

# Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

## May 2008

<i>NOAA Gulf of Mexico News</i> .....	4
<b>NOAA Teams Up With Local Experts to Restore Alabama Shorelines</b> .....	4
<b>Draft Revised Recovery Plan for the Northwest Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle Available for Review</b> .....	5
<b>NOAA Announces Funding to Support Ocean Observing Along the Gulf Coast</b> .....	6
<b>NOAA Predicts Near Normal or Above Normal Atlantic Hurricane Season</b> .....	7
<b>NOAA to Honor National Leaders in Sustainable Fisheries</b> .....	8
<b>New NOAA Ocean Observing System in Pascagoula Aids Mariners; Keeps Shipping Safe</b> .....	10
<b>“Excellent” Children’s Activity Book Brings NOAA Outreach to Louisiana</b> .....	11
<b>NOS Assists Texas in Addressing Unusual Harmful Algal Bloom</b> .....	11
<b>Detection and Communication of Harmful Algal Bloom Assists Texas Coastal Managers</b> .....	11
<i>Other NOAA News</i> .....	12
<b>NOAA Reminds Beachgoers That Rip Currents Can Be a Threat</b> .....	12
<b>Jason-2 Satellite Data to Help NOAA Track Global Sea Level</b> .....	13
<b>NOAA Reports Coastal Waters Show Decline in Contaminants</b> .....	14
<b>MPA Center Unveils Online Marine Protected Areas Inventory</b> .....	15
<b>Knowledge of Invasive Species Distribution Enhanced through Integration of NOAA and USGS Web-Accessible Databases</b> .....	15
<b>CICEET Awards \$2.8 Million to Improve Coastal Planning</b> .....	15
<b>Plans to Update Coastal Zone Management Act Program Change Procedures</b> .....	16
<i>In the Gulf States</i> .....	16
<b>ADEM Provides Water Quality Monitoring at Public Beaches</b> .....	16
<b>Alabama Emergency Management System Achieves National Accreditation</b> .....	17

Alabama Tourism Up 10 Percent to \$9.3 Billion .....	17
State Archaeology Web Site Allows Visitors to Dive into Florida’s Shipwreck Parks Without Getting Wet .....	18
Florida Governor’s Action Team on Energy and Climate Change Considers Policy Recommendations for Final Report.....	19
Florida Recognizes National Beach Safety Week .....	20
Florida DEP Launches Green Travel Web Site.....	21
Trail Leads Visitors through Louisiana's African-American Heritage.....	22
FEMA Awards Louisiana \$96.5 Million to Elevate Homes .....	22
Film Demonstrates Hurricane Impacts .....	23
Minerals Management Service Awards \$18 Million Grant to Louisiana for Coastal Restoration. ....	24
LRA Reactivates Task Force Aimed at Long-term Needs of Southwest Louisiana .....	24
State Approves \$125 Million in Community Recovery Projects for New Orleans .....	25
DMR Receives Keep Mississippi Beautiful Award for 2007 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup.....	26
Governor Barbour Announces Additional Matching Funds for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.....	26
From Ideas to Bricks - Hancock County and FEMA Long Term Community Recovery .....	27
Mississippi DMR, Partners Launch Fishing Line Recycling Program.....	30
Work Begins on Surfside Shoreline Protection Project in Texas.....	30
Texas Sea Grant Offers Electronic Guide to Texas Marinas, Services .....	31
Donations, Angler Dollars Help Achieve Texas’ Shrimp Buyback Goals .....	32
Oyster Research Initiative .....	33
<i>Energy</i> .....	35
MMS Incorporates Revenue Sharing Rules.....	35
The Multipurpose Marine Cadastre (MMC) is Now Available Online.....	35
<i>Other News</i> .....	36
Improved Monitoring and Prevention Keeping Beachgoers Better Protected .....	36
EPA Launches New Multilingual Websites in Korean and Vietnamese .....	37
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Critical Habitat Designation for the Alabama Sturgeon .....	37
Experts Say U.S. Coasts and Estuaries Contribute Billions to Economy, but Much is at Risk.....	39
<i>Grant Opportunities</i> .....	41
EPA to Award \$4.2 Million to Reduce Hypoxic Zone .....	41
Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Request for Proposals for FY 2009 .....	41

<b>Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program- Louisiana Request for Proposals for FY 2009 .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b><i>Training and Conferences</i> .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Coastal Community Planning and Development Training .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Southeast Regional Quality Growth Conference .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Presenters Invited to Participate in Coastal Symposium .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan Implementation and Integration Workshop ...</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>GIS Training Workshops .....</b>	<b>45</b>

## NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

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### ***NOAA Teams Up With Local Experts to Restore Alabama Shorelines***

NOAA has announced plans to invest \$1 million over three years to help restore Alabama's Mobile Bay, partnering with local organizations and citizens to reverse the loss of wetlands caused by coastal development. As part of an innovative restoration practice called "Living Shorelines," [NOAA's Restoration Center](#) will work with a number of organizations including the University of South Alabama, the Association of National Estuary Programs, and Mobile Bay National Estuary Program to use natural techniques to reduce coastal erosion, improve water quality, and prevent future damage from boat wake, storms, and climate change.

"This effort in Mobile Bay demonstrates that by working together, we can make a difference in the fight against shoreline erosion," said Navy Vice Adm. [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. "Habitat restoration gives our coasts a fighting chance against ever-increasing threats, making them more resilient and resistant to dramatic change."

In the past, shorelines were typically stabilized with hardened structures, such as bulkheads and seawalls, to prevent or minimize coastal erosion. However, scientists have found that these structures can actually increase the rate of coastal degradation. Waves reflect off the hardened structures, scouring the area in front of the wall and causing additional shoreline erosion. Bulkheads and seawalls also block tidal water flow to coastal wetlands, as well as hamper natural flood control, water treatment potential, and access for juvenile fish to their nursery habitat.

Living Shorelines offer a variety of natural techniques to stabilize and restore wetlands. Some of these methods include the strategic placement of native vegetation, sand, and other organic materials, including submerged oyster reefs. Wetlands and offshore reefs reduce the force of waves naturally, preventing coastal erosion and protecting important areas near the shoreline.

"Through our relationship with NOAA, the University of Alabama will be able to expand its oyster restoration program to include the restoration of a variety of habitats," said Dr. Robert Shipp, principal investigator for the university's project team. "This expansion will enable us to have a more holistic, ecosystem-wide approach to restoring these important coastal resources."

The following Living Shorelines projects are planned for Alabama:

- **Luscher Park on Dog River:** The goals of this project are to control erosion, create habitat, and establish an educational site for showcasing environmentally-appropriate erosion control technologies as viable alternatives to sea walls and bulkheads. The Mobile National Estuary Program will implement this project in partnership with NOAA and the Association of National Estuary Programs.
- **Alabama Oyster Reef and Fisheries Habitat Enhancement Program:** The University of South Alabama will implement this multi-year program in cooperation with NOAA, conducting a scientific study to assess the multiple benefits of near-shore oyster reef restoration to prevent shoreline erosion at both Point Aux Pines and Alabama Port in Mobile Bay. The program will assess current marine habitats; conduct large-scale habitat creation and restoration activities; undertake targeted research projects; and perform public outreach, education, and communication.

Since 1999, NOAA's Restoration Center has invested more than \$7 million in the state of Alabama. In cooperation with its partners, NOAA has restored salt marshes and seagrass, created and restored oyster reefs, and educated communities about the value of habitat and restoration. Altogether, these projects have engaged more than 1,100 volunteers and resulted in the restoration of approximately 90 acres of coastal habitat.

## ***Draft Revised Recovery Plan for the Northwest Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle Available for Review***

May 30, 2008

Loggerhead turtle.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)



[NOAA's Fisheries Service](#) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are seeking public input on the draft revised recovery plan for the northwest Atlantic population of the [Loggerhead Sea Turtle](#) (*Caretta caretta*). The species is listed globally as threatened under the [Endangered Species Act](#).

“This is an important next step in the conservation and recovery of the loggerhead turtle,” said Jim Balsiger, acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. “What we've done is identify threats, and provide a blueprint for addressing these threats in order to recover loggerhead turtles. These actions are important and necessary.”

The draft revised plan reviews and discusses the species ecology, population status and trends, and identifies threats to the loggerhead turtle in the northwest Atlantic. It lays out a recovery strategy to address the threats, based on the best available science, and includes recovery goals and criteria. In addition, the plan identifies substantive actions needed to address the threats to the species and achieve recovery.

An initial recovery plan for the loggerhead turtle was approved on September 19, 1984. This initial plan was a multi-species plan for all six species of sea turtles occurring in the U.S. On December 26, 1991, a separate recovery plan for the U.S. Atlantic population of the loggerhead turtle was approved. In 2001, NOAA's Fisheries Service and USFWS, which share regulatory jurisdiction for sea turtles, initiated the process to revise the loggerhead plan for a second time.

This revised plan is significant in that it identifies five unique recovery units, which comprise the population of loggerhead turtles in the northwest Atlantic, and describes specific recovery criteria for each recovery unit.

Loggerhead turtles in the northwest Atlantic mature to reproductive age at about 35 years. During their lifetime, they travel and live in the waters of several nations, including the U.S. They face many challenges and threats, including development and loss of nesting habitat, bycatch in fisheries and degradation of their marine habitats. The recovery of any species takes time, but scientists say that for the loggerhead turtle it could take even longer due to the long time to reach maturity and the variety and magnitude of the threats they face.

“Recovery of loggerhead turtles in the northwest Atlantic is a long-term effort that requires cooperation from various groups,” said Bryan Arroyo, USFWS assistant director for endangered species. “It will take commitment and coordination from federal, state, and local government agencies, local communities, conservation organizations, and industry groups, as well as international cooperation.”

Agencies will accept public comments for 60 days until July 29, 2008.

Please send comments about the draft revised recovery plan for the northwest Atlantic population of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle by any one of the following methods:

E-Mail to [seaturtle@fws.gov](mailto:seaturtle@fws.gov). Include in the subject line “Comments on Northwest Atlantic Loggerhead Recovery Plan.” Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

**Mail:**

National Marine Fisheries Service National Sea  
Turtle Coordinator  
Attn: Draft Loggerhead Recovery Plan  
Office of Protected Resources  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13657  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

USFWS National Sea Turtle Coordinator  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
6620 Southpoint Drive South, Suite 310  
Jacksonville, FL 32216  
Fax to 301-713-0376  
Attn: National Marine Fisheries Service  
National Sea Turtle Coordinator.

The public can review the plan online at <http://www.fws.gov/northflorida/SeaTurtles/loggerhead-recovery/default-loggerhead.htm> or <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans.htm>

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

## ***NOAA Announces Funding to Support Ocean Observing Along the Gulf Coast***

May 28, 2008

[NOAA's Integrated Ocean Observing System](#) (IOOS) is awarding \$749,986 in fiscal year 2008 competitive grant funds to support ocean and coastal observing efforts in the Gulf of Mexico.

Texas A&M University Research Foundation is the grant recipient and will use the funding to oversee the continued development of the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System (GCOOS) and associated management efforts. GCOOS will maintain and enhance ocean and coastal observations in the region and link various regional online databases into one centralized database. The project will make data gathered by federal organizations as well as private, academic, and state and local government entities, easier to access and use. Ann Jochens, Ph.D., serves as the regional coordinator for GCOOS and will serve as the project lead investigator.

“Regional partnerships are critical to the success of a national Integrated Ocean Observing System,” said Zdenka Willis, NOAA IOOS program director. “With increased understanding of our oceans and coasts comes an increased ability to keep our nation safe, our economy secure, and our environment healthy and productive.”

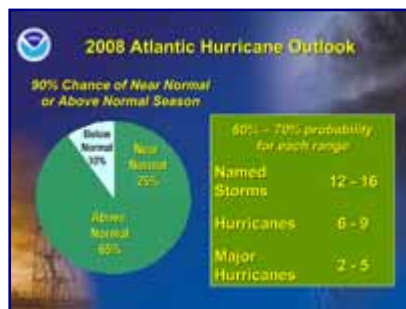
GCOOS is one in an anticipated series of nationwide IOOS grant funded projects, totaling \$20.4M this year. These grants will support the continuation of 17 multi-year projects awarded in 2007, as well as new efforts in 2008.

“This agreement represents another big step forward for the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observing System, as called for in the President’s Ocean Action Plan,” said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. “This year’s award is a great example of NOAA’s dedication to our ocean and coastal observing capacity, as well as our commitment to work with our regional partners.”

The money supports NOAA’s efforts to develop a national IOOS, a vital tool for tracking, predicting, managing, and adapting to changes in our coastal and ocean environments. This network of people and technology is consolidating coastal and ocean data, so it is easily accessible and can be used by scientists and decision-makers to get a ‘bigger picture’ view of environmental change.

## ***NOAA Predicts Near Normal or Above Normal Atlantic Hurricane Season***

[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)



[NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center](#) today announced that projected climate conditions point to a near normal or above normal hurricane season in the Atlantic Basin this year. The prediction was issued at a news conference called to urge residents in vulnerable areas to be fully prepared for the onset of hurricane season, which begins June 1. “Living in a coastal state means having a plan for each and every hurricane season. Review or complete emergency plans now - before a storm threatens,” said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Planning and preparation is the key to storm survival and recovery.”

The [Climate Prediction Center outlook](#) calls for considerable activity with a 65 percent probability of an above normal season and a 25 percent probability of a near normal season. This means there is a 90 percent chance of a near or above normal season. The climate patterns expected during this year’s hurricane season have in past seasons produced a wide range of activity and have been associated with both near-normal and above-normal seasons. For 2008, the outlook indicates a 60 to 70 percent chance of 12 to 16 named storms, including 6 to 9 hurricanes and 2 to 5 major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale).

An average season has 11 named storms, including six hurricanes for which two reach major status. “The outlook is a general guide to the overall seasonal hurricane activity,” Lautenbacher said. “It does not predict whether, where or when any of these storms may hit land. That is the job of the National Hurricane Center after a storm forms.”

Bill Read, director of [NOAA’s National Hurricane Center](#), said, “Our forecasters are ready to track any tropical cyclone, from a depression to a hurricane, which forms in the Atlantic Basin. We urge coastal residents to have a hurricane plan in place before the season begins and NHC will continue to provide the best possible forecast to the public.”

When a storm forms in the tropics – and even before that stage – NOAA forecasters at the Miami-based National Hurricane Center are in continuous monitoring mode – employing a dense network of satellites, land- and ocean-based sensors and aircraft reconnaissance missions operated by NOAA and its partners. This array of data supplies the information for complex computer modeling and human expertise that serves the basis for the hurricane center’s track and intensity forecasts that extend out five days in advance. The science behind the outlook is rooted in the analysis and prediction of current and future global climate patterns as compared to previous seasons with similar conditions.

“The main factors influencing this year’s seasonal outlook are the continuing multi-decadal signal (the combination of ocean and atmospheric conditions that have spawned increased hurricane activity since 1995), and the anticipated lingering effects of La Niña,” said Gerry Bell, Ph.D., lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center. “One of the expected oceanic conditions is a continuation since 1995 of warmer-than-normal temperatures in the eastern tropical Atlantic.”

[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)



“Americans in hurricane-prone states must get serious and be prepared. Government – even with the federal, tribal, state and local governments working perfectly in sync – is not the entire answer. Everyone is part of the emergency management process,” said FEMA Administrator R. David Paulison. “We must continue to develop a culture of preparedness in America in which every American takes personal responsibility for his or her own emergency preparedness.”

NOAA’s Atlantic hurricane season outlook will be updated on August 7, just prior to what is historically the peak period for hurricane activity. Tropical systems acquire a name – the first of which for 2008 will be Arthur – upon reaching tropical storm strength with sustained winds of at least 39 mph. Tropical storms become hurricanes when winds reach 74 mph, and become major hurricanes when winds reach 111 mph.

## ***NOAA to Honor National Leaders in Sustainable Fisheries***

May 20, 2008

[NOAA’s Fisheries Service](#) announced today that it will honor seven people and two organizations for their efforts to enhance the understanding, protection, and sustainable use of U.S. ocean resources. This recognition is part of the agency’s third annual Sustainable Fisheries Leadership Awards program. NOAA’s leaders will present awards at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on June 2.

Manual Calderón of Angleton, Texas,  
[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)



“The health and sustainability of the planet’s ocean resources is of paramount importance for the world’s environmental, economic, and human wellbeing,” said retired Navy Vice Adm. [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “The contributions of our honorees inspire others and enhance NOAA’s work to conserve and manage our nation’s marine resources.”

“We received many outstanding nominations again this year, and the selection process was difficult,” said Jim Balsiger, acting assistant administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service. “We thank each of the 70

nominees for their role in helping us preserve our fishing heritage while conserving marine wildlife and ocean habitats.”

This year’s recipients in the six categories of achievement are:

- Robert C. Fletcher, president of the Sportfishing Association of California, will receive the Special Recognition Award for his dedication to the management, conservation and sustainable use of West Coast marine fisheries. Fletcher is a leader in building consensus for sustainable fishing among competing stakeholders. (San Diego, Calif.)

- Patrick F. Riley, Capt. Manuel Calderón, and Capt. Louis Stephenson will receive the Stewardship and Sustainability Award for their leadership in the development and assessment of effective, efficient equipment to reduce the incidental catch and mortality of sea turtles and sharply reduce fuel use in the Gulf and South Atlantic shrimp industry. (Freeport, Angleton, and Hitchcock, Texas)



Kemp's Ridley Turtle.  
[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

- The Kemp’s Ridley Sea Turtle Population Restoration Program, based at the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas will receive the Conservation Partnership Award. A total of 26 partners representing federal, state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, scientists, businesses and volunteers from the United States and Mexico have worked together for 30 years to protect and recover Kemp’s Ridley sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico. When the project began in 1978, an estimated 924 turtle nests were identified and protected that year. In 2007, more than 15,000 nests were protected, and more than one million baby turtles were released into the Gulf of Mexico. (Brownsville, Texas)
- Clayward Tam, of the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, will receive the Science, Research and Technology Award for his efforts to involve the fishing community in cooperative research on jacks, Hawaii’s most highly prized sport and food fish. This research has given fishery scientists and managers the critical information on the fish’s life history that is being used in ecosystem management. (Honolulu, Hawaii)
- The Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation, based in Juneau, Alaska, will receive the Coastal Habitat Restoration Award for its efforts working with local residents to remove old nets, plastics and other debris from the fur seal rookeries on the Pribilof Islands and throughout coastal Alaska. The foundation has successfully involved a wide array of groups, including tribes, recreational groups and the commercial fishing industry, to remove hundreds of tons of debris from a state with more shoreline than the rest of the nation. (Juneau, Alaska)
- Douglas Gregory, Florida Sea Grant Extension agent in Key West, Fla., will receive the Public Education, Community Service, and Media Award for his work in the Florida Keys to improve the public’s understanding of commercial fishing, and for helping fishermen see the importance of sustainable fishing. He grew up working on his father’s shrimp fishing boat and brings a deep sensitivity for fishing families and their work ethic to his work. He has helped empower commercial fishermen to take an active role with state and federal regulators in ensuring valuable fisheries remain sustainable for future generations. (Key West, Fla.)

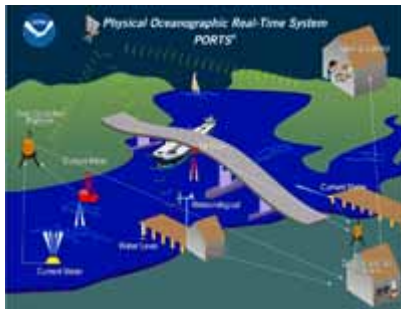
NOAA's Fisheries Service is also recognizing Ralph Rayburn, who will be honored posthumously for his lifetime contributions to ensure conscientious management of marine resources in the Gulf of Mexico. Rayburn, who died this past January, was a visionary who worked cooperatively with shrimp fishermen and conservationists to help solve the problem of unintended sea turtle catches in the shrimp fishery. In his long, distinguished, and diverse career, he represented the shrimp industry as executive director of the Texas Shrimp Association, worked for state and federal resource management agencies—the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council—and helped direct university research as associate director of the Texas Sea Grant College program at Texas A&M University. (College Station, Texas)

## ***New NOAA Ocean Observing System in Pascagoula Aids Mariners; Keeps Shipping Safe***

May 15, 2008

### **PORTS in Pascagoula**

[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)



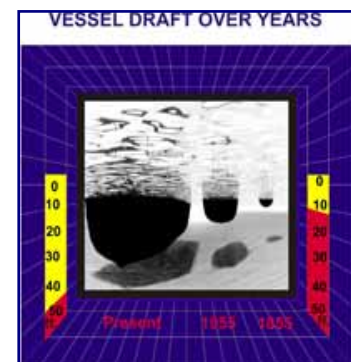
Mariners can now get free real-time information on water and wind conditions for the Port of Pascagoula, Miss., from a new NOAA ocean observing system at the port. The NOAA Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS®) provides observations of water levels, currents, salinity, wind speed and direction, and bridge clearance through an easy-to-use [Web portal](#).

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

Administered by the [NOAA Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services](#), PORTS® can significantly reduce the risk of vessel groundings and increase the amount of cargo moved through the port by enabling mariners to safely utilize every inch of dredged channel depth.

“The real-time oceanographic and meteorological information provided by PORTS® will not only provide commercial and recreational mariners with reliable navigational information for safe and efficient travel but will also enhance local weather and coastal marine forecasting,” said Senator Thad Cochran. “I am proud to have this important technology located in the Port of Pascagoula.”

The Pascagoula system brings the number of PORTS® in operation around the nation to 15. Estimates of economic benefits directly attributed to PORTS® range from \$7 million per year for Tampa Bay to \$16 million per year for Houston-Galveston.



[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

“Navigation safety is vital to recreational boaters, the commercial fishing industry as well as the shipping industry,” said Mark McAndrews, director of the Port of Pascagoula. “PORTS® offers state-of-the-art technology that will be available 24/7 to assist in navigation preparation. The system will also provide important data for search and rescue, weather forecasters, federal agencies and emergency management offices.” The Port of Pascagoula is the largest of the state’s 16 ports. Collectively, Mississippi’s ports contribute \$1.4 billion and some 34,000 direct and indirect jobs to the state’s economy.

## ***“Excellent” Children's Activity Book Brings NOAA Outreach to Louisiana***

On Sunday, May 18, 2008, copies of the children's Coastal Louisiana Activity Book are to be distributed at the Historic New Orleans Collection’s Annual Family Day. The event, held in the historic French Quarter, will focus on Louisiana’s endangered wetlands in conjunction with the ongoing exhibit, *Surrounded by Water: New Orleans, the Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain*. A representative from the Collection's education department said in his request, “The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration produces an excellent activity book, 'Coastal Louisiana Activity Book.' The activity book is thought to be a great supplement to hand out to the young visitors at Family Day which is focused on preserving Louisiana’s threatened wetlands.” For more information, contact Susan Baker at [Susan.Baker@noaa.gov](mailto:Susan.Baker@noaa.gov).

## ***NOS Assists Texas in Addressing Unusual Harmful Algal Bloom***

NOS organizations are supporting Texas coastal managers with an [unusual harmful algal bloom \(HAB\)](#) of *Dinophysis*. The bloom was first detected in February by scientists using the Imaging FlowCytobot—an innovative HAB early warning system—at the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve. Based on this early warning, the Texas Department of State Health Services evaluated water and oyster samples, and issued a recall of Texas oysters, clams, and mussels, and the Aransas, Corpus Christi, and Copano bays were closed for shellfish harvesting. The demonstration of the Imaging FlowCytobot is supported by the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology, a partnership of the Office of Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) and the University of New Hampshire. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) continue monitoring and analysis to enable the state to determine when it is safe to reopen shellfish beds. For more information, contact [Rick Stumpf](#), [Marc Suddleson](#), or [Dwight Trueblood](#).

## ***Detection and Communication of Harmful Algal Bloom Assists Texas Coastal Managers***

Volunteers participating in the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science’s Southeast Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (SEPMN) identified areas of high *Dinophysis acuminata* concentrations along the Texas coast during a recent harmful algal bloom event. Data presented by a SEPMN outreach specialist on April 17 to state managers at the Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting provided new insight into the distribution and movement of the first *Dinophysis* bloom to be reported in the western Gulf of Mexico. The bloom led to the first shellfish closure along the Gulf of Mexico due to oysters found to contain okadaic acid, the toxin causing diarrhetic shellfish poisoning. The SEPMN enhances the awareness of harmful algae and their impacts, and directly engages volunteers in coastal stewardship, with 113 groups monitoring over 72 sites in 9 coastal states. For more information, contact Steve Morton at [Steve.Morton@noaa.gov](mailto:Steve.Morton@noaa.gov).

## Other NOAA News

### **NOAA Reminds Beachgoers That Rip Currents Can Be a Threat** Rip Current Awareness Week Is June 1-7, 2008

NOAA Rip Current Sign.  
[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)



Heading to the beach for summer vacation? NOAA is urging beachgoers to learn how to “Break the Grip” of rip currents before getting into the water. [Rip currents](#) are a deadly threat — accounting for more than 80 percent of lifeguard beach rescues.

Rip currents are narrow channels of fast-moving water that pull swimmers away from the shore. They can occur at any beach with breaking waves, including the Great Lakes.

Moving at speeds of up to eight feet per second, rip currents can move faster than an Olympic swimmer and can easily overpower a victim. Panicked swimmers often incorrectly swim straight back to shore — putting themselves at risk of drowning because of fatigue. If caught in a rip current, don't fight it! Swim parallel to the shore and then swim at an angle – away from the current – toward shore.

“We have a constant education campaign about rip currents since many people visit the beach infrequently and may be unfamiliar with this leading surf hazard,” said Timothy Schott, meteorologist with

NOAA's [National Weather Service Marine and Coastal Branch](#) in Silver Spring, Md. “This year, we have developed bilingual English-Spanish signs to reach a wider audience with life-saving instructions on how to break the grip.”

"Rip currents can be killers. The United States Lifesaving Association estimates that the annual number of deaths due to rip currents on our nation's beaches exceeds 100," said Peter Davis, president of the Gulf Coast Region of the United States Lifesaving Association and chief of the Galveston Island Beach Patrol.

“The greatest safety precaution that can be taken is to recognize the danger of rip currents and always remember to swim at beaches with lifeguards.”

NOAA also offers the following safety tips:

- Swim at lifeguard-protected beaches.
- Never swim alone.
- Speak to on duty lifeguards about rip currents and other expected water hazards.

Many coastal National Weather Service offices issue what's known as [Surf Zone Forecasts](#) that provide a low, moderate or high description of rip current risk. All NOAA National Weather Service offices include moderate to high risk of rip currents in their Hazardous Weather Outlook. These forecasts are available online at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov). More safety tips and educational materials are free and available to download at <http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov/>.

## Jason-2 Satellite Data to Help NOAA Track Global Sea Level

May 20, 2008

Jason-2/Ocean Surface Topography Mission (OSTM).

[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)



A new satellite set to launch next month will monitor the rate of sea-level rise and help measure the strength of hurricanes, according to a leading NOAA scientist. At a press briefing today, Laury Miller, chief of [NOAA's Laboratory for Satellite Altimetry](#), said NOAA will use data from the Jason-2/Ocean Surface Topography Mission (OSTM) to extend a 15-year record from two earlier altimeter missions that currently show sea level is rising at a rate of 3.2 mm/year — nearly twice as fast as the previous 100 years. “This rate, if it continues unchanged over the coming decades, will have a large impact on coastal regions, in terms of erosion and flooding,” said Miller.

The Jason-2/OSTM is scheduled for lift off June 15 at 1:47 a.m. from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. The spacecraft is a joint, international effort between NOAA, NASA, France's Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES), and the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (Eumetsat).

Like its predecessor missions TOPEX/Poseidon and Jason-1, Jason-2/OSTM is designed to extend the climate data record by providing a long-term survey of Earth's oceans, tracking ocean circulation patterns and measuring sea-surface heights and the rate of sea-level rise. These are all key factors in understanding climate change. The satellite will use a radar altimeter instrument attached to it and fly in a low Earth orbit allowing it to monitor 95 percent of Earth's ice-free oceans every 10 days.

In addition to detecting climate change factors, Jason-2/OSTM will also be used in the prediction of short-term, severe weather events, such as hurricanes and tropical storms. According to Miller, NOAA will use the altimeter measurements to monitor ocean conditions that trigger changes in the strength of tropical cyclones, as they move over the ocean towards the land. The technique involves mapping the ocean heat content — the fuel that feeds a storm's intensity — along the storm's predicted track.

“Using data received in earlier altimeter missions during hurricanes with wind speeds in excess of 155 miles per hour, we've been able to reduce our intensity prediction error by an average of five percent — and in some cases as much as 20 percent,” Miller said. “If we increase the accuracy of intensity predictions, we help save lives.”

During the Jason-2/OSTM lifespan, NOAA will work with CNES to handle the complete ground system support. This includes commanding all the satellite's maneuvers, downloading all the data the satellite captures, and distributing it to weather and climate forecasters, who are monitoring ocean-born storms and phenomena such as El Niño/La Niña and global sea-level rise. Additionally, Jason-2/OSTM will be the first, newly launched satellite in which NOAA provides ground support from its [NOAA Satellite Operations Facility in Suitland, Md.](#) The facility opened in 2007 and houses \$50 million worth of high-tech equipment and controls nearly \$5 billion in satellites.

“NOAA is definitely up to the challenge of providing smooth, continuous operational support for this mission, which is sure to bring tangible benefits throughout the world,” said Mike Mignogno, program manager for [NOAA's Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellites](#).

## **NOAA Reports Coastal Waters Show Decline in Contaminants**

Concerns Remain with Continuing Chemical Inputs

May 12, 2008

NOAA scientists today released a 20-year study showing that environmental laws enacted in the 1970s are having a positive effect on reducing overall contaminant levels in coastal waters of the U.S. However, the report points to continuing concerns with elevated levels of metals and organic contaminants found near urban and industrial areas of the coasts. The report is available [online](#).

"It's interesting to note that pesticides, such as DDT, and industrial chemicals, such as PCBs, show significant decreasing trends around the nation, but similar trends were not found for trace metals," said Gunnar Lauenstein, manager of the NOAA Mussel Watch program. "What is of concern is that there are contaminants that continue to be problematic, including oil-related compounds from motor vehicles and shipping activities."

The report, "NOAA National Status and Trends Mussel Watch Program: An Assessment of Two Decades of Contaminant Monitoring in the Nation's Coastal Zone from 1986-2005," is the first that presents national, regional, and local findings in a quick reference format, suitable for use by policymakers, scientists, resource managers and the public. The findings are the result of monitoring efforts that analyze 140 different chemicals in U.S. coastal and estuarine areas, including the Great Lakes.

"We need to ensure the safety of our coastal waters for the rich resources they provide," says John H. Dunnigan, NOAA assistant administrator of the National Ocean Service. "This program shows that although our coasts are under tremendous pressure, policymakers and the public are able to work together to produce positive results."

Significant findings from this report include the following:

- Decreasing trends nationally of the pesticide DDT are documented with a majority of the sites monitored along the Southern California coast.
- Decreasing trends also were found for the industrial chemicals PCBs. The Hudson-Raritan Estuary, one area of the country where some of the highest concentrations of these chemicals were found, now shows 80 percent of monitored sites with significantly decreasing trends for this pollutant.
- Tributyl-tin, a biocide used as a compound to reduce or restrict the growth of marine organisms on boat hulls, was found to have greater than anticipated consequences as it affected not only the targeted organisms, but also other marine and fresh water life as well. First regulated in the 1980s, this compound is now decreasing nationally.

The NOAA Mussel Watch Program also quantifies contaminants that are still entering the nation's waters and two major groups raise concern:

- Oil related compounds (PAHs) from motor vehicles and shipping activities continue to flow into coastal waters daily. Because NOAA has been monitoring these areas for extended periods, baseline data already exist to help define the extent of environmental degradation. For example, PAH levels following the 2007 Cosco Busan oil spill in San Francisco Bay showed concentrations at the monitoring site near the spill were the highest ever recorded.
- Flame retardants known as PBDEs are a new class of contaminants currently being evaluated by NOAA to determine whether they are increasing in coastal waters and what effects they may have on both marine and human health. NOAA plans to issue a report on flame retardants in coastal waters later this year.

NOAA's Mussel Watch Program, founded in 1986, is the nation's longest continuous national contaminant-monitoring program in U.S. coastal waters. The program keeps collected tissue samples frozen so that overlooked or newly emerging contaminants can be retroactively analyzed, as is currently being done with flame retardants. "The Mussel Watch Program 20-year assessment is a concise and informative review of contaminant monitoring in the nation's coastal waters," said Jack Schwartz with [Massachusetts Marine Fisheries](#). "This report should well serve readers who may not necessarily be conversant with scientific literature on contaminant monitoring and fate and effects."

## ***MPA Center Unveils Online Marine Protected Areas Inventory***

MPA Center unveiled the new Marine Protected Areas Inventory (MPA Inventory) on [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov). The MPA Inventory is based on the previously developed Marine Managed Areas Inventory, which was active from 2001-2007. The draft definition of "MPA" used in the Revised Draft Framework for Developing the National System of Marine Protected Areas is being used as the criteria for inclusion in the MPA Inventory. The MPA Inventory contains information on nearly 1,800 sites and is the only such dataset in the nation. This unique, comprehensive inventory provides governments and stakeholders with access to information to make better decisions about the current and future use of place-based conservation. For more information, contact [Lauren Wenzel](#).

## ***Knowledge of Invasive Species Distribution Enhanced through Integration of NOAA and USGS Web-Accessible Databases***

NOAA's National Benthic Inventory (NBI) web site, a quantitative database on distributions, abundances, and diversity of benthic species obtained from studies conducted by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science and partnering institutions nationwide, has been enhanced by integration with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) nonindigenous aquatic species (NAS) online distributional database. The NBI now provides user-friendly access to information on potentially invasive species that appear in the NBI database and that have been cross-referenced to the NAS database supporting the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. An additional enhancement includes the ability to dynamically map the distributions of these species. Currently, 112 NBI species are matched to the NAS database, 51 of these species have records occurring outside of their known native ranges. Visit the web site at <http://nbi.noaa.gov>. For further information, contact Cynthia Cooksey at [Cynthia.Cooksey@noaa.gov](mailto:Cynthia.Cooksey@noaa.gov), or Pascal Bottein at [Pascal.Bottein@noaa.gov](mailto:Pascal.Bottein@noaa.gov).

## ***CICEET Awards \$2.8 Million to Improve Coastal Planning***

Many of the environmental challenges along our nation's coasts begin with the decisions we make about how to use our land, yet many communities lack access to effective land use planning tools or the capacity to use them. To help address the challenges of development, the NOAA/UNH Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) has awarded \$2.8 million to project teams that are building and demonstrating tools for effective planning and sustainable growth.

Thirteen teams working in coastal states from Maine to Oregon have received grants as part of CICEET's Living Coasts Program, which was created to provide coastal areas with more effective tools to grow in a way that preserves water quality, protects natural areas and improves community resilience. Each project team is working with a committed community partner. By demonstrating the effectiveness of better tools for land use planning, and working to ensure they can be as widely used as possible, Living Coasts projects aim to reduce the problems that happen as a result of poor land use decisions.

Development pressure, combined with rising sea levels and more frequent extreme storms have made this a critical time for all organizations with a hand in managing coastal resources to find ways to work together to plan for the future. CICEET will expand the Living Coasts Program in the near future to include collaborative projects aimed at providing tools to help stabilize the shoreline, protect property, and promote healthy habitats along sheltered coasts. Learn more at [http://ciceet.unh.edu/stats/living\\_coasts.html](http://ciceet.unh.edu/stats/living_coasts.html)

## ***Plans to Update Coastal Zone Management Act Program Change Procedures***

On May 20, NOAA published in the Federal Register an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking titled “Changes to the Coastal Zone Management Act Program Change Procedures, 73 Fed. Reg. 29093-29094 (May 20, 2008).” Program changes are modifications to NOAA-approved components of State coastal zone management programs and new program components. NOAA and the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) are requesting input from states, federal agencies, and the public on revised program change regulations to establish a clearer and more efficient and transparent process for program change review. Comments on the proposed changes can be submitted by mail or email ([CZMA.ProgramChanges.ANPR@noaa.gov](mailto:CZMA.ProgramChanges.ANPR@noaa.gov)) and must be received by August 18, 2008. Copies of the notice and all comments received will be posted on [OCRM’s Web site](#). For more information, contact [Kerry Kehoe](#) or [Carleigh Trappe](#).

## **In the Gulf States**

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### ***ADEM Provides Water Quality Monitoring at Public Beaches***

MONTGOMERY – Water quality information for Alabama’s Gulf Coast public beaches will be available this spring and summer to help people make informed decisions about their recreational use of coastal waters. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has initiated its 2008 coastal beach monitoring program and the Department has resumed the weekly collection and analysis of water samples at 25 public beaches in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

ADEM scientists will conduct water quality sampling and testing to establish overall water quality data from each public beach location. The monitoring efforts will stretch from May through Labor Day with water samples being collected weekly, or more frequently if needed, at each of the public beach locations. Beach selection and sampling frequency are determined using a risk-based evaluation and ranking process that considers the amount of beach use, the level of risk, and any specific factors associated with each beach.

The public beaches that are monitored will display a color-coded sign advising swimmers of the most recent water quality conditions and information about potential health risks associated with swimming or other water activities at the beach. In addition to the on-site signs, water quality information will be available online at [www.adem.alabama.gov](http://www.adem.alabama.gov) along with a list and map of beach monitoring locations. Alabama has approximately 50 miles of beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and more than 65 miles of bay beaches. The Department has partnered with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Baldwin County Health Department to ensure the successful implementation of its coastal beach monitoring program.

## ***Alabama Emergency Management System Achieves National Accreditation***

MONTGOMERY - Alabama has become one of only 16 states to achieve the nation's highest accreditation standard when it comes to emergency preparedness and response. To achieve accreditation, Alabama documented compliance with 58 standards and underwent a peer review assessment by Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) examiners.

"This achievement is a clear demonstration of the high priority we place on protecting Alabama citizens," said Governor Bob Riley. "During the past few years, we've built a first-rate, comprehensive system for handling emergencies and disasters. I commend our Alabama Emergency Management Agency and emergency preparedness teams all across the state for this major milestone."

"I'm so proud of what my staff has accomplished and it has taken a lot of work to achieve EMAP accreditation," said Alabama Emergency Management Director Brock Long. "I also want the residents of Alabama to know how serious AEMA views the goal of making sure the residents of Alabama are safe." EMAP is a voluntary accreditation process for state and local government programs that coordinate preparedness and response activities for disasters, from tornadoes to terrorist acts. It recognizes the ability of a state or local government to bring together personnel, resources and communications from a variety of agencies in preparation for and in response to an emergency. EMAP is the only accreditation process for state and local emergency management preparedness.

Accreditation is a means of demonstrating, through program assessment, documentation and on-site assessment by an independent team, that a program meets national standards. Accreditation is valid for five years from the date the EMAP Commission grants accreditation. Accredited programs must maintain compliance with EMAP standards and be reassessed in five years to maintain accredited status.

Working collaboratively since 1997, state, local and federal emergency managers developed EMAP to provide quality standards and a process for determining compliance.

"States like Alabama that work toward and achieve compliance with these standards are at the forefront in ensuring their residents are served by a comprehensive system to deal with disasters," Tim Manning, chairperson of the EMAP Commission and director of New Mexico Emergency Management, said in a statement.

## ***Alabama Tourism Up 10 Percent to \$9.3 Billion***

MONTGOMERY - Alabama's tourism and travel industry increased by 10 percent in 2007 over the previous year, according to an economic impact report released by Governor Bob Riley on Thursday. An estimated 22.4 million people visited the state last year and spent over \$9.3 billion in Alabama. Travelers paid over \$685 million in state and local lodging and sales taxes, according to a survey conducted by the Alabama Tourism Department.

Baldwin County led the state with almost \$2.3 billion in travel-related spending, Jefferson County was second with \$1.5 billion, Madison County was third at \$900 million and Mobile County ranked fourth with \$890 million. Montgomery County was fifth with \$542 million.

The number of jobs in Alabama's hospitality industry grew four percent to over 7,000 jobs from the previous year. The industry was responsible for approximately 115,000 direct jobs and 55,000 spin-off jobs for a total of 170,000, over 8.5 percent of all non-agricultural jobs in Alabama.

"Alabama has beautiful gulf coast beaches, great festivals, outstanding food and hospitality that attract tourists. The dollars that they spend create jobs, grow local economies and generate needed tax revenues," said Governor Riley.

The analysis conducted by Auburn University Montgomery said that every \$80,872 in travel industry spending creates one direct job in Alabama. Additionally, for every two direct jobs created, the state's economy indirectly creates one additional job. The Alabama Tourism Department, which is funded by a quarter of the state's four percent lodging tax, authorized the 34-page AUM study. The remaining \$34 million of the state lodging tax benefited the state's General Fund.

For a county-by-county breakdown of travel-related expenditures and employment figures see the complete 2007 Economic Impact Report on the Alabama Tourism Department's Web site at [www.alabama.travel](http://www.alabama.travel). Click [here](#) to view the report.

## ***State Archaeology Web Site Allows Visitors to Dive into Florida's Shipwreck Parks Without Getting Wet***

TALLAHASSEE, FL –Secretary of State Kurt S. Browning today announced the launch of the Department of State's newest Internet feature, *Museums in the Sea*. "The *Museums in the Sea* Web site provides a virtual Web tour of Florida's Underwater Archaeological Preserves," said Secretary Browning.

"This is another way in which we can share Florida's unique maritime heritage with the world. Now everyone who has access to the Internet can virtually visit Florida's living museums in the sea." Florida's Underwater Archaeological Preserves combine heritage, ecological and recreational tourism opportunities at 11 shipwreck locations around the state. The program began in 1987 in response to sites that were nominated by local waterfront communities. Since then, the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research has established the eleven shipwreck parks throughout the state that have become popular attractions for snorkelers and divers.

To "dive" into Florida's "Museums in the Sea" visit [www.museumsinthesea.com](http://www.museumsinthesea.com). Visitors can choose a shipwreck, take a guided underwater tour of the site, watch a narrated history of the vessel, and observe the marine life that lives in the wreckage. Each section of the site has photographs and text to accompany the videos. Visitors also have the opportunity to download and print the Underwater Preserve brochures and underwater guides.

The five Florida Shipwreck Preserves currently posted on the new Web site include: Lofthus, an iron barque wrecked off Boynton Beach; USS Massachusetts, the oldest existing American battleship sunk off Pensacola; Half Moon, a German racing yacht off Miami, City of Hawkinsville, the largest and last Suwannee River steamboat, and SS Copenhagen, a steel cargo vessel that wrecked off Pompano Beach. Videos and information on the remaining six preserves will be added to the Web site in the near future. The Web site also provides educators with new research material for students, who can use their computers to learn about Florida's maritime history and marine biology, and see environmental changes that can occur to shipwrecks over time.

The *Museums in the Sea* interactive Web site was created by the Bureau's Underwater Archaeology Team and the Florida Center for Interactive Media, with funding assistance from the Department of Environmental Protection, Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

## ***Florida Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change Considers Policy Recommendations for Final Report***

TALLAHASSEE – The Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change today reviewed the first set of policy change recommendations presented by the six Technical Working Groups, as the Action Team's Phase Two deadline of October 1 draws near in its charge to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect Florida from potential harmful impacts of climate change. During the two-day meeting, the Action Team is focusing on the review and approval of the draft policy options. Based on the approval by the Action Team, the Technical Work Groups (TWGs) will then draft detailed proposals for future implementation of final policy options.

“Building on the framework set by Governor Crist during the past year, we have involved a diverse group of scientists, industry experts, environmentalists, academia and many others, all of whom will have devoted enormous time and talent to the Technical Working Groups to develop a list of priorities in six key areas, and I am grateful for their dialogue, study and contributions,” said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary and Action Team Chairman Michael W. Sole.

Since launching Phase Two at the start of 2008, the respective TWGs have:

- Identified a range of potential options for mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, including more than 300 total possible state actions.
- Identified more than 40 initial priorities for analysis of draft policy options, incorporating elements of more than 100 specific catalog policies.
- Developed evaluation criteria, a framework outline, a policy template and a “catalog” of examples for adaptation measures that address the impacts of climate change.
- Developed background and policy options briefings on a variety of issues, such as the design of a cap and trade program and the development of policies that promote the “greening” of Florida's economy.

The TWGs' progress was facilitated by the Center for Climate Strategies as a way to assist the Action Team during Phase Two, building on the Phase One Report framework delivered to Governor Crist on November 1, 2007. Six TWGs were formed –Cap and Trade; Electric Supply and Demand; Transportation and Land Use; Agriculture, Forestry and Waste Management; Government Policy Coordination; and Adaptation. The TWGs are studying carbon capture and storage technologies from the nation and world to recommend long-term public policy options 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 Action Team is charged with creating and evaluating comprehensive actions to achieve reduction targets for greenhouse gas reductions specified in Governor Crist's Executive Order 07-127. The Phase Two report is due October 1. There are 27 appointees on the Action Team. The Governor's Action Team is one component from a series of initiatives outlined in three Executive Orders Governor Crist signed at the 2007 climate change summit. Other activities have included a carbon scorecard for all state agencies in order to “lead by example” and making state buildings and fleet vehicles more energy efficient.

Governor Crist recently announced the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change, June 25-26, 2008, at the Intercontinental Miami. Building on the foundation for Florida's energy future began at last year's summit, the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change will focus on stimulating economic development in clean technologies as well as "greening" Florida's business community. The 2008 summit will bring together industry leaders, policy makers, academics, scientists, environmentalists and the business community to explore opportunities for expanding Florida's renewable and alternative energy marketplace and greening our business community.

For more information on the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change, or to register for the conference, visit [www.myfloridaclimate.com](http://www.myfloridaclimate.com) or [www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com). To sign up for free email alerts about Florida's current climate change activities, see the presentations from Action Team meetings, or for more information, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange). Public comment on the Team's activities and recommendations can be provided electronically to [actionteam@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:actionteam@dep.state.fl.us).

## ***Florida Recognizes National Beach Safety Week***

TALLAHASSEE – Highlighting May 19-26, 2008, as National Beach Safety Week, Governor Charlie Crist signed a proclamation urging all Floridians and visitors to enjoy our coastal resources while taking appropriate measures to protect themselves and their families from dangers of the aquatic environment.

"Florida has some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, and ensuring that they are safely enjoyed by all is a top priority for the state," said Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole. "Public education and awareness of beach conditions and safety practices can help friends and family have a pleasant beach experience during the summer season and all year long."

Florida has more than 1,200 miles of coastline, including more than 800 miles of sandy beaches. National Beach Safety Week, promoted through a partnership between DEP, the Florida Beach Patrol Chiefs Association and the Southeast and South Atlantic Regions of the United States Lifesaving Association, reminds visitors to use caution when enjoying the state's aquatic environment.

"It is important that visitors and residents be mindful of rip currents, and watch for the flag warning system that can save lives and prevent unnecessary tragedy," said DEP Secretary Sole. In 2002, DEP's Florida Coastal Management Program developed a uniform warning and safety flag system for use by Florida's beachfront communities. DEP consulted with the United States Lifesaving Association, the International Life Saving Federation, state agencies and local governments to design a warning flag system that is simple to use and easy to interpret, based on the flag design and color coding proposed by the International Life Saving Federation. To encourage use of the system, the warning flags and interpretive signs to explain the flag's meanings are provided upon request free of charge annually to beachfront communities. Flag warnings and colors are:

Green: Low hazard, calm conditions, exercise caution.

Yellow: Medium hazard, moderate surf and/or currents.

Red: High hazard, high surf and/or strong currents.

Red over Red (two flags flying): Water closed to the public.

Purple: Dangerous marine life.

For more information on beach safety and Florida's Coastal Management Program, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/cmp](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/cmp). To see the Governor's proclamation, visit [http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/events/051908beach\\_safety.pdf](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/events/051908beach_safety.pdf)

## ***Florida DEP Launches Green Travel Web Site***

TALLAHASSEE – With Memorial Day and the summer travel season approaching, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) encourages Florida residents and guests to travel close, clean and green with the launch of a new green travel Web site and Florida Green Lodging Program locator map. The newly launched green travel Web site offers resources for families and travelers looking to get away without depleting their wallets, gas tanks or the environment.

"With a state park or a Green Lodging facility within just a short car ride of any location in the state, there are plenty of opportunities for affordable, eco-friendly travel this summer," said DEP's Deputy Secretary Bob Ballard. "The new green travel Web site is a valuable resource that allows visitors to locate state parks within a 100-mile radius, track down Green Lodging facilities, and provides tips on how to conserve gasoline and exhibit environmental stewardship while on vacation."

When planning a vacation this summer, travelers should consider visiting one of the 161 Florida State Parks and staying at one of the nearly 200 Florida Green Lodging properties throughout the state. A new tool on the Green Lodging Web site allows visitors to view designated properties and Florida State Parks all in the same interactive map. The easy-to-use map shows environmentally friendly travel destinations for the entire state.

"Florida residents and guests can use the newly launched Florida Green Lodging Program map to locate designated lodging facilities near a state park or recreation area," said Director of Sustainable Initiatives Deas Bohn. "Properties range from local bed and breakfast's to five star resorts with more than 1,000 rooms to suit any traveler's needs."

The Florida Green Lodging Program requires each designated property to meet a minimum set of environmental practices in areas such as energy efficiency, water conservation, clean air practices and waste reduction. The specific set of practices varies from one hotel to another. Since each hotel will have a slightly different program, guests should ask hotel staff about their "green" practices.

Launched in March 2004, the Florida Green Lodging Program establishes environmental guidelines for hotels and motels to conserve natural resources and prevent pollution. As reward for designation, the state is recommending designated properties in the Florida Green Lodging Program to companies and trade organizations seeking environmentally conscious lodging and convention facilities. To date, the program has 181 designated properties and more than 345 applicants.

The first two-time Gold Medal winner honoring the nation's best state park service, Florida's state park system is one of the largest in the country with 161 parks spanning nearly 700,000 acres and 100 miles of sandy white beach. From swimming and diving in Florida's rivers and springs to birding and fishing or hiking and riding on natural scenic trails, Florida's state parks offer year-around outdoor activities for all ages. Battle reenactments and Native American festivals celebrate Florida's unique history, while art shows, museums and lighthouses offer a window into Florida's cultural heritage.

For more information on green travel, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/green/travel](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/green/travel). For more information on the Florida Green Lodging Program, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/greenlodging](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/greenlodging). For more information on Florida State Parks visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/parks](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks)

## ***Trail Leads Visitors through Louisiana's African-American Heritage***

The Louisiana Office of Tourism has announced the first phase of the Louisiana African American Heritage Trail. The trail consists of historical sites honoring African-Americans in Louisiana who changed the world through ideas, art and actions. Beginning in New Orleans, guests are invited to take a tour of Louisiana and visit churches, universities, marketplaces, cafés and the many other historical sites that contribute to Louisiana's unique culture. From the birthplace of jazz to the birthplace of Arna Bontemps, a leading writer in the Harlem Renaissance, the trail covers not only historical places but also looks at the everyday lives of African-Americans in Louisiana. [Click here to travel the Trail online.](#)

## ***FEMA Awards Louisiana \$96.5 Million to Elevate Homes***

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- Louisiana will undertake the largest single home elevation project in American history, thanks to grant money to help homeowners pay for measures to make their homes safer and stronger. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved the use of more than \$96.5 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding to elevate nearly 3,000 homes devastated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA announced in conjunction with the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), the Louisiana Office of Community Development (OCD) and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) on Wednesday.

“This unique grant making elevation funds available under the guidance of two programs represents successful collaboration with state and federal agencies to help homeowners rebuild stronger in communities across Louisiana,” said FEMA’s acting Associate Deputy Administrator for Gulf Coast Recovery Jim Stark. “In many cases, these grants will help those who already have taken the initiative to start rebuilding their homes out of harm’s way by elevating the structure.”

This grant is one of the largest, single HMGP project obligations and is the first "batch" of grants in a series that will be made available to the state. The goal of this mitigation funding is to elevate or reconstruct more than 20,000 flood-prone structures throughout Louisiana. OCD has requested \$750 million in federal funds to elevate these homes.

“We are embarking on the single largest elevation program in history and we are committed to working closely with our state and federal partners to ensure homeowners across south Louisiana have the opportunity to rebuild their homes safer, stronger and smarter,” said LRA and OCD Executive Director Paul Rainwater. “By providing this additional elevation money to homeowners, we are able to help alleviate the financial burden associated with mitigation and homeowners are in turn able to protect their homes from future storms.”

The HMGP funding will work in tandem with Louisiana’s Road Home program. Applicants of the Road Home program whose actual elevation costs exceed the elevation funding they received under the Road Home may be eligible for additional funds. The state Hazard Mitigation program will award a maximum of \$30,000 in HMGP funds to eligible applicants to elevate their homes to comply with local floodplain ordinances or Advisory Base Flood Elevation, whichever is higher. This grant is directed towards those homeowners who are not already participating in the HMGP through their parish.

“This grant is the result of the outstanding cooperation between the mitigation staffs at GOHSEP and FEMA,” said State Hazard Mitigation Officer Casey Levy. “We are now able to expand the scope of the HMGP after Katrina and Rita to reach thousands of Louisiana’s citizens and assist them in the rebuilding of their homes.”

The \$96 million in HMGP funds obligated to the state, the first of several batches of funding Louisiana will apply for from FEMA , will support the elevation of almost 3,000 homes. The state identifies properties for the program and FEMA approves them, clearing the way for homeowners to access the money when the program begins reimbursing homeowners later this year. The HMGP award also includes \$100,000 allocated to OCD for informing and educating homeowners on the various requirements for eligibility in the program. Repairs have already begun or have been completed on a majority of the houses that will receive funding from the first batch of grants. FEMA funding for work already in progress, a change from business as usual, is made possible through a limited exception for retroactive approvals that FEMA requested and was granted by the Office of Management and Budget as a result of the unique circumstances in Louisiana after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

To participate in the program, homeowners must return letters mailed from the Road Home program indicating that they wish to elevate their homes through the state HMGP program. To date, more than 100,000 Road Home eligible recipients have received letters announcing that funds are available to assist them with the cost of elevating their homes and more than 12,000 homeowners have indicated their interest in the program. The state expects to begin giving funds to homeowners in early fall of 2008. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration, to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. The state of Louisiana will issue a request for proposals to hire a contractor to manage Louisiana's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Elevation and Pilot Reconstruction Projects.

A congressionally mandated study conducted for FEMA revealed that mitigation saves society an average of \$4 for every dollar spent. Such defensive, preventative mitigation measures learned and implemented by Louisianians will contribute to a national floodplain management plan that saves taxpayers an estimated \$1.1 billion per year by preventing flood damages.

## ***Film Demonstrates Hurricane Impacts***

May 9, 2008

The geographic impact of hurricanes is the focus of a new Web film produced by Louisiana Sea Grant. The video can be found at [www.laseagrant.org/media/ImpactHurricane/index.html](http://www.laseagrant.org/media/ImpactHurricane/index.html). "Our goal was to have the film completed and online by the start of hurricane season on June 1," said Roy Kron, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program communications manager. "We assigned the project to our communications intern, Jill Hancock, and she did an outstanding job. It puts into perspective how much land mass a hurricane can affect."

The film makes its points by using the total land area flooded from Texas to Alabama, as well as the area that endured high winds, during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Rectangular and circular overlays that represent the area of the Gulf Coast affected by the storms are placed on different locations of a map of the United States.

Dianne Lindstedt, Louisiana Sea Grant education coordinator, originally developed the hurricane impacts concept as a classroom activity teachers can use with their students, and she has been sharing the activity with educators. The Web film was developed as way to reach a larger and more diverse audience.

## **Minerals Management Service Awards \$18 Million Grant to Louisiana for Coastal Restoration.**

NEW ORLEANS — The Minerals Management Service (MMS) has awarded an \$18 million grant to the State of Louisiana through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) for the Barataria Land Bridge Dedicated Dredging project. The project will enhance the creation and nourishment of 752 acres of marshland in Jefferson Parish approximately 35 miles south of New Orleans, LA. The project was included in Louisiana's final CIAP plan approved by MMS in November, 2007.

"This is the largest grant to date that we have awarded Louisiana under CIAP," said MMS Director, Randall Luthi. "And, we are very much looking forward to working with Louisiana to award the remaining money allocated for the state's other projects."

The Barataria Land Bridge project, which was initially engineered, designed and permitted through the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) program, will protect existing marshland and create new marshland by enabling sediment building and inhibiting interior deterioration from rising sea-levels and excessive tidal exchange. The area currently is mostly shallow, open water with some existing broken marsh. The area has experienced annual land loss.

The CIAP was created by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Through the program, MMS will annually, from 2007 – 2010, disburse \$250 million in grants to six eligible Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas producing states – Louisiana, Alabama, Alaska, California, Mississippi and Texas. The funding to Louisiana includes \$127.5 million for each of the fiscal years 2007 and 2008, totaling \$255 million. Nineteen Coastal Political Subdivisions (parishes) will share in the funding for projects outlined in the state's approved plan.

## **LRA Reactivates Task Force Aimed at Long-term Needs of Southwest Louisiana**

*Task force to include recovery leaders from Texas*

Baton Rouge, LA - In an effort to properly identify the ongoing recovery needs of the communities devastated by Hurricane Rita, the Louisiana Recovery Authority announced today the reactivation of its task force charged with tackling issues affecting Southwest Louisiana in the aftermath of the disaster. "While much progress has been made since the devastation of Hurricane Rita two and a half years ago, the state understands that the recovery in this area is by no means complete," said Executive Director and Lake Charles native Paul Rainwater. "By reactivating the LRA's Rita Task Force and working closely with local leaders, including Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach, we will continue to assess roadblocks that may be hampering recovery and develop solutions to help this region of our state rebuild, repair and restore for future generations."

The new Rita Task Force includes recovery leaders from both Louisiana and Texas. The membership of the task force will include representatives of the following recovery sectors: economic development, workforce development, fisheries, coastal restoration, housing, education and non-profit organizations. Representatives of both the Louisiana and Texas state legislature will also serve as task force members.

"We support the reactivation of this task force, we think it's a good idea, and we believe it will help us focus on the final phases of recovery," said Lake Charles Mayor and LRA Rita Task Force chair Randy Roach.

When Hurricane Rita made landfall along the Texas-Louisiana border on September 24, 2005, it was a Category 3 hurricane. Winds in excess of 120 miles per hour pushed a 20-foot storm surge onto land. The devastation it left behind made it the third most expensive natural disaster in United States history. The Rita Task Force is expected meet for the first time in early June. Meeting dates, agendas and minutes are posted on the LRA's Web site as they become available.

## **State Approves \$125 Million in Community Recovery Projects for New Orleans**

NEW ORLEANS, La. (May 28, 2008) - The state has approved \$125 million for recovery-related rebuilding projects in the city, New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin announced tonight in his annual State of the City address. "The new administration has prioritized the recovery of New Orleans, and that is evident by their swift action on approving the use of these grant dollars," said Mayor Nagin. "These programs will help to rebuild our City and to make it strong for the next 50 years."

The City of New Orleans will use \$97 million of its allotment of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars to revitalize part of the riverfront, create a theater and performing arts district and start housing programs, among other initiatives. In addition, the state is making \$28 million available to the Finance Authority of New Orleans for a program to create homeownership opportunities.

"The projects the city presented the state are products of a citizen-led planning process and represent the exact kind of development we envisioned coming from this program - creating homeownership opportunities, investing in the unique culture of New Orleans and refurbishing community parks that will be beloved by citizens for years to come," said Paul Rainwater, executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority. "With these project approvals in hand, the City of New Orleans and the State will work together on historical and environmental reviews so that construction can move forward."

The LRA allocated almost \$411 million in CDBG dollars for New Orleans to implement its projects in its long-term recovery plan. Overall, the LRA allocated \$700 million for affected parishes to bring their recovery plans to life. The LRA board approves a parish's recovery plan and the parish then works with LRA and Office of Community Development staff to approve and fund individual projects from its plan. The City of New Orleans was the first local government to have a plan approved by the LRA in 2007. Approved plans include:

- New Orleans "soft seconds" mortgage program run by the Finance Authority of New Orleans -- \$56 million (includes an additional \$28 million in CDBG from the Road Home Small Rental Property Program First-time Homebuyer Pilot);
- Reinventing the Crescent Downriver Park -- \$30 million;
- Theater and Performing Arts District -- \$15 million;
- 17 Streetscapes throughout New Orleans - \$14.9 million;
- Other recovery projects -- \$9.1 million.

For a map of proposed projects and funding amounts, [click here](#). For a by-parish breakdown of proposed funding, [click here](#).

## ***DMR Receives Keep Mississippi Beautiful Award for 2007 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup***

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) received two awards at the 15th annual Keep Mississippi Beautiful (KMB) awards luncheon held May 9 at the Country Club of Jackson. DMR accepted the First Place Award in the State Government category for the 2007 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and a Partnership Award.

Over 250 participants from across the state traveled to Jackson to attend the event. The KMB Statewide Awards Program recognizes those individuals, groups, companies and government agencies who, through ongoing efforts, are utilizing public/private partnerships to improve their community's waste-handling practices and its environment. KMB received 25 entries in this year's awards program.

"It's an honor to accept the First Place Keep Mississippi Beautiful award for State Government for the 2007 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup on behalf of the DMR and our partners," said Lauren Thompson, DMR public relations director and chair of the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force, organizers of the annual event held in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup. "The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup underscores the DMR's mission: to enhance, protect and conserve marine interests of Mississippi. Like so many of the DMR's programs, these collaborative efforts succeed because of the commitment of a dedicated staff coupled with strong community involvement."

The 2007 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup was held on Sept. 15 in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup—the world's largest single-day volunteer effort to clean up the marine environment. More than 3,483 volunteers participated in the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, picking up 3,527 bags of trash along 156 miles of Coastal waterways in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties and the Barrier Islands. The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup takes place each year on the third Saturday in September. For more information, visit [www.mscoastalcleanup.org](http://www.mscoastalcleanup.org).

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 [dmr.ms.gov](http://dmr.ms.gov).

## ***Governor Barbour Announces Additional Matching Funds for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program***

(JACKSON, Mississippi) — Local governments needing hazard mitigation grants to increase community safety and disaster preparedness will pay less money to match federal dollars, Governor Haley Barbour announced today.

State and local governments, private non-profits or tribal governments that apply for monetary assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program will only be responsible for 5 percent of their project costs instead of the 25 percent local share normally required after a major disaster, the Governor said. Twenty percent of the total cost share will be met with state money approved by the Legislature after Hurricane Katrina.

“Following Hurricane Katrina, the federal government allocated more than \$400 million in mitigation funds to make Mississippi communities safer and stronger. But the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the worst natural disaster in American history, resulted in many communities unable to meet a 25 percent cost share match,” Governor Barbour said.

“For the past two years, we have worked to develop ways to clear this hurdle for coastal rebuilding. Today’s announcement is great news for local governments which are now poised to better utilize assistance opportunities available through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program without the burden of overwhelming costs.”

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, which is administered by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, pays 75 percent of costs for approved mitigation projects with the remaining 25 percent cost being the responsibility of state and local governments. However, money approved by the State Legislature following Hurricane Katrina will be used to guarantee the initial 20 percent cost share to FEMA in place of local government funds.

The Governor’s Office, MEMA, and the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration are working with FEMA to secure credits for non-federally funded mitigation projects along the Gulf Coast that ultimately will repay money into the state, said MEMA Director Mike Womack.

Projects being used to help Mississippi receive federal credit include such things as:

- Water and wastewater projects along the Gulf Coast;
- Hardening of wharves and docks at Port of Gulfport;
- Public utilities and Electrical Power Associations securitization and rebuilding; and
- Commercial projects.

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is funded by FEMA and administered by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, which identifies and manages the projects from beginning to closeout. The objectives of mitigation projects 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. Typical HMGP projects include critical infrastructure, draining projects, hazard mitigation planning, elevations and property acquisitions.

Since Hurricane Katrina, state agencies, local governments, private non-profits and tribal governments eligible for the 5 percent cost share have completed more than 230 mitigation project applications. Another 160 applications are still in development.

## ***From Ideas to Bricks - Hancock County and FEMA Long Term Community Recovery***

BILOXI, Miss. -- Does a community have a pulse? Decidedly so, according to Hancock County residents. It can be found beating strongly and steadfastly among the resilient and determined citizens. It can be seen vividly amid the concrete slabs now featuring colorful flowers and plants and inside the doors of the now thriving businesses emerging in the downtown areas of Bay St. Louis and Waveland. All areas were once piles of debris following Hurricane Katrina, ground zero from the nation's worst natural disaster.

Hancock County, a coastal community on the western side of the Mississippi Coast only 45 miles from New Orleans, is one of the top small art communities in America. It is home to America's largest rocket engine test complex. And, it is an area where artists peacefully coexist alongside governmental and professional offices; where a person can pick up a few groceries after work or a few drinks at the local watering hole, all contained within a few city blocks. Concerned residents gathered recently to discuss a plan to restore and revitalize their community's heart and soul--the downtown areas of Waveland and Bay St. Louis. Citizens from Hancock County united the two cities with this one common goal.

"This is about community revitalization. It's about rebuilding two downtowns damaged and destroyed by Katrina," said Tish Williams, executive director of the Hancock Community Development Foundation. "Through this program, we will invent a whole new Main Street Program for disaster communities and communities seeking a county-wide approach."

Natacha Vacroux, Long Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Manager for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has provided day-to-day technical assistance to the county's Chamber of Commerce for the past three months. "Because of Bob (Haywood), Natacha (Vacroux), and help from FEMA, we're able to effectively launch this program. They both bring great technical expertise to the table," said Williams. "Without them, we would not see the Main Street Program moving forward. Their expertise is helping us make what was once a dream, a reality for our citizens."

Vacroux, along with LTCR Section Chief Bob Haywood, serves as a key instrument in helping the county realize their vision of a renewed downtown. Haywood draws upon 26 years of community development experience to offer suggestions on economic revitalization and shifting a project from planning to implementation. "There's so much to be done we're happy to help," said Vacroux.

The Mississippi Main Street Association (MMSA) is also on board to assist Hancock County by helping the community develop its own Main Street Program. Hancock County consists of three local governments: the City of Waveland, the City of Bay St. Louis and Hancock County. For only the second time in the nearly 20 year history of the MMSA, an entire county has been assigned the Main Street designation.

The Hancock County Main Street Program is an initiative of the Hancock Community Development Foundation, a nonprofit public charity founded by the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce to act as a funding conduit for recovery projects with a broad community focus.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the Mississippi Development Authority allowed MMSA to waive membership fees of the Hancock County Main Street Program for three years, saving the Foundation approximately \$17,000. The fees will cover information sessions with committee members and other assistance as needed. A Mississippi Main Street Resource Team will provide technical assistance and follow-up guidance. Their services will be covered by a CDBG grant awarded to the MMSA and specifically for use in Hancock County.

"Bob and Natacha have given us phenomenal help as part of our team," said Kathy Pinn, Co-chair of the Main Street Design Committee and Publicity Chair for the Waveland Community Coalition. "They're both very knowledgeable; Bob's previous experience, having already worked with Main Street programs, provides essential help. Their participation is a great asset to us."

Part of Vacroux's tasks for the past three months have included serving as the county's interim Main Street manager until a full-time manager is hired. "What we're doing is recreating a sense of community. It's not just about economic development but regaining a sense of identity that these communities felt

before Katrina," said Vacroux. "There's a very strong sense of community in Hancock County. It's exciting to work with an organization and a group of people that are so committed."

Typically the community-driven Main Street Program seeks to revitalize existing downtown areas, using a four-point approach that balances historic preservation and community-based economic development. The program functions differently for each main street community but to launch a program following a natural disaster, particularly one on the scale of Katrina, is extraordinary.

The unusual circumstances provide an exciting opportunity for the residents. Parts of the Hancock County Main Street Program will literally work from the ground up. As the residents of these blended neighborhoods will tell anyone, Hancock County is a special place to live, work, visit and raise a family. It is best known for the friendliness of the people who live here and the bevy of home grown local restaurants that feature the best fresh seafood found in this region. One of the greatest assets is the miles of shoreline that feature the man-made beach, drawing residents and visitors alike to enjoy sailing, boating, fishing and a day in the sun.

"It is a program with a proven method for downtown revitalization, tailored to fit the unique needs of specific communities," said Vacroux. "For instance, in neighboring Hattiesburg [Miss.], this city has all of its physical structures intact while Waveland and Bay St. Louis do not, in many places. Both areas seek revitalization but the approaches are different."

So what's the next step with the county's Main Street Program? The MMSA National Resource Team will return to Hancock County in June to help with implementation, committees must be staffed and letters will be mailed to current and potential downtown property owners to gauge interest. The new program leaders refuse to get bogged down in the details.

"That's what's special about Waveland and Bay St. Louis. There's no one thing that's going to get done next," said Pinn. "We are literally rebuilding a county. Our message to our citizens is pick your passion and put it to work," said Tish Williams. "We have proven time and again that one person can make a difference. Through Main Street, our citizens have a vehicle to get involved and work as a partner with government in the rebuilding process."

If you know anything about the Bay-Waveland area, you know that this is a people who work hard and always make time to enjoy the community and each other. During the third weekend in May, the Hancock Chamber sponsored the second annual Bay Bridge Fest, a family-themed event where neighbors laughed, ate, shared and relaxed. And, where visitors had the chance to shop in the downtown areas and then head to the fest for great music, food and fun and a sneak preview of the brass castings of 16 Coast artists that will soon adorn the Bay Bridge Walking Path. This public art project is the only one of its kind in the country. For a sneak preview of this artwork and more on the area, go to: [www.hancockchamber.org](http://www.hancockchamber.org).

Bridge Fest marked the second year of the opening of the multimillion dollar Bay Bridge, which connects Harrison and Hancock Counties. During the festival, anyone could bid on Bay Bridge Art pieces donated by local artists to benefit the Hancock Main Street Program. Hancock County leadership and FEMA LTCR staff are devising new plans to address the housing issues. A Housing Resource Center has been established through the Hancock Community development Foundation with technical support by FEMA LTCR. "We're here to help and the help we provide is invaluable. Once we come in and communities see what we have to offer, people don't want us to leave," said Haywood. Photo Link: [www.photolibrary.fema.gov/photolibrary/photo\\_details.do?id=35110](http://www.photolibrary.fema.gov/photolibrary/photo_details.do?id=35110)

## **Mississippi DMR, Partners Launch Fishing Line Recycling Program**

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR), along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Coastal Conservation Association and the Mississippi Wildlife Federation, are launching the state’s first large-scale monofilament, or fishing line, recycling program. Forty-five outdoor recycling tubes are being placed at piers and boat launches throughout the three coastal counties in the campaign to reduce dangerous marine debris.

“Monofilament poses an entanglement hazard for all marine life,” says Wesley Devers, DMR marine fisheries scientist. “Plus it causes extensive damage to boat motors and water intakes on marine vessels and industrial facilities.” Fishing line consistently tops the list of debris found during the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, which is held each year on the third Saturday in September. Monofilament is non-biodegradable and can last about 600 years in the marine environment.

The recycling tubes, made from 6-inch PVC piping, are posted along with signs encouraging fishermen to “Help Keep Our Gulf Clean” by dropping their used fishing line into the tubes. The used fishing line will be collected by DMR and partnering organizations and then shipped to Pure Fishing America, the parent company of Berkley fishing line. Foreign debris is removed from the line and then the line is put through a processing machine. The line is ground into tiny pieces, melted down and then remolded into various products, such as spools for fishing line, tackle boxes and freshwater fish habitats. The recycled monofilament is not used to make new fishing line.



Monofilament is a high density plastic and requires a special recycling process. The fishing line must be placed into the specially designated receptacles. Even fishing line thrown in the garbage can find its way into and along the environment or marine waters, either by blowing out of the garbage can or landfill, or by being taken out by birds or animals.

The Mississippi program was modeled after Florida’s Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program, which has been highly successful and expanded to over 40 counties since it began in 1999. The program aims to heighten awareness about the negative impacts that fishing line debris has on human welfare, marine life and water quality; to decrease the amount of fishing line in the natural environment; and to increase the amount of fishing line being recycled. Visit the DMR online at [dmr.ms.gov](http://dmr.ms.gov).

## **Work Begins on Surfside Shoreline Protection Project in Texas**

AUSTIN — Work to save the village of Surfside from some of the highest erosion rates in the state begins this week, announced Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. And while the legal battle over homes on the beach continues, a revetment, or stone barrier, nearly three-fourths of a mile long will be protecting Beach Drive in about two months.

“We’re drawing a line in the sand with 19,300 tons of rock,” Patterson said. “This barrier will protect Beach Drive, as well as millions of dollars worth of public infrastructure and tax base.”

The revetment won't, however, protect homes on the beach seaward of the structure. Litigation on the removal of those homes plods forward in the most serious dispute over the Texas Open Beaches Act since it was passed in 1959.

"This project essentially holds the line against further erosion, but doesn't resolve the problem of private houses on the public beach," Patterson said. "The legal process continues, and everyone's rights are intact, but we have to act now to protect what's left of Surfside."

Work on the revetment is expected to last about 70 days, and will cost about \$2 million. The barrier will be 3,500-foot long, stretching from Texas Street to Whelk Street, protecting the entire length of Beach Drive. The barrier will act to absorb the wave energy and storm tides that chew up 10 to 15 feet of beach a year in the area. Construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of July, before the most intense part of the summer storm season begins. Surfside suffers one of the highest erosion rates in the state, leaving several homes built on dry land now standing on the public beach. Patterson has worked with the owners of these beach properties to remove their structures from the public beach, attempting to balance private property rights with public beach access.

In 2006, a total of 37 homes were on the public beach at Surfside in violation of the Texas Open Beaches Act in such a manner as to be priorities for removal as outlined under Patterson's Plan for Texas Open Beaches. Since then, 14 property owners have moved their houses off the beach and taken advantage of a \$50,000 offer from Patterson to reimburse their moving expenses. Surfside city officials removed or demolished nine more structures via a Federal Emergency Management Agency buy out. But 14 properties remain on the public beach. These 14 properties will be seaward of the revetment, Patterson said. "The effort to save Surfside is too important to be held up by these remaining structures," Patterson said.

## ***Texas Sea Grant Offers Electronic Guide to Texas Marinas, Services***

COLLEGE STATION — Boaters who want to know more about Texas' inland and coastal marinas and the services they provide can download a copy of the Texas Sea Grant College Program's 2008 "Texas Marina Facilities and Services Directory." The directory, which has been produced every year since 1986, is developed through an annual survey of all Texas marina operators and owners. It is available as a downloadable PDF file at <http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu/pubs/boating.php>.

Dewayne Hollin, Texas Sea Grant's marine business management specialist, who compiles the directory, said it can be a useful tool for selecting a marina to berth a boat or for any boater looking for a boat ramp, fuel dock, bait shop or boat repair facility. "More than half of the marinas in Texas provide fuel and boat rental and charter services," he said.

The directory also lists contact information, including telephone numbers, and the number of slips and availability of other services, including haul-out facilities, retail sales of boats and motors, sewer pump-out services, grocery stores or snack bars, and onsite lodging or RV parks for each marina. Hollin noted that the 10-year trend of increases in dry boat storage has continued into 2008. "More waterfront properties are being developed for residences, so more boaters are using dry storage, like dry stack facilities, to store their smaller boats."

Another major change in the Texas marina industry since the first survey has been a shift from coastal marinas to inland facilities. In 1986 there were 125 coastal marinas and 184 inland marinas; in 2008, the

number of coastal marinas has dropped to 107, while the number of inland marinas has jumped to 264. Clear Lake/Galveston Bay continues to rank first in the state in boat capacity, with 8,177 wet boat slips and 2,126 dry boat storage slots to accommodate 10,303 boats total, almost twice that of the second area, Lake Travis. Other marinas in the top five are Lake Conroe, Lake Texoma and Lake Ray Hubbard. The only other coastal marina in the top 10 list is the sixth-ranked Corpus Christi/Port Aransas/Aransas Pass/Rockport area.

Most marinas in Texas are small businesses — more than 60 percent of them have fewer than 100 wet slips, and 45 percent have fewer than 50 slips. Only one marina in Texas, located on Clear Lake, has more than 1,000 wet slips. Statewide, there are more than 45,000 wet slips and more than 17,000 dry boat storage slots available. The directory is sponsored by the Clean Texas Marina Program, Marina Association of Texas, Texas Sea Grant and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. For more information, contact Hollin at (979) 845-3857 or [Dewayne Hollin](#).

## ***Donations, Angler Dollars Help Achieve Texas' Shrimp Buyback Goals***

AUSTIN, Texas — It's taken more than a decade and close to \$12 million, but an effort to purchase and retire commercial shrimp licenses and improve the ecological health of Texas bays has achieved its goals, thanks to support from recreational anglers, shrimpers and conservation-minded financial supporters. Bay shrimpers have voluntarily sold more than 1,800 licenses to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and retired from the business since the buyback program began in the 1990s. As a result, peak bay shrimping effort has decreased by 91 percent since 1994.

During the same period, shrimper bycatch, or accidental catch of other marine life besides shrimp, has decreased by 84 percent. Abundance of bycatch species such as croaker, sand trout and anchovies has increased by 61 percent. Croaker abundance in Texas bays has almost doubled since 1994, and 2007 marked a record high catch in TPWD bay trawls. Anglers can expect to see the return of the fall croaker run.

"Our goal was to return bay shrimping effort to the levels of the 1970s, and we've achieved that," said Larry McKinney, Ph.D., TPWD Coastal Fisheries Division director. "Our red drum and trout fisheries are in their best conditions in 30 years, with populations increasing. And reducing the impact of near-shore shrimping has been significant in getting us to where we are today. Our objectives continue to be higher catch rates for shrimpers, reduced bycatch and healthy ecosystems."

Private donors played a key role in the buyback effort. On May 22, a check for \$1.2 million was presented to the TPW Commission by Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation Executive Director Dick Davis.

"This success story involves a diverse group of conservation philanthropists who all deserve recognition," Davis said. The campaign began 18 months ago when former TPW Commission Chairman Joseph Fitzsimons recommended that the foundation establish a fund in honor of the late William Negley, a long-time advocate of Texas coastal conservation. Charter contributors to the campaign via the Bill Negley Fund include Fitzsimons, Ed Harte, Will Harte, the Harte Charitable Foundation, Commission Chairman Peter Holt and Commissioner Dan Friedkin, who together provided \$400,000.

"We've finally reached the goal Bill Negley set decades ago," Fitzsimons said. "I was sitting at Negley's breakfast table 20 years ago, when he told me this had to happen. His vision was that anglers and other conservationists would bear the cost of this, not through regulation but through purchase of licenses to help fund efforts to reduce bycatch. Later, the Harte family asked me what single effort would make the

most difference for coastal conservation, and they made a \$250,000 challenge grant to get things rolling. All Texans will benefit from the resulting improved health of our coastal ecosystems."

The Foundation, led by board members Mimi Zoch, Karen Hixon (now a TPW Commissioner) and Pat Murray, raised the remaining \$800,000. Contributing partners included the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the Robert J. and Helen C. Kleberg Foundation, the Meadows Foundation, the Amon Carter Foundation and Texas Coastal Conservation Association. Several other foundations and individuals also contributed.

For bay shrimpers, the buyback program has provided an exit strategy for an industry plagued by declining shrimp prices and skyrocketing fuel prices. Those who remain have benefited-although total landings have decreased, the shrimp catch-per-hour has doubled since 1994, meaning the bay shrimp fleet is now smaller but more efficient.

"We've offered a way for people to make a graceful exit from a business in decline, providing some funds to get retrained or go into other businesses," McKinney said. "That was also an original purpose of the program authorized by the legislature."

For the first five years, state funding for the license buyback came almost exclusively from a surcharge on commercial bay and bait shrimping licenses, which still generates funds dedicated only for shrimp buyback. That changed in 2000, when the TPW Commission approved a \$3 surcharge on saltwater fishing stamps required of almost all recreational anglers fishing Texas coastal waters. That surcharge was set to expire in 2005, but the commission later approved an indefinite extension.

"Our anglers have been tremendously supportive of our conservation efforts and their investment has paid off in healthy populations of trout and red drum," stated McKinney, "we will be working closely with them and the Commission to look at options to continue to generate similar benefits in other areas of the fishery."

A portion of bay and bait shrimping license revenue remains dedicated for shrimp license buyback, so TPWD will likely continue to purchase smaller numbers of licenses in coming years, although the program's main goals have been achieved. More than 1,000 bay and bait licenses remain in the fishery, so if the industry turns around and more shrimpers return to the bays, license buyback could still be important to reduce effort and protect bay ecosystems.

## ***Oyster Research Initiative***

Combining talents to examine oysters' role and habitat changes

by [Dr. Jennifer Beseres Pollack](#) © 2008 Harte Research Institute

Researchers from Harte Research Institute and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi have come together to form a cooperative Oyster Research Initiative. The group will focus on better understanding the role that oysters play in Texas bays and the potential impacts that changing environmental conditions might have on oyster populations.

The scientists represent a wide range of scientific expertise, technical skills and research interests. Linking many faculty members and research staff together is a powerful way to leverage research resources and form a program of national significance. Considering oysters' importance to estuaries and people, it is surprising that they receive little attention.

Although the eastern oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, may be most familiar as a tasty delicacy served on the half-shell, oysters provide important services to humans before appearing on the menu. As filter-feeders, oysters help maintain bay water quality. As reef-builders, oysters provide habitat for fish and invertebrates, and their structure protects shorelines from erosion. Oysters are key species that maintain bay health and provide economic benefits to fishermen. Oysters can tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions; however, coastal development is putting increased pressure on upstream resources.

Dr. Jennifer Beseres Pollack and [Dr. Paul Montagna](#) monitor changes in oyster biomass, abundance and sex ratios throughout the Mission-Aransas estuary on the Texas coast. Using these data, [Dr. Hae-Cheol Kim](#) is developing a simulation model to predict impacts of changing environmental parameters on oyster population dynamics, and [Dr. David Yoskowitz](#) is developing economic valuations of oyster services benefitting humans. In a separate collaboration, Dr. Montagna's lab is working with [Dr. Joe Fox](#) to establish "Shell Bank," an oyster shell recycling program to reclaim shells from restaurants for use in restoration projects.

Oyster reefs are a valued fishery resource, but they also provide critical habitat for numerous other shellfish and finfish species. [Dr. Greg Stunz's](#) lab, working with Dr. Jim Simons from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, is characterizing nekton use of newly-mapped subtidal oyster reefs in Matagorda Bay, Texas. They have also compared food web structure among various subtidal habitats in Matagorda Bay using stable isotope and gut content analyses.

In collaboration, [Dr. Lee Smee's](#) lab is examining the effects of predators on shallow intertidal oyster reef communities and exploring organism recruitment into Texas bays. [Dr. Rebekah Thomas'](#) lab has discovered that intertidal oysters are less likely to suffer disease-related mortality than subtidal oysters. Her lab is in the process of quantifying the expression of heat shock proteins as a function of disease prevalence and proliferation.

The Oyster Research Initiative will utilize the results from these and other ongoing projects to drive cooperative research partnerships that address issues related to climate change, coastal development, socio-economics, and sustainability of oyster populations.



**Isis Dominguez and Miranda Lopez prepare an oyster habitat experiment.** Photo: J. Beseres

## Energy

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### ***MMS Incorporates Revenue Sharing Rules***

*Establishes Rules for Providing Funds to Coastal States*

WASHINGTON - The Minerals Management Service proposes to issue regulations for distribution of qualified Outer Continental Shelf revenues from certain federal Gulf of Mexico leases in accordance with the provisions of the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA). The regulations document the formula and methodology for calculating and allocating revenues to the Gulf Producing States of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas and their eligible coastal political subdivisions based on detailed parameters set by Congress. "MMS is pleased to issue this regulation to implement the revenue sharing provisions of GOMSEA for these coastal states," said MMS Director, Randall Luthi. "Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas will all benefit from MMS lease sales."

The first lease sale with immediate revenue sharing leases was Sale 224, held on March 19, 2008. GOMESA authorizes that 37.5 percent of all revenue including bonus bids, rentals and production royalty will be shared among the four States and their subdivisions. From that percentage and based on the actual location of the tracts bid on in that sale, the FY 2008 allocation of bonuses and first year rentals under this program would be as follows: Alabama – 30 percent, Mississippi – 27 percent, Louisiana – 32 percent, and Texas – 11 percent. Qualified OCS revenues are allocated among the Gulf producing States based on a formula that incorporates the State's proximity to certain tracts in the Gulf of Mexico Eastern Planning Area and a small section in the Central Planning Area.

### ***The Multipurpose Marine Cadastre (MMC) is Now Available Online***

The MMC, at <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/mbwg/htm/multipurpose.html>, contains data encompassing the spatial extent, usage, rights, restrictions, and responsibilities of marine areas; as well as other regionally-specific data needed to support planning, management, and conservation of submerged lands and marine spaces. The combination of marine cadastral and issue-specific data will provide users with the spatial context needed to address issues such as alternative energy siting, aquaculture, submerged lands leasing, and marine conservation.

The development of the cadastre was generated by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which directed the Secretary of the Interior, in cooperation with other federal agencies, to establish an OCS Mapping Initiative to assist in decision making related to alternative energy uses on the OCS. In response, the NOAA Coastal Services Center has been working in cooperation with the Minerals Management Service and the Marine Boundary Working Group to develop the first phase of the cadastre. The intent is to continue to expand the cadastre as more information becomes available, such as the addition of NOAA Fisheries habitat data and the potential incorporation of state data.

## Other News

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### ***Improved Monitoring and Prevention Keeping Beachgoers Better Protected***

Contact Information: Shakeba Carter-Jenkins, (202) 564-4355 / carter-jenkins.shakeba@epa.gov

(Washington, D.C. - May 29, 2008) Environmental Protection Agency's just-released 2007 Swimming Season Update shows state and territorial beach water quality managers are improving monitoring and prevention, and beaches were open for use 95 percent of beach days in 2007.

"We're all doing more to prevent pollution, monitor water quality, and protect public health at America's beaches and this report reflects the progress, as well as the continuing challenges," said Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles. "EPA is strengthening the science and increasing public awareness to help state and local partners reduce upstream stormwater pollution and downstream beach closures."

During the 2007 swimming season, some beaches were restricted because of contamination-related closings, but most beaches that did have closings were closed for less than two days. Beach days are those counted during the beach season for a given area. Many beaches are open seasonally, although beach days may be counted for most or all of a calendar year in warmer areas.

Beach contamination is often from stormwater running off streets, fields, forests, and other sources. EPA and its state partners are continuing solid progress in collecting and reporting data which provides a good picture of water quality conditions at our nation's beaches. EPA is also working with its partners to develop and use tools to identify and reduce beach pollution. The EPA BEACH Grant program has made available \$71 million to 35 coastal and Great Lakes states and territories since the passage of the BEACH Act in 2000. The funding level for beach monitoring is \$9.75 million this year.

Coastal and Great Lakes states and territories report beach monitoring and notification data to EPA on their coastal recreation waters EPA maintains an electronic monitoring and notification database, and provides states and territories with BEACH Act grants for monitoring and reporting their beach information to EPA. The information submitted by coastal states and territories to EPA regarding beach closings and advisories is reflected in the annual Swimming Season Update. This same information is available to the public.

EPA beach research centers on new and ongoing activities meant to establish benchmarks, explore emerging technologies and refine methodology. Each of these actions is focused on preventing the pollution that can make the beaches and waters unsafe:

- continuing to place a national priority on enforcement against sewer overflows, a key cause of beach closures
- development of a new test for water-borne pathogens that will provide results within six hours
- research to determine the incidence of health effects associated with beach water
- uncovering and correcting sources of disease-causing microorganisms
- working with communities to help build and properly operate their sewage treatment plants and end sewage overflows from outdated sewer systems
- implementing a national storm water program to reduce urban runoff

- working with the Coast Guard to improve sewage and other waste disposal from recreational boats and other vessels

More information:

[2007 Swimming Season Update: epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/seasons/2007/index.html](http://epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/seasons/2007/index.html)

[Historical information about specific beaches: epa.gov/waterscience/beacon/](http://epa.gov/waterscience/beacon/)

[General information about the beaches program: epa.gov/beaches/](http://epa.gov/beaches/)

## ***EPA Launches New Multilingual Websites in Korean and Vietnamese***

Contact Information: Lina Younes, 202-564-9924 / [younes.lina@epa.gov](mailto:younes.lina@epa.gov)

(5/21/08) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is launching new consolidated Web sites in Vietnamese and Korean as part of its ongoing effort to provide environmental information in Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese, in addition to English. These new sites compile EPA multilingual publications and materials in Korean and Vietnamese on a variety of environmental issues such as children's health, indoor air quality in nail salons and dry cleaners, asthma, fish consumption, proper pesticide usage, among others.

These sites also serve as valuable tools in delivering important health and environmental information to the Vietnamese and Korean communities in the United States and worldwide. This initiative promotes environmental protection in local communities as well as the global environment regardless of language. The launch of these Web sites coincides with the celebration in the United States of Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month during May. According to the U.S. Census, over 14.9 million U.S. residents trace their roots to Asian countries.

Visit EPA's multilingual Web sites at:

[www.epa.gov/vietnamese](http://www.epa.gov/vietnamese)

[www.epa.gov/korean](http://www.epa.gov/korean)

[www.epa.gov/chinese](http://www.epa.gov/chinese)

[www.epa.gov/chinese/simple](http://www.epa.gov/chinese/simple)

[www.epa.gov/espanol](http://www.epa.gov/espanol)

## ***U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Critical Habitat Designation for the Alabama Sturgeon***

May 27, 2008

Contacts: Bill Pearson, (251) 441-5870; Tom R. MacKenzie (404) 679-7291, [tom\\_mackenzie@fws.gov](mailto:tom_mackenzie@fws.gov)

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](http://www.fws.gov) today announced a proposed rule to designate critical habitat for the Alabama sturgeon, a species listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The proposed designation for the sturgeon includes one contiguous unit of river channel in portions of the Alabama and Cahaba rivers in the Mobile River Basin, Alabama. The unit encompasses 245 miles of river channel in the Alabama River and 81 miles of river channel in the lower Cahaba River, for a total of 326 miles of river channel.

The public is invited to comment on this proposed critical habitat designation, published in today's Federal Register. The Service will accept comments postmarked on or before July 28, 2008. Copies of the proposal and maps are available on the website at <http://www.fws.gov/daphne>, or by contacting Jeff

Powell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1208-B Main Street, Daphne, Alabama 36526 (telephone 251/441-5858; facsimile 251/441-6222).

When the Alabama sturgeon was first added to the list of threatened and endangered species in 2000, the Service determined that critical habitat was prudent but not determinable due to lack of information on the species' biological and habitat needs. Shortly after the listing, the Alabama-Tombigbee Rivers Coalition filed suit in federal court alleging several defects in the listing process, including failure to designate critical habitat at the time of listing. As part of this case, the court ordered the Service to submit a revised prudency determination and, if prudent, a proposed rule designating critical habitat to the Federal Register by May 16, 2008, and a final rule by May 16, 2009. The Service reviewed available data on the Alabama sturgeon and two closely related species, the pallid and shovelnose sturgeons. It also considered historical and current habitat conditions where Alabama sturgeons have been collected to identify specific areas that meet the definition of critical habitat.

Critical habitat is a term used in the Endangered Species Act that refers to specific geographic areas with features that are essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management and protection. A critical habitat designation does not establish a preserve or refuge nor does it affect individual citizens, organizations, states, local governments, or other non-federal entities that do not require federal permits or funding. Critical habitat does not include existing developed sites within the proposed unit such as dams, piers or marinas. As a listed species under the Endangered Species Act, the Alabama sturgeon is already protected wherever it occurs, and federal agencies are required to consult on any action they take that might affect the species. Designating critical habitat will provide non-regulatory benefits to the sturgeon by informing the public of areas that are important to the species' recovery and identifying where conservation actions would be most effective. The designation of critical habitat also will help the sturgeon by ensuring that federal agencies and the public are aware of the habitat needs of the species.

When determining areas to designate as critical habitat, the Service considers physical and biological habitat features that are essential to the conservation of the species. These features include space for individual and population growth and for normal behavior; cover or shelter; food, water, air, light, minerals, or other nutritional or physiological requirements; sites for breeding and rearing offspring; and habitats that are protected from disturbances or are representative of the historic geographical and ecological distributions of the species.

As part of designating critical habitat, the Service also takes into account the economic impact, as well as any other relevant impacts, of specifying any particular area as critical habitat. The Service may exclude any area from critical habitat if it is determined that the benefits of excluding it outweigh the benefits of including it, unless it is determined that excluding the area as critical habitat will result in the extinction of the species. The Service will publish an announcement in the Federal Register to notify the public when the draft economic analysis is available for review and comment. Once the draft economic analysis is available for comment, the Service will hold a public hearing on this proposed action and the draft economic analysis, should one be requested.

After the designation of critical habitat, the Service's consultations under the Endangered Species Act with federal agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, are not expected to change substantially. The consultations will require assessment of potential impacts to critical habitat. However, these consultations were already required because of the presence of Alabama sturgeon in the rivers that are being proposed for designation. Recommended flows for the Alabama sturgeon remain the same as the levels the Service consulted on prior to the designation. Therefore, the Service does not anticipate that management of flows within the river will change as a result of the designation.

Please submit any comments on the proposed critical habitat designation within 60 days, by July 28, 2008. These comments may be submitted through one of the following methods: Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments. U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R4-ES-2008-0058; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203. E-mail or faxes will not be accepted. All comments, including personal information, on <http://www.regulations.gov>. Written requests for public hearings may be submitted, using the same methods, within the next 45 days, by July 11, 2008.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).



Frank Parauka, USFWS biologist, holds a young Gulf sturgeon in his hands. Photo was taken on the Choctawhatchee River near Geneva, AL. Photo by Jake Osborne/USFWS



Range map for the Sturgeon

## ***Experts Say U.S. Coasts and Estuaries Contribute Billions to Economy, but Much is at Risk***

WASHINGTON (May 21, 2008) – At the National Press Club today Jeff Benoit, President of Restore America Estuaries and Dr. Linwood Pendleton, of The Ocean Foundation's Coastal Ocean Values Center, announced the results of a recent report documenting how coastal areas of the United States support economic values in excess of hundreds of billions of dollars. "The productivity of our coastlines is up there with the Fortune 500's" said Benoit. "Yet historically, we have overlooked the critical role our coasts play in contributing to the national economy."

According to the report, "The Economic and Market Value of Coasts and Estuaries: What's At Stake?" U.S. coasts and estuaries that have been protected and managed in a sustainable way are worth billions. Beaches, coastal communities, ports, and fragile bays are economic engines that drive and support large sectors of the national economy. The report focuses on aspects of coasts and estuaries that are most dependent on ecologically healthy conditions. The authors also examined a growing body of research that reveals the economic consequences of environmental change in coastal and estuary ecosystems.

Estuary regions make up only 13 percent of the land area of the United States, but are home to 43 percent of the population. In addition, 40 percent of the population works in these areas, and the estuaries produce a staggering 49 percent of the economic output. In eight coastal states, estuary regions are home to 80

percent or more of the state's economy. The report highlights the need for a national investment in protecting and restoring vital coastal environments to help grow America's employment, tourism, trade capabilities, and recreational and commercial fisheries. "How well we maintain these resources will be the bellwether for how our economic sectors respond" said Benoit.

"The findings, compiled by a panel of internationally renowned experts, just scratch the surface in our understanding of the value of coasts and estuaries" said Pendleton "It's astonishing. In this report we focus only on those sectors of the economy that depend on ecologically healthy coasts and estuaries, and still the numbers are huge. We are only now coming to grips with the enormity of the economic value and potential from sustainable uses of our coastal resources, and more importantly, the potential economic losses we suffer each year because of underinvestment in coastal protection and restoration."

Findings documented in the report include values gained from healthy coasts, such as:

- Beach going in the United States may contribute up to \$30 billion annually in economic well being to Americans; and
- Recreational fishing along the coasts could contribute between \$10 billion and \$26 billion per year in economic well being.

The report also identifies the threats and costs associated with damaged ecosystems that could be restored:

- 45% of America's petroleum refining capacity is at risk due to wetland loss in the Gulf of Mexico; and
- Dredging in U.S. waterways, often a result of deteriorating environmental conditions, costs the economy nearly \$600 million annually.

The report, available through Restore America's Estuaries' website ([www.estuaries.org](http://www.estuaries.org)), is the first step in a longer-term effort by the organization to make the economic value of restoration a more integral part of coastal planning and management. Restore America's Estuaries and The Ocean Foundation's Coastal Ocean Values Center have embarked on new research with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Restoration Center to develop methods to quantify the economic returns from coastal restoration with a pilot project set to begin in Southern California's Santa Monica Bay this June.

This project was made possible through funding provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Minerals Management Service, The McKnight Foundation, Shell - World Sponsor of America's Wetland: Campaign to Save Coastal Louisiana, and National Wildlife Federation. To learn more about this report contact: Jeff Benoit: (703) 524-0248 or Dr. Linwood Pendleton: (805) 794-8206

Restore America's Estuaries is a national alliance of community-based conservation organizations from the East, West, and Gulf coasts with a mission of preserving the nation's network of estuaries by protecting and restoring the lands and water essential to the richness and diversity of coastal life.

Restore America's Estuaries is organizing the 4th National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration, October 11 – 15, 2008, in Providence, Rhode Island. Visit [www.estuaries.org](http://www.estuaries.org) for more information. The Ocean Foundation's Coastal Ocean Values Center is a research center dedicated to helping local, national, and international coastal managers find, analyze, and use economic information to promote coastal restoration and sustainable use. Visit [www.coastalvalues.org](http://www.coastalvalues.org) for more information.

## Grant Opportunities

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### ***EPA to Award \$4.2 Million to Reduce Hypoxic Zone***

EPA plans to award up to \$4.2 million in targeted watershed grants to reduce the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Grant proposals must be submitted by September 9, 2008. EPA is soliciting proposals that will use water quality trading programs to reduce nutrient loads, particularly from the Ohio River, the Upper Mississippi River, or the Lower Mississippi River. These three sub-basins provide the most nutrients to the Gulf, contributing to the hypoxic zone, an oxygen-depleted area that cannot support aquatic life.

Excess nutrients come from a wide range of sources, including runoff from developed land, atmospheric deposition, soil erosion, agricultural fertilizers, and sewage and industrial discharges. Market-based approaches like water quality trading that use innovative pollutant cap and trade programs can accelerate the restoration of the Gulf and help achieve major reductions in pollution at lower costs. Setting pollutant reduction targets and allowing sources to buy and sell credits to meet those targets can make it faster, easier, and cheaper to meet water quality goals.

State governors and tribal leaders nominate proposals for targeted watershed grants. A national panel evaluates and ranks submissions based on criteria outlined in the notice. Selection of the grantees will be announced this fall.

The Targeted Watersheds Grants program has awarded nearly \$50 million to 61 organizations since 2003. For 2008, the focus is on supporting water quality trading to protect local water resources to reduce the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

#### **More information:**

[Targeted Watersheds Grants program](#)

[Water quality trading](#)

[Hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico](#)

### ***Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Request for Proposals for FY 2009***

NOAA requests proposals to develop a prioritized list of projects that are ready and eligible for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2009 under the CELCP (similar to FY 2007 and FY 2008). Each eligible state or territory may submit no more than 3 project proposals requesting a maximum of \$3 million in federal funding per proposal. The deadline for submission of proposals is 11:59pm EDT on July 23, 2008. The Federal Register Notice and Full Funding Opportunity notice (below) describe the specific details and requirements for this competition. Interested parties should contact the appropriate [state CELCP lead](#) for additional information on the state's project solicitation process.

[Federal Register Notice](#)

[Full Funding Opportunity Notice](#)

## [Project and Budget Templates and Project Application Checklist](#)

NOAA will develop a prioritized list of projects that are ready and eligible for funding. Availability of funding available is contingent upon Congressional appropriation. The FY 2009 President's Budget request included CELCP funding at a level of \$15 million.

For additional information, please contact: [Elaine Vaudreuil](#) or go to [http://www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/land/celcp\\_fundingop.html](http://www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/land/celcp_fundingop.html)

## ***Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program- Louisiana Request for Proposals for FY 2009***

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) Coastal Management Division (CMD) is currently requesting project proposals for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP). CELCP projects protect important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses. Priority is given to lands that can be effectively managed and protected, and that have significant ecological value by purchasing land from willing land owners at an appraised fair market value.

All proposals are due to LDNR-CMD by 11:59 pm CDT on Monday, June 23, 2008. LDNR-CMD must receive project proposals for review 30 days prior to submitting projects to NOAA. The deadline for submission of proposals by LDNR-CMD to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is 11:59pm EDT on July 23, 2008. For additional information, please contact Gregory DuCote by email at [Gregory.DuCote@LA.GOV](mailto:Gregory.DuCote@LA.GOV).

## **Training and Conferences**

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### ***Coastal Community Planning and Development Training***

Presented by [NOAA Coastal Services Center](#)

**June 30-31, 2008 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

[Palma Sola Botanical Park](#)

9800 17th Ave NW, Bradenton ([Map to Park](#))

The Coastal Community Planning and Development (CCPD) training will enable participants to understand, plan, and guide efforts to implement alternative growth and development approaches in their coastal communities. This course is designed for those who would like to participate, or are currently participating, in planning and development activities in their community who need a basic knowledge of planning processes as well as alternatives to conventional patterns of growth and development. This course is designed for those in the initial stages of planning alternative growth options for their communities. The training is most productive when attended by a broad spectrum of community members. The range of participants could include local elected officials and related personnel (e.g.,

council members, commission members, etc.); developers; business leaders; realtors; community groups; members of civic organizations; coastal resource managers; and concerned citizens.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP), Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) are pleased to offer this training in an effort to help its partners in their efforts to protect the natural environment and fulfill the management plans for Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay and Charlotte Harbor. Special thanks to NOAA Coastal Services Center for offering this course.

There are no prerequisites and no registration fee; however, we do ask that you preregister by completing this form. Please visit the [Manatee County Convention & Visitor Bureau](#) for nearby lodging options. For more information: <http://www.chnep.org/Events/ProfDev/CommPlanning7-08.asp>

## ***Southeast Regional Quality Growth Conference***

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

**August 12 – 14, 2008**

**Charleston, SC**

[www.sustainablecommunitiesconference.org](http://www.sustainablecommunitiesconference.org)

Nashville - The Southeast Watershed Forum is working with NOAA's Coastal Services Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Gulf of Mexico Program, TVA and other agencies and organizations on plans for the first Regional Quality Growth conference - *Building Sustainable Communities for the 21st Century*, scheduled for August 12-14, 2008 in Charleston, South Carolina at the Doubletree Guest Suites. This conference offers an opportunity to provide regional leadership on issues that will dramatically affect the viability and natural resource base of southeastern communities. It will highlight resource protection programs and management strategies to ensure more sustainable communities in a time of unprecedented growth and development pressures, diminished water availability and threats from climate change.

More than 35 presenters and seven plenary speakers will provide innovative ideas and case studies based on the following themes: 1) Building Greener Communities; 2) Saving Habitat, Farmland, Green Infrastructure and Community Character, and 3) Designing Resilient Communities.

Pre-conference workshops and field trips will be available on August 12, with the conference program beginning on August 13. Early registration is \$160/person until July 18. A conference room rate of \$109/night is available until July 25. On-line registration and room reservations are available through the website: [www.sustainablecommunitiesconference.org](http://www.sustainablecommunitiesconference.org).

The program should attract developers, land use planners, natural resource managers, elected officials, land trusts, watershed groups, universities and local, state and federal agencies in an effort to showcase ideas for creating wiser land use and development strategies for the region. The conference will serve as the Forum's 11th Watershed Roundtable. For additional information, please contact the Southeast Watershed Forum at 615-627-1310 or [kd@southeastwaterforum.org](mailto:kd@southeastwaterforum.org), or visit the website at [www.sustainablecommunitiesconference.org](http://www.sustainablecommunitiesconference.org).

## ***Presenters Invited to Participate in Coastal Symposium***

Scientists, resource managers, educators and members of community action groups that focus on environmental stewardship are invited to share information about their programs, education efforts or research at the 2008 Mississippi-Alabama Bays and Bayous Symposium, set for Oct. 28-29 at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center in Biloxi. People interested in presenting research, field experience or other information at the symposium should submit abstracts describing the content of their presentations to Bays and Bayous organizers. Go to <http://masgc.org/baysandbayous> for guidelines on submitting abstracts. Abstracts for oral or poster presentations must be received by Aug. 1.

The symposium will provide a forum for information exchange about solutions to coastal issues. These solutions should focus on minimizing human impact on the coastal environment and maximizing stewardship. Dozens of presenters will share their expertise in education, community action and research about issues important to the north central Gulf of Mexico. Session topics at the symposium will include coastal community action and stewardship; extension, outreach and education; habitat management and restoration; living estuarine resources; natural hazards resiliency and the ocean's role in climate; and water resources: supply and quality.

## ***Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan Implementation and Integration Workshop***

**Save the Date!**

**Omni Marina Hotel  
Corpus Christi, Texas  
August 20-21, 2008**

Please join us for the fourth annual "all hands" meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. This workshop provides an opportunity for the Priority Issue Teams to meet individually and in plenary to develop the first draft of Action Plan II, to share successes, network, and plan next steps.

Below is a general schedule of dates and times for planning purposes. Logistics and details will be available soon!



### **Wednesday, August 20**

9:00 am – 12:00	Opening Plenary Session
1:30 – 5:00 pm	Priority Issue Team Working Sessions
6:00 pm	Reception

### **Thursday, August 21**



8:30 am – 12:00	Priority Issue Team Report Outs and Closing Plenary Session
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## GIS Training Workshops



# GIS Trainings


## Coastal Applications Using ArcGIS and Coastal Inundation Mapping




**Training Highlights:**

<u>Coastal Applications</u>	<u>Coastal Inundation Mapping</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction to Coastal GIS</li><li>• Visualizing population growth along the coast</li><li>• Impacts to sensitive habitats</li><li>• Siting Marine Protected Areas</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coastal Inundation products</li><li>• Elevation and water level data</li><li>• Inundation mapping</li><li>• Risk and vulnerability assessment</li></ul>

**Hosted by: Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve  
& NOAA Coastal Service Center**



**Held at: Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center  
300 Tower Road  
Naples, FL 34113**



**Coastal Applications Using ArcGIS: Tuesday-Wednesday, July 22-23, 2008  
(8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)**

**Coastal Inundation Mapping: Thursday-Friday, July 24-25, 2008  
(8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)**

**Who Should Attend:**

Coastal Applications Using ArcGIS  
Environmental Non-Profit Staff, Natural Resource Managers, State and Local Planners, Wetland Professionals and Consultants

Coastal Inundation Mapping  
Certified Floodplain Managers, Elected Officials, Emergency Managers, National Weather Service Personnel, State and Local Planners

**\*\* Please note that these are *NOT* introductory classes. All participants must have completed an Introduction to ArcGIS course prior to registering for these workshops.**

The fee for each workshop is \$250.00 per person. This includes all materials, snacks, and lunches each day. **PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.**  
**The deadline for pre-registration is Monday, July 14, 2008.**

For additional information about these events, please contact Octavia Williams,  
(239) 417-6310 x 226, [octavia.williams@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:octavia.williams@dep.state.fl.us).

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