurance claims. While the damage is not necessarily life-threatening to the occupants, it does result in costly repairs and renovations.

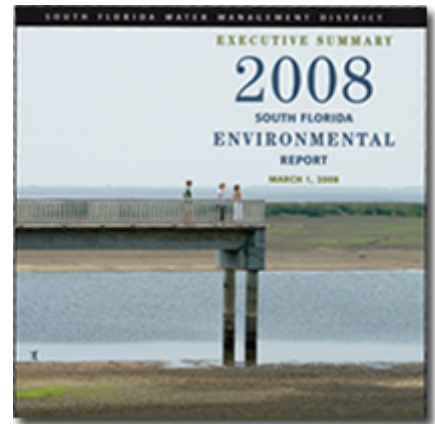
Estimates from Hurricane Andrew, as an example, reflect that water damage was responsible for 60 percent of the insured losses. Stronger buildings and protection from wind-borne debris would reduce damage and losses.

"The primary purpose of any building code is to provide for the safety of the occupants, and the Florida Building Code does that very well," said Rodriguez. "The 'Code-Plus' requirements address occupant safety and additional property protection in high-risk areas, which will in turn reduce insurance losses." [View a map \(pdf format\) illustrating Florida's wind-borne debris region.](#)

Florida Releases 2008 South Florida Environmental Report

WEST PALM BEACH - The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today released the 2008 South Florida Environmental Report detailing a year of scientific, engineering and restoration work to improve the environmental quality of America's Everglades and the entire South Florida ecosystem.

Spanning two comprehensive volumes and comprising more than 50 individual reports, the 2008 report marks the tenth year of unified, streamlined environmental reporting by the two agencies. The report provides extensive research summaries, data analyses, financial updates and a searchable database of environmental projects throughout the Everglades, Kissimmee Basin, Lake Okeechobee, and South Florida's estuaries and coastal areas. The report covers the 2007 Water Year, which is May 1, 2006 to April 31, 2007.



"Despite the hardships associated with a severe regional water shortage, low water levels provided unique opportunities for environmental restoration over the past year," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "This report captures the cutting-edge science behind the efforts, as well as the hard work of dedicated State of Florida employees." The 2008 South Florida Environmental Report, including a 52-page executive summary, is available online at <http://www.sfwmd.gov/sfer>.

DEP's "LIFE" Program Engages Middle School Students in Beach Nourishment Project

PINELLAS- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program hosted middle school students from Kennedy Middle School at Honeymoon Island State Park over the last three days for a series of labs centered on the park's recent beach nourishment project. The students conducted science-based field labs as part of the on-site educational program, including bird observations and adaptations, ecosystem ingredients and a dune movement lab.

“By planting dune vegetation, monitoring beach restoration efforts and tracking erosion, these students are not only learning to be environmental stewards but are providing a tremendous service to Honeymoon Island State Park,” said DEP’s LIFE Director Greg Ira. “The LIFE program provides a great opportunity for students to gain hands-on, engaging lessons in environmental care and restoration.”

Students and volunteers planted dune vegetation on the park’s new beach last weekend in addition to the LIFE program labs that started on Wednesday. The dune movement lab in particular involved students monitoring the beach project, measuring the width of the beach along several transects and the height of the dune using a permanent benchmark. The measurements will then allow students and park staff to track erosion and accretion of the dunes within the nourishment area.

The LIFE program at Honeymoon Island State Park has been a part of the Gulf Alliance Initiative by fulfilling the Environmental Education priority of the Gulf Of Mexico Alliance Governor’s Action Plan. The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is part of a coordinated response to President George W. Bush’s Ocean Action Plan, which called for the development of regional goals and priorities for safeguarding the nation’s oceans. The state-federal alliance outlines 11 actions to improve and protect water quality, restore coastal wetlands and estuarine ecosystems, reduce pollution and nutrient loading, identify Gulf habitats to support coastal management and expand environmental education.

Since 2004, nearly 3,500 future scientists and stewards have participated in the LIFE program. The LIFE initiative seeks to establish a series of field-based, environmental-science education programs around the state. Each of the nine existing programs is a partnership between the DEP and a local school district. The goal of each LIFE program is increased student achievement and teacher professional development in science, with the content and delivery varying from site to site. For more information on the LIFE program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/ed/.

Florida DEP Unveils Comprehensive Sand Source Inventory

--Online tool will help identify suitable sand sources in Florida’s coastal waters—



With this new database, both the state and local beach managers will be better equipped to evaluate and protect our precious coastal resources." ~ DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently completed its statewide, comprehensive on-line tool for identifying suitable sand sources from Florida’s coastal waters, making this database the first of its kind in the nation. The database includes comprehensive information about offshore sediment and geological features and is to support the design and construction of beach restoration and nourishment projects.

“With this new database, both the state and local beach managers will be better equipped to evaluate and protect our precious coastal resources,” said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. “DEP continues to look for innovative tools and technologies to enhance our abilities and protect Florida’s environment.”

Named the Reconnaissance Offshore Sand Search, or “ROSS,” the database is publicly available on the internet. ROSS is a comprehensive tool for coastal engineers, project managers, and regulators as they design and construct beach restoration and

nourishment projects, that encourages better sand management practices. The database will help reduce the costs of locating sufficient quantities of quality sand, and assists DEP in regional sand management for the protection of Florida's coastal communities and habitats.

“State, federal and local governments invest millions of dollars annually to restore and maintain critically eroded beaches along Florida's coastline,” said Mike Barnett, a licensed professional engineer and Bureau Chief of DEP's Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems. “Having an up-to-date tracking system of available offshore sand sources statewide will help beach restoration and nourishment projects move forward more quickly.”

Florida's beach and dune system acts as the first line of defense during hurricane season. Beach restoration and nourishment can prepare the coastline to better withstand the forces of hurricanes while providing recreational and economic benefits. To date, more than 190 miles of beach have been restored and maintained through the State program. For more information on DEP's Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems, and to view the sand inventory database, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/beaches.

LA DEQ, Motiva, Others Announce Plans to Cleanup Bayou Trepagnier Site

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality entered into a cooperative agreement with Motiva Enterprises to implement a clean-up project at Bayou Trepagnier in Norco. The agreement was signed this afternoon.

Bayou Trepagnier is located 10 miles west of New Orleans, just north of Airline Highway. Motiva will remove some of the contaminated soil and put down clean soil on what's left behind as a cap. The area could be the home of a freshwater diversion project that would allow freshwater across Bayou Trepagnier into nearby wetlands.

Prior to 1995, wastewater, storm water and dredged sediment from various dredging and refinery operations were discharged into the bayou. In 1998, Motiva Enterprises took over operations of the petroleum refinery at the site. Since then, Motiva officials have worked in conjunction with the DEQ and various organizations to address clean-up efforts for the bayou.

“The signing of this cooperative agreement marks a major milestone for this project,” said Louis Buatt, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Environmental Assessment for DEQ. “This will result in the clean-up of the bayou being addressed sooner rather than later, thereby creating a clean corridor to accommodate any future fresh water diversion project.”

Community Invited to Help Shape Vision for Calcasieu Parish

The Calcasieu Parish Police Jury is working with Planning Works, a land use planning consulting firm, to draft the Parish's first Comprehensive Plan. The plan will guide ongoing growth and development, identify goals for the parish, establish decision-making policies and propose implementation strategies. The team expects that the plan will take 12 to 14 months to complete and will hold 10 public meetings across the parish to invite input from residents. The first public meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Feb. 12 at the Lake Charles Civic Center's Jean Lafitte Room. For more information on Vision Calcasieu, call the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury at 337-721-3500 or visit www.visioncalcasieu.com.

FEMA and State Unify Efforts to Spur Along Recovery

BATON ROUGE, La. - The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Louisiana hosted a two-day partnership meeting this week in Baton Rouge to discuss emergency preparedness and recovery issues, goals, objectives and policies among FEMA, the state and local governments. Participants came together to unify efforts and recognize strengths and weaknesses to maximize a successful recovery. The meeting served to break down communication barriers that may have impeded progress in the past and to generate a renewed sense of partnership among all leadership.

"I am very pleased with the results of the partnership meeting. We agreed to continue working together to find solutions that are legal, substantive and effective," FEMA Deputy Administrator Admiral Harvey Johnson said. "There are a lot of new people in important positions, and the combination of fresh eyes and experience from those with first-hand involvement presents an opportunity to think differently about breaking down barriers to recovery."

The increased communication provided resolutions in several critical areas, including an extension of the March 1, 2008 Hazard Mitigation application deadline to Sept. 1, 2008 and an agreement to establish a process that allows for discussion and resolution of many policy issues that will speed up the recovery process, in particular, a process to prioritize and streamline Public Assistance project worksheets. Also, FEMA committed to providing the state a decision on the development of an improved path forward for the appeals process within seven days and to creating a single project worksheet for applicants to hire personnel to conduct program/project management. Finally, the parties agreed to come together again to discuss progress on other outstanding issues within 30 days.

"Our focus in Louisiana is entirely on finding common sense solutions to speed the pace of payouts to local governments working to rebuild," said Executive Director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) Paul Rainwater. "I want to thank Deputy Administrator Johnson for devoting this time to having an honest discussion about ways to achieve this, and we look forward to working together to continue moving our recovery forward."

Other issues remaining to be resolved include such matters as identification and prioritization of applicants with project worksheet scope alignment issues, establishment of goals and milestones for revisiting the hazard mitigation portion of Public Assistance pursuant to Section 406 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and looking at a more efficient and practical approach to conducting Environmental and Historical property reviews. However, federal and state representatives involved in recovery efforts agreed to continue working together to find solutions that will help not only Louisiana recover, but also serve as a model for future disasters.

"As our communities deal with the hardships and the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we continue to build a strong working relationship with our federal and state partners," said Director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) Mark Cooper. "This meeting allowed federal and state partners to meet face to face to address the challenges that the state of Louisiana and its citizens face day to day, and come up with solutions to move forward in our recovery process."

Meeting participants included FEMA Deputy Administrator Admiral Harvey Johnson, Acting Associate Deputy Administrator for FEMA's Gulf Coast Recovery Office Jim Stark, LRA Executive Director Paul Rainwater, GOHSEP Director Mark Cooper, St. Tammany Parish President Kevin Davis, St. Bernard Parish President Craig Taffaro, Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser, Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach and representatives from the city of New Orleans, Cameron Parish and Jefferson Parish.

Office of State Planning Task Force Releases Report

BATON ROUGE, La. (February 19, 2008) - The task force charged with studying and making recommendations for the creation of a comprehensive Office of State Planning released its report to the Louisiana Legislature today. The Louisiana Legislature established the task force during the 2007 Regular Session. The creation of a group to make recommendations on this issue was a 2007 legislative priority of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA). The establishment of a coordinated State Office of Planning is a 2008 priority of Louisiana Speaks.

Among the report's recommendations are:

- The state planning office should be located within the executive branch and include oversight by a planning commission.
- The office should serve as a central repository for data and plans; provide technical support, including monitoring of local plan implementation and providing education and information about best practices; administer incentive and program funding to assist local governments and coordinate state planning efforts.
- The LRA should serve as an interim location for the housing and development of the Office of State Planning, with the LRA conducting a statewide capacity assessment and adjusting its staffing and budget to perform additional planning implementation activities

To download a copy of the report, [click here](#). The task force includes appointees from the Governor's Office, the Division of Administration, the LRA, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), the Police Jury Association, the Louisiana Municipal Association, the Louisiana Association of Planning and Development Districts, the Louisiana Chapter of the American Planning Association, the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) and Louisiana Speaks. The Legislature passed House Concurrent Resolution 29 by Rep. Cheryl Gray recommending the task force during the regular session of 2007. [Click here to read the resolution.](#)

State Develops Solutions to Louisiana Land Trust Issue

Data sharing agreement gives group additional access to closing documents

BATON ROUGE (February 20, 2008) - The Louisiana Land Trust (LLT) will now have access to additional closing documents from Road Home program properties it owns, thanks to a new data sharing agreement being finalized this week. Just days after the LLT's Executive Director Nadine Jarmon made a presentation to the Louisiana Recovery Authority's (LRA) board, the LRA, the Office of Community Development (OCD) and ICF International, the contractor that runs the Road Home program, completed a process that gives the LLT access to additional closing papers on properties it owns.

"At the LRA and the Office of Community Development, we're looking for quick, common sense solutions to issues that could hamper the state's recovery from the hurricanes," said LRA Executive Director Paul Rainwater. "The Louisiana Land Trust needed better access to information to be able to do its job and working together, we were able to iron out this wrinkle in the process."

When homeowners choose "Option 2" or "Option 3" under the Road Home program and sell their homes to the state, the LLT takes ownership of the properties. It is responsible for securing and maintaining the properties until it turns them over to parishes for redevelopment. Complete closing documents are necessary for the LLT to prove ownership, insure and maintain the correct properties and prevent residents from staying on a property after selling their homes to the LLT.

"We own properties in communities across the state until such time that we can turn them over to parishes for redevelopment, so having correct closing documents is critical to our mission," said Jarmon. "We want to be good neighbors to the many homeowners who chose to keep their homes, and this agreement helps us do that."

Parishes must present their plans for the properties from the LLT for review and approval by the LRA Board before the properties are made available to them for redevelopment. So far, the LRA has approved plans for Orleans and Jefferson parishes. All parish plans must be submitted and approved by June 2008. At its February meeting, the LRA Board approved an action plan that provides program guidance on the disposition of properties sold to the state through the Road Home program to the LLT. This action plan still needs approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

New Orleans Population Surpasses 300,000

A new report shows New Orleans' population has crossed the 300,000 mark. GCR & Associates estimate that the city's population was 302,191 as of February 1, 2008. That's a 43,000 person increase over the February 2007 population. GCR & Associates based its estimate on utility hookups. Demographers for the firm say about 2,000 people are moving back to the city each month. That compares to an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 people the city gained each month during most of last year. In July 2005, New Orleans' population was about 455,000 residents. Exceeding 300,000 residents restores New Orleans to a cohort of major cities, including Pittsburgh, Tampa, Anaheim and St. Louis. For more about GCR & Associates, visit <http://www.gcrprofessional.com/>.

DMR Seeks Input from Mississippi Commercial Fishermen Regarding Fisheries Recovery Projects

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Fisheries Office will receive \$25 million over the next five years to assist in the recovery of Mississippi's marine resources. Congress appropriated these funds to NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service as part of the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program II.

DMR Office of Marine Fisheries Director Dale Diaz said, "We would like to meet with Mississippi's commercial fishing community to make sure they have an opportunity to provide input on our proposed projects designed to monitor and restore our valuable marine resources, which took such a hard hit from Hurricane Katrina."

The purpose of the meetings was to get input from fishermen about the implementation of programs designed to study the recovery of Mississippi fisheries. Written comments were accepted through Feb. 29, 2008. Eligible fishermen (resident commercial license holders in either or both 2004-2005 and/or 2005-2006) are needed to assist the DMR in recovery and monitoring of Mississippi's Gulf Fisheries:

Shrimp: Commercial Shrimp Recovery Reporting and TED/BRD Compliance Program

Crab: Commercial Crab Recovery Reporting and Derelict Crab Trap Gear Removal (Licensed Crab Fishermen)

Oyster: Oyster relay and cultivation

Finfish: Fishery Recovery Reporting Commercial Hook and Line/Gig Fishermen

Contact the DMR Fisheries Office at (228) 374-5000 for more information.

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.

Realtors and Appraisers Can Earn Continuing Education Credits by Attending Smart Growth Conference

BILOXI, Miss.—Real estate agents and appraisers can earn 10 hours of continuing education credit by attending the ninth annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference (Smart Growth), May 5-6 at the Historic Saenger Theatre in Biloxi. 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's mission is to develop a plan to sustain Mississippi's coastal resources while providing a healthy economy in the region.

The Mississippi Real Estate Commission and the Mississippi Real Estate Appraiser Licensing and Certification Board have approved this conference as an elective Real Estate Course for 10 continuing education hours. Receipts will be provided to all other professions—such as, engineers, teachers and architects—to submit for credit to their respective organizations.

The multidisciplinary event draws elected officials, city and county staff, contractors, developers, bankers, planners, realtors, engineers, landowners, industry students, federal and state agencies, county boards of supervisors, lawyers, private and corporate entities, environmentalists, resource managers and others committed to rebuilding the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

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.

Harrison County to Receive More Than \$150,000 For Mitigation Plan

BILOXI, Miss. -- Harrison County will receive a federal grant of more than \$150,000 to invest in long-term solutions today that will reduce the toll from natural and manmade disasters tomorrow. The \$159,425 grant provides 75 percent of the total \$212,568 project cost which will assist Harrison County in updating their hazard mitigation plan that will be approved by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The county's updated plan will assess all natural hazards based upon best current available data, identify specific areas of vulnerability, assess existing local government capabilities to implement mitigation actions and projects, and outline strategies to reduce the impact of high risk hazards.

The results of this project will support the ongoing planning efforts of Harrison County by: creating mechanisms to generate public awareness and education of known hazards and to facilitate local-level participatory hazard mitigation planning; incorporating disaster prevention and risk reduction measures into ongoing long-term recovery and redevelopment programs; and developing a methodology for project identification, assessment and implementation, better preparing Harrison County and participating jurisdictions to submit eligible Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) projects to MEMA and FEMA that can result in measurable reductions to hazard vulnerability.

FEMA will provide the funding from the HMGP. HMGP funds are activated following a disaster declaration and based on a percentage of the estimated federal funding to be spent on Public and Individual Assistance programs. The HMGP can be used to fund projects to protect either public or private property, provided the project fits within the state's and local government's overall mitigation strategy and complies with HMGP guidelines.

The HMGP is administered by MEMA which identifies and manages the projects from beginning to closeout. The objectives of the HMGP are to reduce or eliminate future risk to lives and property from all hazards, provide funds to implement projects previously identified in state or local hazard mitigation plans, and enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

First Mississippi VOAD Conference

BILOXI, Miss. -- The Mississippi Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) annual conference kicked off Feb. 14. The two-day event marked the first time many Mississippi voluntary agencies gathered in one place to share ideas, exchange war stories, and prepare for the next disaster. More than 100 attendees listened to various speakers and participated in special seminars. Donald Powell, federal coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding, delivered the keynote address in which he saluted the attendees and their organizations.

"Any success achieved in the recovery effort is due to the spirit of volunteers and love for their fellow Americans," said Powell. "The rest of the world speaks not of the failure of government but the spirit of the volunteers who gave time and effort to help their fellow man."

Powell conducted a brief question and answer session where he addressed various issues, including the need for additional funding and new case managers, availability of mental health services, and resource availability for case managers. Jay Huffstatler, project manager of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation's Mississippi Hurricane Recovery Fund, spent six months coordinating the conference. "We're tremendously excited and overwhelmed by the response," said Huffstatler. "We received a lot of support from various agencies, including FEMA, to make this event a reality."

Other guest speakers included William Feist, emergency services director for the Salvation Army Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana region, Alec Watson, chief of staff for the FEMA Mississippi

Transitional Recovery Office, Mike Womack, director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, and Ken Skalitzky, FEMA Region IV Lead Voluntary Agency Liaison.

"The conference was a great opportunity to share experiences and spark conversation. We were able to interact and find ways to partner together for the future," said Sandra Braasch, director of disaster response for Lutheran Episcopal Services in Mississippi. "The speakers provided updates on current national events and insights into issues pertaining to volunteer agencies."

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

Texas Green Choices Grow with Energy Star Buildings

(Dallas, Texas – February 13, 2008) A total of 356 top-performing Texas buildings earned the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star for energy efficiency in 2007, leading to the most greenhouse gas reductions in the nation from Energy Star buildings.

The award-winning buildings save more than \$107 million annually in lower energy bills and prevent nearly 2 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions, which is equal to the emissions of more than 164,000 vehicles. "EPA is glad to see so many organizations making the choice to go green with Energy Star," said EPA Regional Administrator Richard E. Greene. "Energy Star buildings are America's energy all-stars – they save more, use less and protect the environment."

Nearly 4,100 buildings and manufacturing plants have earned the EPA's Energy Star through the end of 2007, with the addition of more than 1,400 in 2007 alone. In total, these commercial buildings and manufacturing plants have saved nearly \$1.5 billion annually in lower energy bills and prevented carbon dioxide emissions equal to the emissions associated with electricity use of more than 1.5 million American homes for a year, relative to typical buildings.

Energy use in commercial buildings and manufacturing plants accounts for nearly half of the total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 50 percent of energy consumption nationwide. Commercial buildings that have earned the Energy Star use nearly 40 percent less energy than average buildings and emit 35 percent less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, offering a significantly smaller carbon footprint.

EPA has worked with businesses and organizations for more than a decade to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through strategic energy management practices. The number of commercial buildings and manufacturing plants to earn the Energy Star for superior energy efficiency is up by more than 25 percent in the past year, and the amount of carbon dioxide emissions reduced has reached an all-time high of more than 25 billion pounds.

EPA started the Energy Star program in 1992. Energy Star is a government-backed program that helps businesses and consumers protect the environment through superior energy efficiency. To qualify for the Energy Star label, a building or manufacturing plant must score in the top 25 percent using EPA's National Energy Performance Rating System.

The complete list of [Energy Star buildings](http://www.energystar.gov/LabeledList) in Texas is available at <http://www.energystar.gov/LabeledList>. To learn more about activities in [EPA Region 6](http://www.epa.gov/region6/), go to <http://www.epa.gov/region6/>.

Patterson Resolves Dispute Over Conn Brown Harbor

AUSTIN — Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson and Aransas Pass Mayor Tommy Knight today signed documents transferring title of Conn Brown Harbor to Aransas Pass, lifting a cloud that has hung over the harbor's title for more than 63 years.

“Working together, we have been able to resolve a problem that's lingered over this harbor for a lifetime now,” Patterson said. “Fixing this should create many opportunities for Aransas Pass as we move forward together.”

The controversy over the ownership of Conn Brown Harbor began in 1944, when Land Commissioner Bascom Giles gave away 9,644 acres of Permanent School Fund land to the city of Aransas Pass with Special Award No.1. The trouble was, Giles — the first elected state official ever to serve prison time for crimes committed while in office — didn't have constitutional authority to simply give away state property.

Over the years, city officials developed the property, built an airport on it and leased out the land. But in 1998, Texas Attorney General John Cornyn, now a U.S. senator, ruled the harbor still belonged to the state. But city officials continued to lease the property and little changed, other than city officials and land commissioners. The unsettled ownership of Conn Brown Harbor hindered its commercial development.

After years of negotiations, former State Rep. Gene Seaman authored legislation (HB 1740) to facilitate a land trade between four state-owned tracts and one city-owned tract in 2005.

Negotiations that followed between city officials and Patterson began in 2006 and culminated with a deal tentatively reached in January 2007. Terms of that agreement call for the city of Aransas Pass to pay the Land Office \$6 million and trade 89 acres of city-owned land for four tracts in Conn Brown Harbor, including the old airport site.

The Land Office recognized the value of extensive work done to build a concrete bulkhead around the perimeter of the harbor and credited the city for \$1.4 million for the value of the bulkhead. The Land Office staff also negotiated a credit toward environmental clean up with the understanding that the Land Office would receive full indemnification from any environmental liability. “This is a good day for Aransas Pass,” Knight said. “Commissioner Patterson and his staff made this complex land purchase much easier than expected. Their professionalism is to be commended.

Winter Texans Haul Nearly 3 Tons of Trash Off South Padre Island

AUSTIN — A total of 150 volunteers enjoyed warm temperatures and plenty of sunshine while hauling more than 5,200 pounds of trash off South Padre Island beaches Saturday at the 11th Annual Texas General Land Office Winter Texan Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup.

At Edwin Atwood Park, on South Padre Island, volunteers from Canada, Minnesota, Illinois, Montana, Michigan, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Missouri, Gordonville near Lake Texoma, and students from the University of Texas Pan American in McAllen, Texas, as well as students from Carlos F. Truan Jr.

High in Elsa, Texas started the morning early with donuts donated by H-E-B and orange juice donated by Sam's Club.

Among the items found on South Padre Island were a \$1 bill, plastic toy flags, underwear, a hypodermic needle, a Spiderman T-shirt, a Home Depot shirt from Mexico, a golf ball, a house key, a full bottle of Budweiser beer, a CD and part of a cell phone.

The Winter Texan Beach Cleanup is one of three all-volunteer seasonal cleanups coordinated through the Adopt-A-Beach Program of the Texas General Land Office. The next cleanup will be the Spring Adopt-A-Beach effort, set for Saturday, April 26th, 2008.

Texas beaches receive large amounts of marine debris due to a convergence of currents in the Gulf of Mexico. Since 1986, more than 365,000 Adopt-A-Beach volunteers have picked up more than 6,900 tons of this debris, some of it originating from as far away as South America. Volunteers record data on the trash to learn more about the causes of marine debris and to help mitigate pollution along Texas' 367 miles of coastline. For additional information on the Winter Texan Beach Cleanup and the Adopt-A-Beach Program, visit www.texasadoptabeach.org, or contact the GLO at 1-877-TXCOAST.

2 Tons of Trash Hauled Off During Winter Cleanup

AUSTIN — A total of 166 volunteers hauled more than two tons of trash off Coastal Bend beaches Saturday, making the Fourth Annual Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Winter Cleanup a big success. Dedicated volunteers picked up 4,600 pounds of litter from 17 miles of area beaches. The 4th Annual Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Winter Cleanup took place at three sites in the Coastal Bend area. Sites participating in this year's event were Aransas Pass – Redfish Bay/Conn Brown Harbor, Corpus Christi Beach at the Texas State Aquarium, and at the Padre Island National Seashore.

The day began with cloudy skies and unseasonably mild temperatures. With the threat of a cold front approaching later that afternoon, volunteers were able to remove the unsightly trash before it reached the Gulf of Mexico.

Some of the more unusual items found this year were shotgun shells, two fiberglass boat doors, a plastic cell phone toy, railroad tracks, rebar, a buoy and a channel marker sign. Participants in this year's event were from area schools and youth groups. Some of the volunteers were lending a hand to complete community service hours for school while others just wanted to show they care about Texas beaches. All were committed to keeping Texas beaches and bays clean of debris. For additional information on the Winter Texan Beach Cleanup and the Adopt-A-Beach Program, visit www.texasadoptabeach.org, or contact the GLO at 1-877-TXCOAST.

Sites Announced for Crab Trap Clean-Up Feb. 15-24

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Coastal Fisheries Division officials have announced drop-off sites for the 7th Texas Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program, running this year from Feb. 15-24. During this 10-day period, all Texas bays will be closed to crabbing with crab traps and any traps left in the bay will be presumed to be abandoned and considered litter under state law, thus allowing volunteers to legally remove any crab traps they find.

Volunteers are needed to assist in the coast-wide effort to remove the numerous wire mesh cages used to catch crabs that have been lost or abandoned since last year's cleanup and in years past. To facilitate volunteer trap removal efforts this year, TPWD staff has designated sites in each of the eight major bay systems for trap collection.

Areas that are relatively free of abandoned traps will have stand-alone sites with dumpsters marked for trap removal. In other areas where more effort is needed, sites will be manned until noon on Saturday, Feb. 16, weather permitting, and have stand-alone dumpsters for the duration of the closure. For those who choose to work on their own, TPWD requests information about the number of traps that are collected.

Volunteers can work at their own pace during the closure as time and weather permit, but cannot remove traps before Feb. 15 or after Feb. 24. Any crabs found in the traps must be set free. Last year, volunteers with the aid of numerous sponsors removed more than 2,000 traps. To participate, volunteers can pick up free tarps, gloves, trap hooks and additional information at each of the sites or their local TPWD Coastal Fisheries Field Stations.

Free Coastal Expos Set for Marble Falls and Edinburg

AUSTIN, Texas — The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will host five Coastal Expos for the public, beginning with events at Johnson Park in Marble Falls March 6-8 and at Edinburg Municipal Park in Edinburg March 13-14. Coastal Expos are free, interactive events that seek to increase public awareness of the importance of Texas ecosystems and the ways in which people can protect them. Visitors will have the opportunity to interact with live crabs, fish and other coastal animals, while learning about freshwater inflows, coastal conservation issues and beach habitats.

Activities include touch tanks with a wide variety of live coastal animals, such as sea urchins, sea squirts, crabs and other sea life. At the glass-bottom stream, visitors will learn about animals' natural habitats and how bugs can indicate pollution levels in water.

Participants will also have an opportunity to solve a mysterious fish kill, paint images of coastal fish and identify beach objects by touch. They will also learn about fishing and boating safety through a variety of fun and educational devices.

See below for an upcoming expo in your area:

March 6-8 — Marble Falls at Johnson Park

March 13-14 — Edinburg at Edinburg Municipal Park

April 26 — Bay City at the Matagorda County Birding Nature Center, as part of the Earth Week Fair

May 17 — Galveston Bay at the Kemah Boardwalk, as part of Galveston Bay Foundation's Bay Day

July 4-15 — Freeport at the Freeport Municipal Park, as part of the Fishing Fiesta

For more information or to volunteer for any of these events contact Kris Shipman at (512) 912-7037 or Kris.Shipman@tpwd.state.tx.us. No previous experience is necessary. Volunteers can be taught everything needed at the event.

On the Net:

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/conservation/coastalexpo/>

Other News

Secretary Kempthorne Announces Proposal to Remove the Brown Pelican from the Endangered Species List

February 8, 2008

BATON ROUGE, La – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today celebrated the brown pelican’s remarkable recovery from the brink of extinction by formally proposing to remove the remaining protected populations of the bird along the Gulf and Pacific coasts, and in the Caribbean, and Central and South America from protection under the Endangered Species Act. Kempthorne announced the proposal at the Louisiana Governor’s Mansion in Baton Rouge during a joint appearance with Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal.

“Thanks to decades of coordinated efforts on the part of state and federal agencies, conservation organizations and private landowners, the pelican has rebounded to historic levels,” said Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne. “I’d like to thank Governor Jindal and the State of Louisiana for their contributions to the pelican’s recovery and for inviting me here to mark this milestone in conservation history.”

Kempthorne also noted that the pelican’s recovery is due in large measure to the federal ban on the general use of the pesticide DDT in 1972, after former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* and alerted the nation to the dangers of unrestricted pesticide use. “The brown pelican is known for its fishing displays, plunging headlong from the air into the water and rising with a mouthful of fish. In the same dramatic fashion, the pelican has pulled off an amazing recovery after a steep plunge toward extinction,” said Kempthorne. “There are now more than 620,000 brown pelicans found across Florida and the Gulf and Pacific Coasts of our nation, as well as in the Caribbean and Latin America.”

Louisiana, long known as the “pelican state,” has been a key partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in efforts to recover the pelican in the Gulf Coast region. For example, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission jointly implemented a restoration project. A total of 1,276 young pelicans were captured at sites in Florida and released at three sites in southeastern Louisiana during the 13 years of the project.

"The mechanism put in place to protect these birds and the dedicated people on the ground who brought them back from the brink of extinction demonstrate how ecosystem protection does make a difference," said Robert Barham, secretary of the Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries. "Over 350,000 brown pelicans have been produced in Louisiana since 1971."

Efforts to protect the brown pelican led to the birth of the National Wildlife Refuge System more than a century ago in central Florida, where a German immigrant named Paul Kroegel became appalled by the indiscriminate slaughter of pelicans for their feathers. His impassioned pleas to President Theodore Roosevelt led Roosevelt to create the first National Wildlife Refuge at Pelican Island in 1903 and name Kroegel its first refuge manager. More than a century later, there are 548 national wildlife refuges, many of which have played key roles in the brown pelican’s recovery.

In the southwest, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, The Nature Conservancy and numerous other conservation organizations helped purchase important nesting sites and develop monitoring programs to ensure pelican rookeries were thriving. Other habitat protection and restoration efforts within the U.S., Mexico, and some Central and South American countries have also contributed to the pelican's recovery. "Exactly 24 years ago this week, we celebrated the recovery of brown pelicans on the Atlantic coast," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall. "The legal protections provided by the Endangered Species Act, coupled with the banning of DDT in 1972, provided the means for the Service and its partners to accelerate the pelican's recovery. State wildlife agencies, universities, private ornithological groups and individuals participated in reintroduction efforts and helped protect nest sites during the breeding season."

If the brown pelican is removed from the list of threatened and endangered species, federal agencies would not be required to consult with the Service to ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out will avoid or minimize harm to the species. Other federal laws, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act, would continue to protect the brown pelican, its nests and its eggs from harm should the bird be removed from Endangered Species Act protection.

Further, the Service is working with state natural resource agencies where the brown pelican occurs to develop cooperative management agreements to ensure that the species continues to be monitored and protected should it be removed from the endangered species list. The Endangered Species Act also requires the Service to work with the state natural resource agencies to monitor the population and threats to the species for a minimum of five years after it is delisted. Should the population numbers decrease or the threats to pelicans change, brown pelicans can be relisted under the Endangered Species Act. The brown pelican was first declared endangered in 1970 under the Endangered Species Conservation Act, a precursor to the current Endangered Species Act. The brown pelican in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and northward along the Atlantic Coast states was removed from the list of endangered species in 1985. There are now more than 620,000 brown pelicans found across Florida and the Gulf and Pacific Coasts of our nation, as well as the Caribbean and Latin America. Today's proposal would remove Endangered Species Act protection from all remaining protected populations of brown pelicans.

The proposal to remove the bird from the list of threatened and endangered species will be published in the Federal Register. The Service will seek comments on the proposal for 60 days following publication. Comments may be submitted by hand-delivery or mail to the Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AV28, Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222, Arlington, VA 22203. Comments may also be submitted electronically on the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Energy

State Awards Grants for Renewable Energy Technologies

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Charles H. Bronson and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole today announced the recipients of Florida's renewable energy technologies grants. Part of DEP's Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program, \$12.5 million in grant funding was awarded to eight organizations to stimulate capital investment in the state and promote and enhance the statewide utilization of renewable energy technologies, including ethanol, bioenergy, solar and wind.

“We believe that awards such as these are critical in triggering the development of a renewable energy industry in Florida,” Commissioner Bronson said. “With the backing of and an investment from the state, we’re hopeful that these projects will yield positive results and serve as a catalyst for major commercial investment in this industry.”

DEP received 139 grant proposals seeking more than \$200 million in grant funding and providing almost \$700 million in cost share for renewable energy projects. The proposals, which include technologies such as biomass, solar and hydrogen, were evaluated by the state based on a number of different criteria: cost share percentage; economic development; technical feasibility; innovative technology; production potential; energy efficiency; fostering awareness; project management; duration and timeline; located served; public integration; and incorporation of multiple technologies.

“Through targeted incentives like the Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program, Florida is stimulating economic development in the renewable and alternative energy fields,” said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. “By investing in cutting-edge technologies, Florida is exploring strategies to ensure a stronger economy as well as help prevent pollution and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

In 2007, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$12.5 million for the Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program, providing funding for projects that generate or utilize renewable energy resources, including hydrogen, biomass and solar energy. Since the creation of the Florida Energy Act in 2006, a total of \$27.5 million has been appropriated for the Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program.

In addition to the Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program, the Florida Legislature created the “Farm to Fuel” Grants Program to provide matching grants for projects that promote the production and distribution of renewable energy from Florida-grown crops, agricultural wastes and residues, and other biomass. As part of the program and with DEP’s input, twelve grants totaling \$25 million were awarded last month to stimulate investment in projects that will enhance the value of agriculture products and expand agribusiness in the State.

Last summer, Governor Charlie Crist signed a set of executive orders to reduce Florida’s greenhouse gases emissions, increase energy efficiency, and remove market barriers for renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind energy. In the months since the executive orders were signed, Florida has stepped onto the world stage as a major marketplace for advanced energy technologies. Just last month, the Governor announced a \$200 million energy and economic development budget recommendation that builds on the policy framework of the Governor’s executive orders, focusing on increasing energy efficiency, stimulating development of renewable sources of energy, and using markets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information about the Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/energy. For more information on Florida’s climate change initiatives, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange.

Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change Begins Phase Two of Florida's Action Plan

TALLAHASSEE – The Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change convened today to begin developing Phase Two of the action plan. The Action Team is charged with creating and evaluating comprehensive actions to achieve reduction targets for greenhouse gas reductions specified in Executive Order 07-127. The Phase Two report, due October 1, will focus on mitigating impacts to society, public health, the economy and the environment created by greenhouse gas emissions from new growth.

At today's meeting, Action Team Chairman Michael W. Sole, Secretary of Florida Department of Environmental Protection, introduced the Center for Climate Strategies as facilitators for the Phase Two process. The Center is a nonprofit organization that works with public officials and stakeholders to identify, design, and implement policies that address climate mitigation, clean energy, and economic development opportunities. Currently, the Center is working in 16 states to build consensus and develop comprehensive action plans.

"Meeting Florida's growing energy needs while reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases is one of the most important issues we face today," said Action Team Chairman Sole. "By having the Center for Climate Strategies facilitating this important stakeholder dialogue on climate change, we can ensure that the people of Florida will continue to enjoy the natural landscape and the quality of life we all enjoy."

The Action Team, with the Center for Climate Strategies, is creating a facilitated stakeholder process to form Technical Work Groups operating alongside the Action Team during Phase Two. Building on and completing the Phase One report and framework of recommendations that was delivered to Governor Crist on November 1, 2007, the Action Team and Technical Work Groups will explore carbon capture and storage technologies and coordinate a long-term public policy focused on reducing greenhouse gases in areas of economic development, university-based research and development (R&D), energy, environmental protection, growth management and transportation. The six groups will report back in future months to address cap and trade design; electric supply and demand issues; transportation and land use; agriculture, forestry and waste management; government policy coordination; and adaptation. "By creating the Technical Work Groups, the Action Team will receive full and thorough input and guidance from wide range of stakeholders," said Chairman Sole. "Partnering experts from various industries with the members of the Action Team, we can shape Florida's climate change strategies with consensus-based policy solutions."

The Action Team received public comment at today's meeting about proceedings to date and the facilitated process. Further public comment can be provided electronically to actionteam@dep.state.fl.us. To sign up for free email alerts about Florida's current climate change activities, see the presentations from the meetings, or for more information, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange.

Gov. Jindal's Executive Order Address State Government's Energy, Conservation Needs

BATON ROUGE – Governor Bobby Jindal's executive order No. BJ-2008-8 comes at a time when the public is becoming more aware of environmental issues such as global warming, recycling and energy efficiency. This executive order, issued on Jan. 30, calls for state government to take unprecedented strides in energy efficiency and environmental awareness.

An example of environmental advancement laid out in the order requires the Division of Administration to “set energy-efficiency goals for state facilities, office buildings or complexes for Fiscal Years 2009, 2010 and 2011 by July 30, 2008. I further direct the Division of Administration and state agencies to use all existing statutory authority in implementing measures to achieve these goals.”

DEQ Secretary Harold Leggett said the order goes a long way toward improving the environment. “This is what I like to call ‘leadership by example,’” Leggett said. “If the state wants private citizens and industry to take necessary steps in protecting the environment, then state agencies should be leading the way.

With the order, the executive branch of state government is prepared to make changes, to be more energy efficient and to be a leader in environmental causes.” The order also directs agencies to adopt programs to reduce solid waste and to rely less on paper, to develop fuel economy goals for the state fleet of vehicles and to develop business practices to purchase energy efficient products such as light bulbs and smart chargers. The entire order can be found at www.deq.louisiana.gov.

MMS Proposes Bonus or Royalty Credits for Relinquishing Eligible Leases

Certain Leases Offshore Florida Eligible for Credit Exchange for Use in Gulf of Mexico

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) is proposing to amend its regulations to provide a credit to lessees who relinquish certain eligible leases in the Gulf of Mexico. The amended regulations will also define the eligible leases and establish how those credits may be used. This proposed rule for oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf was mandated by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006.

The Act mandated that there be a moratorium on oil and gas leasing and any related activity in any part of the Eastern Planning Area that is within 125 miles of the coastline of the State of Florida and a portion of the Central Planning Area that is within 100 miles of the coastline of Florida. It also allowed for the exchange of existing leases in these areas for bonus or royalty credit to be used for leases in the Gulf of Mexico.

“We are confident that these amendments to the regulations will allow for an efficient exchange of the leases for credit and help to promote the oil and gas operators' continued development of energy production in the Gulf of Mexico,” said MMS Director Randall Luthi.

The [proposed rule](#) would provide a credit equal to the bonus bid originally paid plus subsequent rental payments to lessees who relinquish leases within the specified areas. Lessees may also use the credits in lieu of monetary payment for either a lease bonus bid or royalty due on oil and gas production from most

other leases in the Gulf of Mexico or transfer the credits to other parties for use as bonus bid or royalty payments due on most Gulf of Mexico leases.

MMS is accepting comments on the proposed rule for the next 60 days. Comments must be identified with RIN 1010-AD44 in the subject line, and will be accepted via one of the following methods through April 1, 2008: Federal eRulemaking Portal, Mail, or hand-carry

Minerals Management Service
Attention: Regulations and Standards Branch (RSB)
381 Elden Street, MS-4024
Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817
Media Contact:

[Eileen Angelico](#) 504-736-2595

[Nicolette Nye](#) 703-787-1011

Grant Opportunities

U.S. EPA, Gulf of Mexico Program Request for Proposals

Federal Agency Name: U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Gulf of Mexico Program Office

Funding Opportunity Title: Gulf of Mexico Alliance Regional Partnership Projects

Announcement Type: Request for Proposals

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 66.475- Gulf of Mexico Program

www.cfda.gov.

Solicitation Number: EPA-GM-2008-1

Dates: The deadline for submissions is **March 15, 2008, 6 pm CST**. Proposals must be submitted electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. For those applicants who lack the technical capability to apply through Grants.gov, please contact Esther Coblentz at (228) 688-1281 and/or coblentz.esther@epa.gov for an alternative submission method. All proposals received after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding. For further information, see Section IV.

Funding Opportunity Description: An estimated amount of up to \$3,000,000 for between approximately ten to fifty cooperative agreements may be awarded under this announcement to eligible applicants for projects that improve the health of the Gulf of Mexico by addressing improved water quality and public health, priority coastal habitat protection/recovery, more effective coastal environmental education, improved habitat identification/characterization data and decision support systems, and strategic nutrient reductions. Projects must actively involve stakeholders and focus on support and implementation of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts.

<http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/pdf/gom-alliance-regional-partnership-projects-funding-announcement.pdf>

NOAA Restoration Center Partnerships for Habitat Restoration

TNC-NOAA Community-based Habitat Restoration Grants

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are pleased to [request proposals](#) for their restoration matching grants program. This program is part of a national cooperative agreement between TNC's Global Marine Team and the NOAA Restoration Center.

The objective of NOAA's and TNC's Community-based Restoration Programs (CRP) is to bring together citizens, public and non-profit organizations, watershed groups, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, and local government, state, and Federal agencies to implement habitat restoration projects to benefit NOAA trust resources (anadromous, estuarine, and marine species and their habitats). This innovative program recognizes the significant role that partnerships can play in making habitat restoration happen within communities, and acknowledges that habitat restoration is often best implemented through technical and monetary support provided at a community level. (For more information visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/> or <http://www.nature.org/initiatives/marine/strategies/community.html>).

Proposal Requirements and Submission: Specifications for TNC-NOAA Community based Habitat Restoration Grants are detailed in the following pages. Proposals are due by March 28, 2008 by e-mail (preferred), or by hard copy to: Boze Hancock, TNC-NOAA National Partnership Coordinator bhancock@tnc.org (electronic submission is preferred)

The Nature Conservancy Global Marine Initiative
University of Rhode Island Narragansett Bay Campus
South Ferry Road
Narragansett, RI 02882-1197

For questions about the grants program or proposals please contact Boze Hancock, TNC-NOAA National Partnership Coordinator at 401-874-6121 (phone), or bhancock@tnc.org (email).

Coastal Counties Restoration Initiative

The National Association of Counties (NACo) in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Community-Based Restoration Program (CRP), is pleased to announce the second year of funding for the *Coastal Counties Restoration Initiative (CCRI)*. The initiative provides financial assistance on a competitive basis to innovative, high quality county-led or supported projects. In 2008, CCRI will provide \$500,000 in grants to improve stream, river, estuarine and other important marine habitats.

Grants that are community-based in nature and willing to work in partnership with NOAA will be given special consideration, as NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program is providing major financial support for this partnership. A priority area for CCRI is the removal of fish passage barriers in coastal streams and rivers. Grants will range from \$50,000-\$100,000, based upon need.

"NACo is very pleased that our partnership with NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program will expand to bring additional resources to coastal counties," said NACo President Eric Coleman, commissioner, Oakland County, Mich. "Our nation's coastal environment provides tremendous benefits. Counties across the country are leading many critical efforts to restore these resources, and NACo is proud that this new program will bolster county-led efforts."

The *Coastal Counties Restoration Initiative* will encourage innovative, county projects that restore important marine and coastal habitats. In addition, it will develop the capacity of county governments, citizens groups and other organizations to conduct community-based restoration that will enhance local watershed-based resource management and promote stewardship.

"NOAA, in partnership with the National Association of Counties, helps restore coastal and river habitat for fish, shellfish, birds and other animals. This work improves the environment and benefits the economies of local communities," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., NOAA administrator and under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere.

CCRI is currently accepting applications. **The deadline for applications is March 24, 2008. For more information and to access the full RFP and application instructions, visit www.naco.org/techassistance under "Water Resource Management", call 202-942-4246 or email ccri@naco.org.**

Training and Conferences

Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network Strategic Planning for the Next Five Years

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network will host a series of meetings to help identify priorities for the next five years. For more information contact Lee Yokel at lyokel@disl.org.

Tuesday, March 4, 2008, 10AM - 3PM

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program: Nicholls State, Thibideaux, Louisiana

Tuesday, March 11, 2008 1PM to 4PM

AL Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Coastal Section: Five Rivers Delta Center, Spanish Fort, AL

Wednesday, March 19, 2008 1PM to 5PM

Florida Aquarium: Tampa, Florida

Thursday, March 27, 2008

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve: Naples, Florida

Wednesday, April 2, 2008 1PM to 5PM

Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, Northern Gulf Institute: Biloxi, Mississippi

Tuesday, April 8, 2008 1PM to 5PM

Texas State Aquarium: Corpus Christi, Texas

Thursday, April 10, 2008 1PM to 5PM

Flower Garden Banks Marine Sanctuary: Galveston, Texas

2008 Ocean Sciences Meeting

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

Dates: March 2-7, 2008

Location: Orlando, Florida, USA

Contact Information: Email: orlando2008@sgmeet.com

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

Gulf of Mexico Alliance Regional Sediment Management Workshop

The Gulf Regional Sediment Management Master Plan (GRSMMP) working group led by Larry Parson, COE, with the assistance of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation is organizing a workshop on GRSMMP Ecological Considerations as part of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan. The main focus of the workshop is intended to develop an approach that considers the ecological processes that are affected whenever and wherever RSM is being implemented. Rafael Calderon with The Nature Conservancy and Carl Ferraro with the Alabama Department of Natural Resources are the co-chairs of the Ecological Considerations Focus Group. The workshop will bring together representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations throughout the Gulf of Mexico to continue the coordinated restoration efforts in support of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governor's Action Plan.

The meeting is scheduled for **March 25 and 26, 2008, at Le Pavillon Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana.** The schedule for Day 1 is to start at 8:00 a.m. and end around 4:15 p.m. On Day 2, the full meeting will run from 8:30 a.m. to around 2:30 p.m. A block of rooms has been reserved at Le Pavillon under "Gulf of Mexico Foundation—GRSMMP Group." The rate is \$131 for a single, which is the Federal Government per diem rate. Doubles are available at \$151. The hotel is located at Poydras at Baronne. You may make your reservations by calling 1-504-581-3111 or 1-800-535-9095. Please note that reservations must be made by the cutoff date of March 3, 2008.

Contact: Larry E. Parson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District
Larry.E.Parson@usace.army.mil or (251) 690-3139

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.

Gulf of Mexico Resilience Working Group to Meet March 31-April 2

The GOMA Resilience Working Group will meet March 31 - April 2 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The group will be revisiting the activities/projects prioritized at the December meeting. The meeting will also highlight a variety of resilience-related efforts in the state of Louisiana. For more information contact Heidi Recksiek at Heidi.Recksiek@noaa.gov or Michele Deshotels at Michele.Deshotels@la.gov.

Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting 2008

The University of Texas Marine Science Institute (UTMSI) is pleased to announce the annual Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting (TBEM) for 2008. The meeting will occur in Port Aransas, Texas. It will focus on work being done in the bays, estuaries and near-shore Gulf of Mexico. The meeting provides an opportunity for scientists working in the Texas coastal zone to share information, results and insights into our diverse coastal environment. Both natural and social science research is welcome. There will be awards for the best student presentations.

Dates: April 16-17, 2008

Location: Port Aransas, Texas

Early Registration Deadline: April 4, 2008

Abstract/Proposal Submission Deadline: April 4, 2008

Contact Information: Tracy Villareal, University of Texas Marine Science Institute
t.villareal@mail.utexas.edu or 361-816-2525

Home Page URL: <http://www.utmsi.utexas.edu/>

28th Conference on Hurricanes and Tropical Meteorology

The 28th Conference on Hurricanes and Tropical Meteorology, sponsored by the American Meteorological Society (AMS) and organized by the AMS Committee on Tropical Meteorology and Tropical Cyclones, will be held **28 April – 2 May 2008**, at the Wyndham Orlando Resort, 8001 International Drive, Orlando, Florida 32819, USA.

Papers are solicited on all aspects of tropical meteorology and oceanography, including convection, tropical cyclones, intraseasonal variability, monsoons, air-sea interaction, climate observing systems and prediction. Several special sessions are planned:

- “Advances in Remote Sensing of Tropical Cyclones” will focus on the latest and planned advances in monitoring of tropical cyclones from all types of remote sensing platforms, including satellites, aircraft and ground-based sensors.
- “Forecast Uncertainties in the Tropics” will address the issue of predictability at all space and time scales with respect to various tropical weather phenomena, with particular focus on ensemble prediction systems, probabilistic forecasting methods and communicating uncertainties to forecast users.
- “Modulation of Tropical Cyclones by Large-Scale Patterns” aims to assemble expertise in tropical cyclones, the Madden-Julian Oscillation, ENSO, and related topics.
- Special sessions are also planned to focus on initial results of recent field programs including RAINEX, TCSP, AMMA and IFEX.
- A special program will also be presented to honor Dr. Yoshio Kurihara and Dr. K. Vic Ooyama, two pioneers in hurricane modeling that recently passed away.

Location: Orlando, Florida, USA

Dates: April 28 - May 2, 2008

Abstract/Proposal Submission Deadline: November 15, 2007

Contact Information: Richard Knabb, Program Chairperson, National Hurricane Center

Email: richard.knabb@noaa.gov or 305-229-4487

Home Page URL: <http://www.ametsoc.org/meet/fainst/200828Hurricane.html>

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