Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

June 2008

Rapid Response to Coastal Ports a Key Hurricane Season Goal of NOAA's Navigation Response Teams

June 17, 2008

Sunken wreckage near port entrances and coastal waterways endanger commercial traffic from delivering much-needed supplies to hard-hit regions.

High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

With an active hurricane season forecast by NOAA's National Weather Service, planning and preparation is the message both to the general public as well as to key components within NOAA who respond with emergency services support following a storm's passage. Critical to a coastal community's rebound after a major coastal storm hit, is the work of NOAA's Office of Coast Survey's Navigational Response Teams (NRTs). When hurricanes and strong storms make landfall they often bring with them stronger than normal ocean currents that can shift navigational channels and bring debris that can threaten the ability of vessels to navigate safely in these channels.

Working in cooperation with other Federal agencies including the U.S. Coast Guard, the Army Corps of Engineers, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), NOAA stands ready to respond quickly to port emergencies with its mobile NRTs.

"Our goal at NOAA is to ensure safe, healthy and productive coasts," notes John H. Dunnigan, NOAA assistant administrator of the National Ocean Service. "The role of the Office of Coast Survey in responding to the impacts of hurricanes is critical. The quick response of our Navigational Response Teams provides the foundation for getting coastal communities back on their feet quickly by clearing the way for both emergency supplies and normal maritime commerce to resume."

NRTs utilize small boats that can quickly survey ports and channels to update nautical charts allowing marine transportation to resume immediately following a hurricane or other disaster. Each of the six regional NRTs teams around the country consist of a three-person crew that uses some of the latest technology to quickly assess storm damage, identify submerged hazards or obstructions, and work with their federal, state and local community partners to restore safe navigational access.

NOAA NRT boats use sonar technology to locate and chart obstructions for safe navigation. The type of sonar that is used most often — side scan sonar — provides photograph-like imagery of the seafloor to view wreckage and debris below the surface. Some NOAA NRTs also operate a multi-beam sonar, a technology that provides full bottom coverage to create a three dimensional image of the seafloor for ocean depths on nautical charts.

Coastal areas hit hard by hurricanes require this rapid investigation to keep maritime vessel traffic navigating safely. The nation's economic welfare depends upon the Marine Transportation System with ports and commercial vessel traffic contributing more than $1 trillion annually to the nation's economy.

During the 2005 hurricane season, NOAA NRT boats were critical to the reopening of ports in the Gulf of Mexico following Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. With shipping channels promptly charted, ships were able to get to the disaster region with much-needed supplies.

When not responding to hurricanes and other emergencies, NOAA NRTs provide valuable assistance to navigation safety by checking the accuracy of NOAA's electronic navigational charts and responding to survey requests. Recent NOAA NRT missions include the discovery of a major shipwreck near the entrance to the Port of Pensacola, Fla. and surveys conducted for the U.S. Navy off Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, a former U.S. Navy training site, to assess the quantity, types, and distribution of dangerous underwater unexploded ordnance leftover from military training operations.

Wrecked Highway 90 Bridge at the mouth of Biloxi Bay, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

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

NOAA Issues Rule to Prevent Overfishing of Atlantic Sharks

June 19, 2008

Sandbar shark.

High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA's Fisheries Service today announced a new rule to lower significantly the fishing quotas for sandbar and porbeagle sharks in order to rebuild these depleted species. NOAA also will implement new regional quotas for the other large coastal sharks.

The new shark regulations will take effect starting on July 24. That latest stock assessment determined that the population of sandbar sharks was depleted and the rate of fishing was too high. Sandbar sharks are prized for their fins, and they are one of the most commercially valuable shark species caught in the Atlantic Ocean. They make up the majority of current East and Gulf Coast commercial shark landings.

"Our recent stock assessments show we need to take strong conservation measures to stop overfishing on sandbar and other sharks to allow these species to rebuild," said Jim Balsiger, NOAA acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "These sharks, like many sharks, mature late, grow slowly and produce few young, making them particularly vulnerable to fishing pressure."

The rule also requires all sharks to be offloaded at the dock with all of their fins naturally attached. This regulation is designed to improve enforcement against shark finning, where fishermen remove the highly

valuable fins from sharks at sea and discard the shark carcasses overboard. The regulation also will assist with identification of shark species and improve species-specific data collection for future stock assessments.

Porbeagle shark.
High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

In the new rule that will publish in the Federal Register on Tuesday, June 24, 2008, NOAA's Fisheries Service establishes a separate sandbar shark annual commercial quota of 87.9 metric tons. Sandbar sharks were previously part of the Large Coastal Shark Complex that had an annual commercial quota of 1,017 metric tons. Sandbar sharks comprised an average of 60 percent of the large coastal shark landings, an annual average of 594.4 metric tons.

The rule establishes regional quotas for the other large coastal sharks. These quotas (non-sandbar shark Large Coastal Shark regional quotas) are 390.5 metric tons in the Gulf of Mexico region and 187.8 metric tons in the Atlantic region. The rule also reduces the annual commercial quota for porbeagle sharks from 92 metric tons to 1.7 metric tons per year.

Under this final rule, all fishing for sandbar sharks will take place as part of a shark research fishery with approximately 10 commercial fishing vessels participating per year. More details on the research fishery can be found in a separate Federal Register notice that will also publish on Tuesday. NOAA's Fisheries Service is now accepting applications from commercial shark fishermen for the shark research fishery.

Applications are available on the Highly Migratory Species Management Division's Web site. The objective of the research fishery is to gain more information on shark life history, as well as to develop techniques to reduce bycatch, and ensure sufficient data collection for future stock assessments. The new rule prohibits recreational shark fishermen from landing sandbar or silky sharks.

New NOAA Ocean Observing System in Gulfport Supports Safe, Efficient Navigation

June 23, 2008

NOAA staff with Mississippi Senator Thad Cochran touring the Port of Gulfport via tugboat.

High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

Mariners can now get free real-time information on water and wind conditions for the Port of Gulfport, Miss., from a new NOAA ocean observing system at the port.

The NOAA Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS®) at Gulfport provides observations of currents, water and air temperature, barometric pressure, and wind speed, gusts and direction through an easy-to-use Web portal at http://www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/ports.html.

"NOAA is committed to providing quality tools and services like PORTS® ensure safe and efficient navigation," said John H. Dunnigan, NOAA assistant administrator for the National Ocean Service. "NOAA is pleased to add the Port of Gulfport 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 system also allows large ships to time their arrivals and departures more efficiently.

"The PORTS® system is a valuable support tool that not only improves the safety and efficiency of our maritime customers, it also aids in coastal resource management with real-time environmental data," said Don Allee, executive director for the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport. "Our partnership with NOAA makes the Port of Gulfport a better port, and we are proud to be part of this dynamic program."
The Gulfport system brings the number of PORTS® in operation around the nation to 16. The Port of Pascagoula, Miss., was added to the PORTS® network in May 2008. Estimates of economic benefits directly attributed to the system range from $7 million per year for Tampa Bay to $16 million per year for Houston-Galveston.

"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 Sen. Thad Cochran. "I am proud to have this important technology located in the Port of Gulfport."

The new real-time wind and current station.
High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

The Port of Gulfport, Miss., is the third busiest container port on the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and handled more than 1.6 million tons of cargo, shipping nearly 198,000 containers in 2006.

Model Development Assists NOS in Operational Forecasting of Coastal Currents

The Regional Ocean Modeling System (ROMS), developed in part with support from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), is being used as a foundation for NOS coastal and estuarine operational forecast systems to predict currents, water levels, and tides in coastal areas of the United States. Prototype operational forecast systems based on ROMS are presently under development and evaluation for the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, and Tampa Bay. The model can also serve as a future physical backbone for ecological forecasting in these regions. The transitioning of ROMS to an operational setting has involved a highly successful collaboration between the Office of Coast Survey (OCS) Development Laboratory, the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS), and the ROMS academic community. Three training workshops have been held to familiarize NOS modelers with the ROMS code, including its data assimilation and post-processing tools and its application in estuarine settings. For more information, visit http://www.myroms.org/ or contact Beth Turner or Frank Aikman.

New High-Tech Research Ship to Serve NOAA's Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary

June 27, 2008

R/V *Manta* maneuvering.
High resolution (credit: NOAA)

Today, NOAA christened a new, state-of-the-art research vessel that will enhance the study and protection of Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico. The 83-foot R/V Manta will operate out of Galveston, Texas, where the sanctuary is headquartered.

"This technologically advanced research vessel is a vital addition to our fleet," said Daniel J. Basta, director of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. "The Manta will open new windows onto the marine life and habitats of the Flower Garden Banks sanctuary while helping us protect this special place for future generations."

Built in Bellingham, Wash., by All American Marine, the twin-hulled Manta features a laboratory equipped with the latest scientific instruments, air compressors to allow divers to refill scuba tanks at sea, and a recompression chamber to enhance diver safety. The vessel can hold up to 25 people, deploy robot subs and other ocean exploration tools, and cruise at speeds up to 35 knots. In addition to being a platform for exploring the sanctuary and surrounding waters, the Manta will also serve as a patrol vessel to enforce sanctuary regulations and a floating classroom. Teachers will be regular visitors aboard the Manta to watch and learn as scientists conduct research.

"With the Manta, we will be able to study the sanctuary more intensively, protect it more effectively, and share its wonders with more people than ever before," said G.P. Schmahl, the sanctuary's superintendent. "The vessel's capabilities are as diverse as the sanctuary itself."

Located 115 miles off the Texas/Louisiana coast, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is one of 14 marine protected areas managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The sanctuary includes the two northernmost coral reefs in the continental United States, sponge communities, and other habitats.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Recruiting Members for Outreach and Education Advisory Panel

Tampa, Florida - The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is forming a new Outreach and Education Advisory Panel (AP) to advise the Council on matters pertaining to outreach and education. The AP will evaluate innovative approaches to outreach and education strategies and make recommendations to the Council on such strategies. It will consist of eleven members; seven members from state/federal agencies, which include an O&E specialist from each of the five Gulf States, a Sea Grant representative, and the NOAA Fisheries SERO Public Affairs representative.

The remaining four representatives for which the Council is recruiting will consist of one media representative and three members of the public. One of these four members should also have a technology

background. Expected time commitment is 1 - 2 two-day meetings per year. Members are not compensated; however travel expenses are reimbursed. Anyone interested in serving on the AP should submit a letter and resume to:

Charlene Ponce
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
2203 N. Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607

Materials may also be faxed to: 813-348-1711; or e-mailed to charlene.ponce@gulfcouncil.org. Resumes and letters should be received no later than close of business July 25, 2008.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans designed to manage fishery resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

Tracking Manatees Will Contribute to Florida Water Management Plan

Global Positioning System (GPS) tags attached to manatees will help resource managers evaluate long-term effects of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan on critical seagrass habitat in southwest Florida. As part of a U.S. Geological Survey project, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researchers are investigating effects of increased freshwater flow on seagrass beds located downstream of the Everglades National Park. Low-visibility conditions prevent researchers from mapping seagrass beds with standard remote sensing techniques. As a result, researchers are using GPS tags to track manatees to feeding areas within seagrass habitats of the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge and Everglades National Park. Continued GPS tracking will allow managers to compare habitat use and maps of submerged aquatic vegetation to examine changes in seagrass habitat after restoration of freshwater flow. Over the past 40 years, southwest Florida's inshore marine ecosystems have experienced significant losses to submerged aquatic vegetation, which serves as important nursery, sanctuary, and foraging areas for marine species. The goal of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is to re-establish historic levels of fresh water flow to the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico and to redirect it to revive coastal and marine ecosystems. For more information, contact Jud Kenworthy.

Hurricane Season Preparedness Meeting with Louisiana Natural Resource Stakeholders

On June 9-10, staff from the Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) attended a joint meeting with the Louisiana Sea Grant to discuss ways to effectively communicate with stakeholders in Louisiana following oil and chemical spills, and to increase the overall level of preparedness as hurricane season approaches. Strategies to mitigate potentially contentious human dimensions issues were also discussed. Outcomes of the meeting included increased knowledge of OR&R's roles and responsibilities in Louisiana, agreement on the type and level of notification and information sharing to occur following a spill, and a commitment by field agents and Sea Grant administrators to assist with public information and facilitation activities following spills. Representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, and Coastal Response Research Center, also participated in the meeting. For more information, contact Troy Baker.

Hypoxia Action Plan to Reduce Gulf of Mexico "Dead Zone" Released

On June 16, the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force formally released the *2008 Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan* during a signing ceremony and meeting in New Orleans, LA with National Ocean Service Assistant Administrator Jack Dunnigan representing NOAA AdministratorVADM Lautenbacher as NOAA's Task Force member. The updated Action Plan reiterates the Task Force's commitment to the framework of the original plan, including continued encouragement of incentive-based voluntary actions for nutrient load reductions, and maintains the goal of reducing the size of the hypoxic zone to 5,000 square kilometers.

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's long-term competitive research program to address this problem provided the foundational science for this, as well as the last Action Plan in an adaptive management framework. Hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico, which threatens critical commercial and recreational fisheries that generate $2.8 billion annually, is the subject of the largest interagency ecosystem management effort in the Nation to address nutrient pollution of coastal waters. Since its inception, NOAA has fulfilled a critical role in Task Force activities, playing key leadership roles and managing programs that are the major driving force for determining the causes of hypoxia and its impacts on living resources.For more information, contact Rob Magnien at Rob.Magnien@noaa.gov.

Other NOAA News

Special Publication Features HAB Lesson Plan for High Schools

An oceanographic educational journal for high school science students and teachers features a lesson plan written by a National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researcher. The lesson plan appears in the premier issue of *Rising Tides*, a publication prepared by the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) funded by NOAA and in collaboration with NASA. *Rising Tides* contains an assortment of cutting-edge research articles that introduce students to exciting new research in oceanography, while reinforcing the complex biological aspects of coastal oceanography. The lesson plan submitted by NCCOS is titled "What is a Harmful Algal Bloom?" It describes an assortment of HAB species, the various toxins they produce, and possible effects on humans and marine resources. *Rising Tides* is available on the NCCOS website education page at http://www.coastalscience.noaa.gov/education/welcome.html and on the NASA website at http://phytoplankton.gsfc.nasa.gov. On the NASA website, follow the "*Rising Tides*" link at the bottom of the page. For more information, contact Pat Tester at Pat.Tester@noaa.gov.

NOAA Outlines Annual Catch Limits to End Overfishing

June 5, 2008

NOAA's Fisheries Service today outlined a plan to establish annual catch limits designed to help restore federally managed marine fish stocks. Annual catch limits are the amount of each type of fish allowed to be caught in a year and are required by the 2007 amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Additionally, the act calls for measures to ensure these limits are followed and that the limits do not exceed the scientific recommendations made by the regional fishery management councils' scientific committees.

"Annual catch limits for fish stocks will help the nation meet the call by the president and Congress to end overfishing," said Jim Balsiger, NOAA acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "They will help sustain and recover stocks that provide the nation with valuable seafood and recreational opportunities, as well as benefits to the ocean environment."

NOAA's Fisheries Service, the regional fishery management councils, and fishing communities have taken significant steps toward ending overfishing and rebuilding stocks in recent years. In 2007, seven fish stocks were removed from the overfishing list. However, 41 fish stocks in U.S. ocean waters continue to be fished at unsustainable levels.

The guidelines published in the Federal Register today propose to set up a system of catch limits and targets for each stock to prevent overfishing. The system would account for scientific uncertainty in estimating catch limits for a stock, and include accountability measures to prevent annual catch limits from being exceeded, and to address such a situation quickly if it does occur. Annual catch limits will be required for all U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries subject to overfishing by 2010, and all other stocks by 2011. NOAA hopes to issue final guidelines on annual catch limits by the end of 2008.

"Ending overfishing on these stocks and preventing overfishing from occurring on others is critical to maintaining and rebuilding our valuable fisheries resources," said Balsiger. "The economic, recreational and ecological stakes are high."

U.S. fisheries contribute more than $35 billion annually to the economy and an estimated $20 billion is spent on recreational fishing activities each year. The proposed guidelines may be viewed online at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/msa2007/. Public comments on the proposed revisions will be accepted through Sept. 8.

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

NOAA Launches Online Inventory of Marine Protected Areas

June 9, 2008

NOAA's National Marine Protected Areas Center, in cooperation with the Department of the Interior, has created a first ever online inventory of the nation's marine protected areas (MPAs). This unique, comprehensive inventory catalogs and classifies marine protected areas within US waters, and was developed with extensive input from state and federal MPA programs, as well as other publically available data. It provides baseline information that will contribute to the development of the National System of MPAs, as defined in Executive Order 13158.

"This is a milestone in the development of a national system of marine protected areas," says John H. Dunnigan, NOAA assistant administrator of the National Ocean Service. "Not only will the MPA Inventory be a key resource for nominating eligible sites to the national system, but it will also serve as a

valuable tool for MPA managers and stakeholders, enabling them to make more informed decisions about current and future management of our nation's marine resources."

The MPA Inventory, posted on http://www.MPA.gov, contains a range of information on each protected area established or managed by federal, state, or territorial agencies or programs. For each site, it includes the following information: Site Name, Region, Level of Government, Level of Protection, Permanence, Constancy, Scale of Protection, Conservation Focus, Primary Conservation Focus, Fishing Restrictions, and Area. Both tabular and GIS spatial data can be downloaded, as well as mapping products and analysis reports created using the MPA Inventory data.

Information in the MPA Inventory is current as of December 2007. Data was collected from most federal, state, and territorial agencies and programs. For states that chose not to participate in the inventory, the MPA Center collected the best publicly available information. All information has been quality checked by the MPA Center to ensure consistent application of definitions. The MPA Inventory will be updated annually.

NOAA Proposes Rule to Require Saltwater Angler Registration

June 11, 2008

High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA's Fisheries Service is seeking comment on a proposed rule that requires anglers and spearfishers who fish recreationally in federal ocean waters to be registered before fishing in 2009. The rule would also require registration by those who may catch anadromous species anywhere, including striped bass, salmon and shad that spawn in rivers and streams and spend their adult lives in estuaries and the ocean.

The proposed rule satisfies the National Academy of Science National Research Council recommendations to establish a national database of saltwater anglers, and meets the requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The proposed rule is part of a larger initiative of NOAA's Fisheries Service to improve the quality and accuracy of data on marine recreational fishing and catches. The registry will also help measure the economic benefits of recreational fishing on the national and local economies.

"The national registry of saltwater anglers is the key to closing a major gap in information on recreational fishing," said Jim Balsiger, NOAA acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "It will help us conduct surveys to get a more complete picture of how recreational fishing by an estimated 14 million people is affecting fish stocks. This will lead to better stock assessments and more effective regulations to rebuild and manage these valuable fish."

NOAA may exempt anglers from registration if they already have a state-issued saltwater fishing license or registration, and the state provides sufficiently complete information to place in the national registry. In certain instances, anglers in states participating in regional surveys of marine recreational fishing may also be exempted. The new rule allows states to apply for exemptions.

States on the West Coast (including Alaska), the Gulf Coast, and the South Atlantic offer saltwater fishing licenses. Hawaii and the states from New Jersey to Maine do not.
"States without saltwater licenses have a strong incentive to adopt licenses," said Balsiger. "Any fee that a state collects through a license can be used for restoration and fishery management in the state. By law, the registry fee taken by NOAA will offset the cost of issuing the registration. It can not be specifically directed to fisheries management."

Fishermen would be required to be registered annually and NOAA will not charge a registration fee in the first two years. Beginning in 2011, the annual fee will be an estimated $15 to $25 per angler. Anglers under the age of 16 would be exempt from registering and fees would be waived for indigenous people, such as members of federally recognized tribes. NOAA's Fisheries Service recognizes that many indigenous people fish for food as part of ancient cultural traditions.

Anglers who fish only on licensed party, charter, or guide boats would also be exempt, since these vessels are surveyed separately from the angler surveys. Also, persons who hold commercial fishing licenses or permits, and are legally fishing under them, will be exempt from the registration requirement.

Registrations will include an angler's name, address, telephone number, and the regions where fishing is conducted. This information will not be made public; it will be used only by NOAA to conduct surveys. The National Academy of Science's National Research Council advised NOAA's Fisheries Service in 2006 to redesign its surveys of recreational fishermen for more accuracy, precision, and transparency. The NRC's independent scientific review resulted in more than 200 recommendations for improving marine recreational surveys, including the recommendation to establish a national database of saltwater anglers. This recommendation became law in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the primary fisheries law for U.S. ocean waters, which was reauthorized in 2007. Please see the Marine Recreational Information Program for additional information on this effort.

For the last 28 years, NOAA's Fisheries Service has conducted recreational fishing surveys through random telephone interviews with residents living in coastal counties. NOAA and its regional and state partners conduct an extensive program of dockside interviews of anglers to obtain data on their catch. The national saltwater registry will enable surveyors to interview only those people who fish, and will reach all anglers, not only those who live near the coast. To read the proposed rule, go to the National Saltwater Anlger Registry.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until Aug. 11. They can be mailed to:
John Boreman
Director, Office of Science and Technology
NMFS
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Attn.: Gordon Colvin
Comments also can be submitted electronically.

Scientific Assessment Captures Effects of a Changing Climate on Extreme Weather Events in North America

June 19, 2008

High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

The U.S. Climate Change Science Program and the Subcommittee on Global Change Research today released a scientific assessment that provides the first comprehensive analysis of observed and projected changes in weather and climate extremes in North America and U.S. territories. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change previously evaluated extreme weather and climate events on a global basis in this same context. However, there has not been a specific assessment across North America prior to this report.

Among the major findings reported in this assessment are that droughts, heavy downpours, excessive heat, and intense hurricanes are likely to become more commonplace as humans continue to increase the atmospheric concentrations of heat-trapping greenhouse gases.

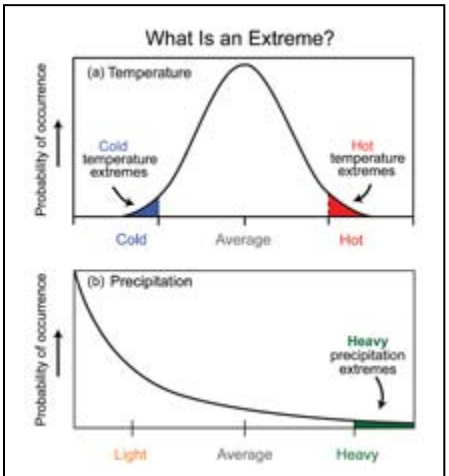
The report is based on scientific evidence that a warming world will be accompanied by changes in the intensity, duration, frequency, and geographic extent of weather and climate extremes.

"This report addresses one of the most frequently asked questions about global warming: what will happen to weather and climate extremes? This synthesis and assessment product examines this question across North America and concludes that we are now witnessing and will increasingly experience more extreme weather and climate events," said report co-chair Tom Karl, Ph.D., director of NOAA's National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C.

"We will continue to see some of the biggest impacts of global warming coming from changes in weather and climate extremes," said report co-chair Gerry Meehl, Ph.D., of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. "This report focuses for the first time on changes of extremes specifically over North America."

The full CCSP 3.3 report, Weather and Climate Extremes in a Changing Climate, and a summary FAQ brochure are available online.

Global warming of the past 50 years is due primarily to human-induced increases in heat-trapping gases, according to the report. Many types of extreme weather and climate event changes have been observed during this time period and continued changes are projected for this century.



High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

Specific future projections include:

- Abnormally hot days and nights, along with heat waves, are very likely to become more common. Cold nights are very likely to become less common.
- Sea ice extent is expected to continue to decrease and may even disappear in the Arctic Ocean in summer in coming decades.
- Precipitation, on average, is likely to be less frequent but more intense.
- Droughts are likely to become more frequent and severe in some regions.
- Hurricanes will likely have increased precipitation and wind.
- The strongest cold-season storms in the Atlantic and Pacific are likely to produce stronger winds and higher extreme wave heights.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

NOAA plays a key role in the Climate Change Science Program, which is responsible for coordinating and integrating climate research, observations, decision support, and communications of 13 federal departments and agencies. The National Center for Atmospheric Research investigates climate, weather, and other topics related to the atmosphere. It is sponsored by the National Science Foundation and managed by a nonprofit consortium of universities, the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research.

NOAA: Seven Stocks Removed from Overfishing Lists, None Added

2007 status of U.S. fisheries report released

June 27, 2008

NOAA announced today that seven stocks have been removed from the overfishing list and no new stocks added in their annual report to Congress on the status of fishing stocks. The report tracks both population levels and harvest rates for species caught in federal waters between three and 200 miles off U.S. coasts. This year's report indicates that seven stocks have been removed from the overfishing list, four stocks have increased population levels and are no longer overfished, and three stocks are now listed as fully "rebuilt."

"This is great news for the American people and for the scientists who devote their lives to the study of fish populations," said Jim Balsiger, NOAA acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "Ending overfishing on these stocks and preventing overfishing from occurring on others is critical to maintaining and rebuilding our valuable fisheries resources, and this year we took a giant step forward in this regard."

NOAA's Fisheries Service and the eight regional fishery management councils took significant steps toward ending "overfishing" — when too many fish in a species are caught in a year — and rebuilding stocks in 2007. Among the report's findings:

- 244 stocks and stock complexes were reviewed for their overfishing status.
    - 203 (83 percent) are not subject to overfishing, while 41 (17 percent) are.
    - Seven stocks were taken off the overfishing list in 2007, the largest number removed in a single year since NOAA has been compiling the report.

- 190 stocks and stock complexes were reviewed for their overfished status.
    - 145 (76 percent) are not overfished, while 45 (24 percent) are. A stock or complex is considered to be overfished when its population numbers fall below a certain level.
    - Four complexes are no longer overfished.
    - Three complexes have fully rebuilt to target levels.

"No new stocks were subject to overfishing in 2007, which is very good news as well," Balsiger said. "The economic, recreational and ecological stakes for sustaining these resources are incredibly high."

"NOAA fisheries scientists constantly are learning more all the time about how to help fish populations," he added. "Our agency is working hard to end overfishing by 2010, as required by the Magnuson Stevens Act. Continued and new sustainable management practices such as annual catch limits are one of the tools we are using."

NOAA recently proposed guidelines to establish catch limits and targets for each stock to prevent overfishing. These annual catch limits are the amount of fish allowed to be caught in a year, and are required by a 2007 amendment to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Additionally, the act calls for measures to ensure these limits are followed and do not exceed the scientific recommendations made by the regional fishery management councils' scientific committees.
The proposed guidelines may be viewed online. Public comments on the proposed revisions will be accepted through Sept. 8.

NOAA's Fisheries Service develops the annual status of U.S. fisheries report using the best available scientific information available and the status determination criteria specified in fishery management plans.

National Estuaries Day

The last Saturday in September is National Estuaries Day -- an interagency celebration of the magical places where rivers meet the sea. It began in 1988 as part of Coast Weeks to educate the public on the importance of estuaries and the need to protect them. The annual event has matured into a national campaign with festivities across the country.

NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System and the U.S. EPA's National Estuary Program have collaborated throughout the years to promote National Estuaries Day. This partnership has been growing stronger and expanding to other federal, state and non-profit agencies. As a result, this interagency campaign reaches more and more individuals every year.

Since 2001, the featured event for National Estuaries Day has been EstuaryLive, an interactive field trip of over the Internet. Classrooms from across the country log on to explore estuaries from Maine to Alaska. The program has allowed multiple National Estuarine Research Reserves and National Estuary Programs to participate in the same educational event and provides an opportunity for students that live far from the coast to experience the wonderful world of estuaries. For more information visit http://www.estuaries.gov/neday.html.

In the Gulf States

Alabama County Efforts Make River Delta Marina Clean

River Delta Marina in Mobile County will be recognized as a Clean Marina at 4 p.m. June 18 at the marina. The county-owned marina's designation as a Clean Marina will mark the first certification in Alabama since Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina. It will be the fourth Clean Marina in the Alabama program. Other Clean Marinas include Zeke's Landing Marina in Orange Beach, Dog River Marina in Mobile and Harbor Pointe Marina in central Alabama.

In order to earn the designation, marina operators implemented specific best management practices aimed at protecting the water, air and land surrounding the marina. Mobile County marina management and staff worked with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management as well as Clean Marina Coordinator Laura Bowie to take the necessary steps to qualify for Clean Marina status. The Clean Marina Program's best management practices include sewage handling, fuel management, solid waste management, vessel cleaning and repair, stormwater management, staff training and boater education.

There are ll state Clean Marina programs in the United States. About 300 marinas have been certified over the last 12 years. The Clean Marina Program in Alabama was launched in 2004 and has pledges from about a half dozen marinas interested in working toward their own Clean Marina certification.

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium has coordinated this Clean Marina Program from its inception, along with help from Auburn Marine Extension & Research Center, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Coastal Section and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. Additional information about the program is available at www.masgc.org/cleanmarinas; information about River Delta Marina is available at www.mobilecounty.al.gov/recreation-deadlakemarina.htm.

Two Public Meetings Will Be Held Regarding Near Shore Reef Construction at Gulf State Park Pier

CONTACT: Marine Resources
251-968-7576

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (ADCNR) Marine Resources Division will hold two public meetings to ask for input on the design and placement of concrete material from the demolition of the old Gulf State Park Pier around the new Gulf State Park Pier. The first meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on June 24, 2008, at the Gulf Shores Adult Activities Center, 260 Clubhouse Dr. in Gulf Shores. The second meeting will be held at the Foley Civic Center, 407 E. Laurel Ave. in Foley on June 26 at 6 p.m.

Public input from these meetings will be used to assist ADCNR in developing an artificial reef proposal for submission to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for approval. Alabama has one of the largest artificial reef programs in the world. There are currently 23 inshore artificial reefs in Alabama providing some of the very best saltwater gamefish populations in the Gulf of Mexico. Visit www.outdooralabama.com for information on Alabama's artificial reef program.

Construction to rebuild the Gulf State Park Pier began in November 2007. The original pier, a popular recreational fishing spot, was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. The new pier is expected to be completed in late 2008.

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

ADEM Hosts Groundwater Conference

MONTGOMERY − Approximately 1.5 million Alabamians depend on groundwater resources as their source of drinking water. Ensuring a clean, safe supply of this precious commodity is a priority for the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, along with helping drinking water systems operate at maximum efficiency.

Each year, ADEM hosts a Groundwater Conference for public drinking water utilities, municipal officials, government agencies, and environmental consultants to meet and discuss issues of importance related to groundwater availability, impacts to groundwater resources, and changing regulatory requirements.

Approximately 125 professionals who work to manage and protect groundwater resources attended the June 4 conference in Montgomery where they heard presentations on a variety of topics including real-time monitoring of stream conditions, recent trends in quantifying groundwater recharge, water level surveys, and the incorporation of modeling in the assessment of underground plumes. In addition, this year's conference provided information about regulatory requirements placed on drinking water systems as part of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and updates regarding groundwater levels following last year's drought. ADEM also utilized the conference to encourage drinking water systems to prepare for storm events and to take security measures to address circumstances that could possibly disrupt, or compromise, the safety and reliability of Alabama's drinking water supplies.

"We want to provide the best training, education, and outreach possible and to lend our technical expertise to water systems and stakeholders who have a vested interest in protecting Alabama's groundwater resources," said ADEM Director Trey Glenn. "This conference enables us to accomplish this goal. It also gives us the opportunity to answer questions and address concerns that assist local drinking water systems in serving their customers more effectively."

Dauphin Island Sea Lab's New Executive Director Begins Job July 1, 2008

Dr. L. Scott Quackenbush, the recently appointed Executive Director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, will begin his position at the Sea Lab on July 1, 2008. Interim Director Dr. John Dindo has been head of the Sea Lab since the retirement of Dr. George Crozier in December 2007, and will remain Chair of the Sea Lab's K-12, teacher and public outreach programs. Quackenbush has most recently been the Director of Humboldt State University's Marine Lab in northern California. His previous professional experience includes chair of the biological science departments at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington

and Florida International University. He earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota, his master's degree at the University of West Florida, and his doctorate at Florida State University.

"I'm looking forward to continuing the remarkable progress made by former Director George Crozier," said Quackenbush. I intend to use these first months acquainting myself with the many diverse activities of the Sea Lab, as well as with the needs of the communities which we serve.

By assessing our resources, programs and fiscal needs over the next several months, we'll focus on developing a strategic plan for the Sea Lab that I can present to our twenty-one consortium members and Sea Lab community in the next year. For now, however, the programs of the Sea Lab will proceed as planned and I hope the transition will be as seamless as possible.

Florida Estuaries Among Those Preparing to Be Climate Ready

Release date: 06/19/2008

(ATLANTA – Jun. 19, 2008) EPA has selected six estuaries, including Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds in North Carolina and Charlotte Harbor in Florida, to be case studies for local action to protect sensitive coastal ecosystems and economies from the potential effects of climate change. This is the first step in EPA's new "Climate Ready Estuaries" effort to build local ability to adapt to climate change.

"EPA's Climate Ready Estuaries work will help coastal communities understand and adapt to climate change," said Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles. "Our aim is to build capacity for local decision makers and resource managers to help take pro-active, practical steps for bays at risk."

Within the U.S., the Southeast is considered to be the area most susceptible to climate change. And, within the Southeast, the Albemarle-Pamlico Sound National Estuary is one of three areas with the greatest potential for being adversely affected by climate change, while the Charlotte Harbor Estuary is particularly susceptible to potential sea level rise associated with climate change. The other four pilots include New Hampshire Estuaries Project, Massachusetts Bays Estuary Program, Partnership for Delaware Bay and San Francisco Estuary Project.

Each estuary program will receive technical assistance to assess and reduce their vulnerability to climate change. The pilot projects in Florida and North Carolina will engage residents from Sanibel Island and the coastal region of North Carolina, respectively, to prepare to adapt to climate change and mitigate adverse impacts. The programs will apply analyses and tools to help them make decisions to protect their communities and build knowledge to help other communities adapt to a changing climate. Communities with plans approved by their local stakeholders will be designated as "Climate Ready Estuaries" by EPA.

The Climate Ready Estuaries effort will take the lessons learned from the pilots to provide information and leadership to other coastal communities around the nation. Under the Climate Ready Estuaries framework, EPA will use the 28 National Estuary Programs, Web-based resources and other means identified through the initial pilots to support local efforts in all of the nation's coastal communities to effectively plan and adapt to climate change. The Climate Ready Estuaries program is one of more than 40 specific actions to respond to the water-related impacts of climate change that are described in a draft strategy developed by the National Water Program. The draft strategy is designed to help water resource managers adapt their programs to a changing climate.

For more information on Climate Ready Estuaries: http://www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries/cre.html.
For information on the water climate change strategy: http://www.epa.gov/water/climatechange

Panhandle Area Teachers to Receive 'LIFE' Lesson

-Panhandle Area Education Consortium and DEP immerse teachers in science-

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program will host 24 teachers for hands-on research projects as part of the Panhandle Area Education Consortium's (PAEC) Science, Collaboration: Immersion, Inquiry Innovation (Sc:iii) project. With grant funding from the Florida Department of Education, the Sc:iii project will give a total of 120 science teachers in the Panhandle an opportunity to conduct hands-on research and monitoring alongside scientists, and develop educational programs for area schools.

"DEP is pleased to be a host organization supporting this effort to provide professional development for science teachers," said DEP's Office of Environmental Education Director, Greg Ira. "By pairing teachers with scientists, resource managers and environmental specialists in the field, the program immerses teachers directly into ongoing research. This real world involvement in research is an invaluable experience for teachers which will ultimately benefit their students."

Scientists and resource managers with DEP's Office of Environmental Education, Northwest District office, Falling Waters State Park and De Leon State Park will engage three teams of teacher participants in collaborative projects. The team assigned to DEP's Office of Environmental Education will develop a water quality monitoring program for the Wakulla River Watershed. The program will be integrated into the Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program for seventh graders at Riversprings Middle School next year. DEP's Falling Waters State Park and De Leon State Park team will participate in a gopher tortoise survey and exotic species removal, and DEP's Northwest District office team will help with ecosystem restoration projects.

"My colleagues and I can't wait to begin our summer research with the science and education staff of the Department of Environmental Protection," said Diane Driggers, a fourth grade teacher with Crawfordville Elementary School. "Helping develop a water monitoring program that we can share with other teachers and students gives us the opportunity to do some authentic research and inquiry. The insight we gain this summer will be invaluable when we return to the classroom in the fall."

The Florida Department of Education awarded PAEC a Math and Science Partnership Grant to conduct the program using methods pioneered by Florida State University Professor Penny Gilmer. Superintendents, professional development and curriculum directors in each district will work with school-based administrators to select the teachers. The program expects to have 40-50 teams of teacher participants, with the potential to impact approximately 12,880 students in a single school year. Each team will dedicate 15 days, six hours minimum per day, to their assignment.

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

For more information on the PAEC's Sc:iii project, visit www.paec-sc-iii.org. For more information about the LIFE program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/ed/.

Gulf of Mexico Ocean Literacy Project Demonstrates Importance of Hands-On Learning through Test Score Results

-Students from Florida, Texas and Louisiana receive 'LIFE' lesson through Gulf of Mexico Ocean Literacy Project-

WAKULLA- Members of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Office of Environmental Education (OEE) along with education providers from Texas and Louisiana assembled today to review the results of a year-long pilot study designed to increase student achievement in science through hands-on learning. The Gulf of Mexico Ocean Literacy Project measures success through increased student test scores while enhancing teachers' professional development and promoting stewardship of coastal lands and waters.

"Very few topics capture the attention and imagination of students like the environment and the wildlife it supports," said OEE Director Greg Ira. "We can harness and direct that interest toward science education and achieve two goals at the same time -- increasing student achievement in science and building a sense of environmental stewardship to help today's students prepare for tomorrow's economic, social and environmental challenges."

The Gulf of Mexico Ocean Literacy Project, led by the OEE, supports the efforts of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance to develop environmental education strategies for underserved and underrepresented coastal populations along the Gulf and inspire the next generation of scientists and resource managers. The OEE partnered with the Texas State Aquarium and the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium to pilot test selected educational strategies in a consistent manner in three unique locations. Approximately 100 students in Corpus Christi, Texas, Chauvin, Louisiana and Dunedin, Florida participated in a minimum of three field experiences in and around their coastal environment. Project activities included water quality testing, wetland conservation and monitoring the effects of nutrients in waterways.

The pilot program demonstrated that environmental field experiences can enhance students' interest, knowledge and skills related to science. In each of 11 field experiences, students showed gains from pretest to posttest scores. In posttest scores, students in Texas showed the largest increase with 74 percent, followed by Florida students with a 41 percent increase and Louisiana students showing a nine percent increase. Student survey data showed that all of the students who completed the survey either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that outdoor field activities helped them to better understand the topics learned in science class. Similarly, approximately 75 percent of teachers 'agreed' that the program increased achievement among participating students. These and other results will be documented during the final series of three workshops at Wakulla Springs State Park over the next two days.

Additional conclusions from the project include:

- Small group size is crucial to field-based, hands-on activities and many facilitators are needed to work with a large number of small groups.
- Having multiple field experiences during the year is more effective than a single field experience.
- Local environmental topics and locations provide effective subject matter for science education.
- District and School Administrators need mechanisms to support off-campus learning.

The Office of Environmental Education strives to cultivate and support environmental citizenship through awareness, understanding and appreciation of Florida's environment and the capacity to think critically and participate constructively in its protection. Together with other government agencies, non-profits, the academic and the private sector, the OEE contributes structure and funding of environmental education in Florida through programs such as LIFE, Learning in Florida's Environment.

Since 2004, almost 3,500 future scientists and stewards have participated in the LIFE program. The LIFE initiative seeks to establish a series of field-based, environmental-science education programs throughout the state. Each of the nine existing programs is a partnership between the DEP and a local school district. The goal of each LIFE program is increased student achievement and teacher professional development in science, with the content and delivery varying from site to site.

For more information about the LIFE program, visit http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/ed/lifeprogram.htm. For more information about the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, visit http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gulf/.

Florida DEP Hosts "Florida Coastal and Ocean Economics Forum"

--Workshop provides public with findings of Phase II Economies Report—

MIAMI- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Florida Oceans and Coastal Council hosted the "Florida Coastal and Ocean Economics Forum" at the Hilton Miami Airport today to discuss the findings from a forthcoming economic report. The final version of the Phase II report by the National Ocean Economics Program is scheduled for release at the end of this month.

"Our waters define Florida and we are recognizing, as never before, the inextricable links between our communities, our coasts, our ocean and our quality of life," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "In Florida, the only continental state largely surrounded by ocean, you are never more than 75 miles from saltwater. This report demonstrates why now, more than ever before, we as Floridians must realize how our individual and regional decisions can impact the oceans as a whole."

Florida's economy and population are projected to grow rapidly over the long term with development booming along the coasts. The Phase II report outlines the importance of using our oceans and coastal systems in a way that is both protective and economically stimulating.

Some of the highlights of the Phase II report include:

- Florida's coastal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2006 was more than $561 billion, a 17.4 percent increase from 2003.
- Florida's ocean economy contributed $25 billion in direct revenue during 2005.
- Florida's shoreline accounts for more than 75 percent of the state's economic productivity, while occupying only 56 percent of the land area.

DEP Chief of Staff Kelly Layman provided opening remarks for the forum and Dr. Judith Kildow, Principal Investigator and Director of the National Ocean Economics Program presented the findings from the Phase II: Florida's Ocean and Coastal Economies Report. The forum also included a public question and answer session with Dr. Kildow, Florida Ocean and Coastal Council members and sector representatives.

The Florida Oceans and Coastal Council was created in 2005 by the Oceans and Coastal Resources Act and is comprised of 18 individuals who coordinate coastal and marine research in Florida, identify research gaps, create an annual research plan and recommend new strategies to enhance management and conservation efforts for the state's coastal and marine resources.

For more information on the Florida Oceans and Coastal Council visit www.FloridaOceansCouncil.org. To view the 2006 Phase I Report, click on the link to the Florida Coastal and Ocean Economics Forum. For more information on the National Ocean Economics Program, visit http://noep.mbari.org/

Governor Crist Unveils Momentous Strategy to Save America's Everglades, Preserve National Treasure

~Water managers to negotiate buy-out of U.S. Sugar Corporation; Massive environmental acquisition to provide "missing link" for reconnecting Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades and reviving fabled River of Grass~

WEST PALM BEACH, FL – Governor Charlie Crist today stood at the edge of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, joined by Florida's top elected leaders, the United States Sugar Corporation and a host of environmental advocates, to unveil a momentous strategy that could bring about one of the largest environmental land acquisitions in the nation's history and provide the "missing link" needed to protect Florida's coastal estuaries and better revive, restore and preserve one of America's greatest natural treasures – the Everglades. The announcement kicks off the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate, which begins tomorrow in Miami.

"Sixty years ago, President Harry Truman came to South Florida to dedicate Everglades National Park. Today, we follow in the great footsteps – and in the tradition of the great conservationist President Teddy Roosevelt. We continue their legacy of permanent preservation of the one of the most unique landscapes of our country – and on the planet," said Governor Crist. "We have an opportunity to provide the critical missing link in our restoration activities. I can envision no better gift to the Everglades, or the people of Florida, or to our country than to place in public ownership this missing link that represents the key to true restoration."

Announcing a new partnership to revive the River of Grass, Governor Crist called on the South Florida Water Management District to begin negotiating an agreement to acquire as much as 187,000 acres of agricultural land owned by the United States Sugar Corporation. The vast tracts of land would then be used to reestablish a part of the historic connection between Lake Okeechobee and the fabled River of Grass through a managed system of storage and treatment and, at the same time, safeguard the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and estuaries.

"This is a watershed event in national conservation history, and a paradigm shift for the Everglades and the environment in Florida, one that would have been inconceivable in years past. Yet, here we are," said Robert Buker, president and CEO of United States Sugar Corporation. "We look forward to continuing to work with the Governor and the District in the cooperative spirit with which we have begun, in order to make the dream represented by the Statement of Principles that we sign here today a reality for Florida tomorrow."

The proposed agreement between the South Florida Water Management District and the United States Sugar Corporation involves the public purchase of nearly 300 square miles spanning four counties in South Florida – a land mass as large as New York City. The District will also take ownership of the company's assets, including 200 miles of railroad, a state-of-the-art sugar mill, sugar refinery and citrus processing plant. Subject to independent appraisals and approval by the District's Governing Board, water managers will invest $1.75 billion in cash and certificates of participation to finance the acquisition. "America's River of Grass sustains life for so much and so many. Today it receives its lifeline," said Everglades Foundation Vice Chairperson Mary Barley. "A restored and sustained Everglades is no longer a dream. History will record this action as the point that brought it within our reach."

Acquiring the enormous expanse of real estate offers water managers the opportunity and flexibility to store and clean water on a scale never before contemplated. Water managers expect that dedicating

significantly more land in the Everglades Agricultural Area to restoration will build upon and enhance the 30-year state-federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the State of Florida's Northern Everglades program to restore and protect Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and their respective estuaries. Benefits from the land acquisition will allow for the following:

- Huge increases in the availability of water storage, significantly reducing the potential for harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee to Florida's coastal rivers and estuaries when lake levels are high.
- The ability to deliver cleaner water to the Everglades during dry times and greater water storage to protect the natural system during wet years.
- Preventing thousands of tons of phosphorus from entering the Everglades every year.
- Forever eliminating the need for "back-pumping" water into Lake Okeechobee from the Everglades Agricultural Area to augment the water supply needs. The District's Governing Board this year voted not to back-pump into the lake during the ongoing water shortage to protect water quality.
- Additional water storage alternatives, relieving some pressures on the Herbert Hoover Dike while the federal government undertakes repairs.
- Sustainability of agriculture and green energy production.

"The significance of this moment will forever be recorded in Florida's environmental history," said South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Vice Chair Shannon Estenoz. "Today, we offer the Everglades restoration opportunities once thought impossible; environmental progress once considered unachievable; and protections just a decade ago believed unattainable. History will mark today as a watershed event for restoring our beloved national treasure – the Everglades – and generations will thank the Governor for his leadership in making it happen."

To mark the occasion, the Governor stood as official witness as South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Vice Chair Shannon Estenoz signed a "Statement of Principles" with United States Sugar Corporation President and CEO Robert H. Buker. The Statement of Principles provides the framework for the potential acquisition of property. Negotiations on the final agreement will take place over the coming months, with a closing on the real estate anticipated before the year's end. As part of the proposal, United States Sugar Corporation will continue to farm and manage the land consistent with its previous business practices for the next six years. Construction of any new water treatment and storage projects on the agricultural land would likely begin following the six-year transition period.

As the agreement is finalized, the Governor directed the District to work closely with interest groups, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Legislature, United States Congress and federal agencies on the future use of the land and any effects to the planning, design and construction of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan or Northern Everglades projects. The Governor also called upon the Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development and the Agency for Workforce Innovation to work with United States Sugar Corporation, local governments and area businesses on an economic transition plan for the area.

For more information on restoration of America's Everglades, visit www.myflorida.com. For information on the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change, visit www.myfloridaclimate.com or www.myflorida.com.

Apalachicola Paddling Trail Receives National Recognition

June 10, 2008

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) announces that the Apalachicola Paddling Trail System, located in Franklin County in the Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area, is one of 24 trails designated by the Secretary of the Interior as a National Recreation Trail.

This network of paddling trails was developed by the FWC's Office of Recreation Services. It features approximately 100 miles of scenic waterways accessible to boaters, canoeists and kayakers with all levels of experience. The shortest trails are 2 miles long, while others are 4 to 16 miles and offer pleasant half- or full-day paddling trips. Paddlers, anglers and birders can explore the quiet, calm creeks meandering through cypress-tupelo swamps or enjoy vistas of the open bay and salt marsh.

Whiskey George Creek flows through marsh bordered by towering pines north of Carrabelle. In summer, visitors may see swallow-tailed kites soaring overhead; in

Those who wish a more extended backcountry experience can combine trails to create two- or three-day trips. Suggested primitive campsites are shown on the waterproof trail map available from the FWC. No fees or permits are required. This paddling trail system was also named one of the 12 most recommended water trails in the United States for 2006 by The American Canoe Association and Paddler magazine.

Liz Sparks, an FWC recreational planner who helped create the trail, said the agency is honored the trail is recognized nationally as a great destination for a variety of users who come to enjoy the area's outstanding scenery and wildlife-viewing opportunities.

"We encourage people to use the trails throughout the year, but the fall and spring offer more comfortable temperatures and fewer bugs," Sparks said. "These are also great months to fish or watch wildlife and view flowering plants along the trails." To receive a free copy of the Apalachicola Paddling Trail System map, call 850-488-5520 or go to MyFWC.com and click on "Outdoor Recreation" to download copies of individual trip options.

DEP Secretary Sole Hosts Panel Discussion of Climate Change Government, Private Sector Experts at Governor's Summit

--Secretary's panel focused on progress to date, plans for the future—

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Michael W. Sole today moderated a panel discussion during the first day of the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change, June 25-26, 2008, at the Intercontinental Miami. The Secretary's panel, "A Year's Progress and Promise for the Future," focused on achievements in Florida over the past year as well as possibilities for the future.

"In my view, the appropriate role of public policy is to establish the playing field and the rules of the game and then to allow markets the freedom to work effectively toward the ends we're trying to achieve," said DEP Secretary Sole.

The Secretary's panel discussion was part of the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate, June 25-26, 2008, at the Intercontinental Miami. Building on the foundation for Florida's energy future that began at last year's summit, the 2008 summit will focus on stimulating economic development in clean technologies as well as "greening" Florida's business community. The 2008 summit brings together industry leaders, international 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. By encouraging companies to invest in our state's energy future, Florida will transform its energy marketplace to enhance fuel diversity, lessen dependence on foreign sources of oil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This year's summit furthers the policy framework established during the 2007 summit. On July 13, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist signed a series of executive orders to reduce Florida's greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, and remove market barriers for renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind energy. Since the executive orders were signed, Florida has stepped onto the world stage as a major marketplace for advanced energy technologies.

For more information on the 2008 Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change, visit www.myfloridaclimate.com or www.myflorida.com. For more information on DEP, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange.

Loggerhead Sea Turtle is a New State Symbol

June 30, 2008
Contact: Bonnie Abellera, 850-922-4330
Sea turtle facts
Sharing the beach with sea turtles

Starting July 1, the loggerhead sea turtle is the official Florida saltwater reptile. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the loggerhead sea turtle (scientific name: *Caretta caretta*) is the most common sea turtle to nest along Florida's coast. Its designation as the official Florida saltwater reptile recognizes this threatened species at a time when loggerhead nest counts are down.


A loggerhead sea turtle hatchling (FWC photo by Meghan Koperski)

Typically, about 90 percent of loggerhead nests in the United States are in Florida. Almost half the loggerhead nests in the world occur on Florida's beaches.

Over the past 19 years, Florida's loggerhead sea turtle nest counts have declined 37 percent. The species nests from late April until September in Florida. Hatchlings emerge after incubating in warm sand for two months.

The FWC credits students from the Florida State University School's Middle School Science Honors Class for pursuing the state symbol designation during the 2007-08 school year and the 2008 legislative session. The loggerhead sea turtle was one of four symbols the students proposed for addition to the state list. Working with State Representative Curtis Richardson (D-Tallahassee), the students provided information and answered questions regarding the symbols. Richardson amended an already-existing state symbol bill to include the loggerhead sea turtle.

The FWC's Imperiled Species Management Section administers protection and conservation of Florida's sea turtles with funding from a sea turtle specialty license plate, which also features a loggerhead hatchling, and from annual sea turtle decal sales.

FWC staff assists with research, recovery, beach construction permit review, lighting issues, educational materials and administration in addition to coordinating a network of volunteers around the state who record and monitor sea turtle nests during nesting season. For more information about FWC sea turtle research and management programs, visit MyFWC.com.

Louisiana Outlines Assistance Programs Available to Fishermen

Baton Rouge, LA (June 3 2008) - Louisiana fishermen may be eligible for grants, loans and direct aid to assist in recovering from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, according to programs outlined today by the state. The Louisiana Recovery Authority, Louisiana Economic Development and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries have committed and are coordinating the distribution of millions of dollars in direct aid to fisherman and to repair or rebuild fisheries infrastructure.

"Getting Louisiana fishermen back on the water is a top priority to the state, not only is the fishing industry a huge economic sector in Louisiana but it is also a way of life for many of our residents," said Executive Director of the LRA Paul Rainwater. "Working with our state partners we have been able to commit millions of dollars to the fishing industry; however we realize that this is just the tip of the iceberg. We will continue to keep this recovery a top priority and find creative ways to commit more funds to this critical industry."

Studies conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimate that Hurricane Katrina alone generated more than $1.3 billion of economic loss on Louisiana's fishing industry.

Business Recovery Grant and Loan
Last week LED and the LRA announced the launch of Phase II of the Louisiana Business Recovery Grant and Loan program designed to support businesses recovering from the after-effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. State officials have made $80 million dollars available in a combination of grants and zero-interest loans for recovering businesses in this phase. The program will accept applications June 9 to July 18 through community-based financing intermediaries across the region.

In Phase I of the Business Recovery Grant and Loan program approximately 1,000 fishermen received grants totaling more than $15 million. LED and LRA officials developed Phase II of the program with extensive input from local fishermen and have made adjustments that will have a significant impact on the fisheries sector. Local businesses now have the option to substitute a $20,000 tangible loss in place of the revenue decline requirement from Phase I of the program. Many of the fishermen who worked diligently to get back in business immediately after the hurricane did not meet the revenue decline requirement in Phase I, because they instead took on enormous amounts of personal and business debt to get back on the water. Still they had significant physical losses. For more information on the BRGL program visit www.louisianaforward.com or call 1-877-610-3533.

LDWF Direct Aid program
Fishermen may also be eligible for direct aid through $27.6 million in assistance available to the state's commercial fishing industries through a $41.3 million federal fisheries economic assistance grant from the NOAA through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission being administered by LDWF.

The South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) and affiliated planning districts will receive and process all information about this assistance program on behalf of LDWF. Any questions concerning eligibility, requests for information, etc. should be directed to the SCPDC by calling 1-800-630-3791 (toll-free) or 985 655-1051 (local) or mailing SCPDC at P.O. Box 1240, Gray, LA 70359-9902 or visiting the SCPDC Web site at www.scpdc.org/fisheriesassistance.

LRA Fisheries Infrastructure program
It is estimated that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed more than $528 million in fisheries infrastructure in Louisiana's fishing communities with millions more in losses to supporting industries. In March the LRA announced the funding of 15 infrastructure improvement projects to repair the heavily damaged fisheries industry across South Louisiana that totaled nearly $19 million.

The program uses Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to provide grants for building projects that improve the viability and long-term sustainability of the commercial and recreational fisheries of coastal Louisiana. Click here for a list of projects funded.

LRA Progress Report Highlights New Leadership and Program Successes

BATON ROUGE, La. (June 4, 2008) - As a result of an Executive Order signed in the first days of Governor Bobby Jindal's administration, the Louisiana Recovery Authority spent the first months of 2008 establishing a better working relationship with its federal partners and initiating projects to speed the pace of recovery in the state, according to the latest issue of the LRA Progress Report.

The report, which was released today, details the successes of Executive Director Paul Rainwater's efforts for better communication between the LRA, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other federal and state partners.

"During the past few months, we've broken down barriers that may have hampered progress in the past and generated a renewed sense of partnership," said Rainwater. "In order for Louisiana to continue its trek toward recovery, the LRA and the state must work to streamline bureaucracy and find common sense solutions to issues that could impede the state's progress."

The report also illustrates efforts to speed the pace of recovery. LRA staff members are embedded within the city of New Orleans to increase the city's strategic planning capabilities. The LRA staff members act as a bridge between the state and city, streamlining state program requirement requests and assisting the city in meeting these requirements.

Programs like Public Assistance Express Pay, which paid out $102 million in its first two months, reduce the amount of time it takes FEMA Public Assistance applicants, usually local governments and agencies, to be reimbursed for rebuilding projects. In the past, the long wait time made it harder for public entities to hire and pay contractors and workers.

The report also outlines funding flowing through the state. Data provided in the report suggests $38 billion in federal funding has been spent in Louisiana since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. That's 69% of all federal funding allocated to the state. $10.6 billion has been spent on rebuilding efforts. To download the Progress Report, click here.

L.D.W.F. ACQUIRES 7,200 ACRES WITHIN JOYCE WMA

Land Purchased from The Conservation Fund

BATON ROUGE -- The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), with funding assistance from several conservation partners, today announced the purchase of more than 7,200 acres within the boundaries of Joyce Wildlife Management Area (WMA) from The Conservation Fund (TCF).

"The conservation and restoration of our state's coastal wetlands, like those found around Lake Pontchartrain, are of utmost importance and these vital resources must be protected for generations to come," said LDWF Secretary Robert Barham. "Our partners are to be commended for making this happen."

The nearly $2.2 million purchase was finalized during a ceremony at the June 5 Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) meeting. The land, formerly known as the Octavia tract in Tangipahoa Parish, had previously been leased from TCF.

"Coastal wetlands not only protect fragile ecosystems, but also provide important public recreation opportunities," said Ray Herndon, TCF's director of the lower Mississippi region. "This effort is a testament to the power of partnerships. It proves that all sectors - governmental, corporate and non-profit - can work together to achieve great outcomes. We commend all the parties involved, especially the members of Octavia Partners, for their commitment to this effort and their willingness to enable this important project."

The funding sources making the purchase possible include a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant ($1.67 million), a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant ($392,000) and $100,000 from LDWF's Wildlife Habitat Natural Heritage Trust Fund. TCF was able to reduce the state's purchase price with $450,000 provided by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant through its partnership with Shell Oil ($250,000) and private funds donated through TCF by Ameriprise Financial ($200,000).

"We have to take the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of Louisiana's natural environments," said Senator David Vitter in correspondence delivered to ceremony participants. "Our state's wetlands support a vibrant ecosystem, provide recreational and educational opportunities to Louisianans of all ages and are a critical component of hurricane protection. The conservation of these unique areas will ensure their enjoyment by future generations of Louisianans."

"This unique collaboration between public, private and nonprofit entities demonstrates our shared commitment to preserving and restoring Louisiana's vital wetlands," said Senator Mary Landrieu when informed of the property acquisition. "I have long championed the protection and restoration of the vital ecosystem along our coast, which provides a natural barrier of protection from storms. I was also proud to secure an independent funding stream for this purpose in 2006 when Congress passed the Domenici-Landrieu Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act. Protecting Louisiana's ecosystems is not only critical for our communities -- it also greatly benefits the rest of the nation that so relies on our Gulf seafood industry and the domestic energy we produce off our coast."

To date, funding support from NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) has helped to preserve more than 32,000 coastal acres throughout the U.S. In addition, $15 million is included for the CELCP in the fiscal year 2009 budget request for NOAA.

"NOAA has been pleased to support the implementation of the CELCP since its creation by Congress in 2002," said David Kennedy, director of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. "The CELCP's objective -- to help permanently conserve lands in coastal and estuarine areas with significant ecological, conservation, historic, aesthetic, or recreation values – will clearly be met by the protection of the Octavia tract addition to Joyce WMA."

"We are fortunate to have both private and governmental funding sources able to support the department's land acquisitions goals and help secure more public land for conservation management and outdoor recreational use," said LWFC Chairman Patrick Morrow.

Joyce WMA is located five miles south of Hammond. The area consists of 12,809 acres donated to LDWF by the Joyce Foundation in 1982 and 2,250 acres donated by Guste Heirs in 1994. An additional 850 acres and 484 acres are leased from the Joyce Foundation and the Tangipahoa Parish School Board, respectively. With the addition of the 7,274-acre Octavia tract and the 1,040-acre Salmen tract also acquired from TCF this month, Joyce WMA acreage now totals 24,707.

"The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Council works closely with regional bird habitat conservation groups such as the Gulf Coast Joint Venture (GCJV) to stimulate partnerships that conserve wetlands for birds," said GCJV Coordinator Barry Wilson. "The acquisition of this tract exemplifies both a committed group of partners and a tract of important migratory bird habitat."

The entire area is a wetland within the Pontchartrain Basin and consists primarily of cypress-tupelo swamp. A large portion of the area is a dense shrub-marsh community with red maple, wax-myrtle, red bay, and younger cypress-tupelo. A 500-acre fresh marsh of primarily maiden-cane is located on the northern portion of the property.

Game species found within the WMA include deer, rabbits, squirrel and waterfowl. The primary importance of the tract to hunters is its waterfowl resource. Mallard and wood duck are the major species using the area along with gadwall, widgeon and pintail occurring less frequently. Trapping is permitted for raccoon, nutria, muskrat, otter, mink and opossum. Alligators are also common on the area.

An elevated boardwalk constructed in 1990 at the northwest corner of the WMA provides visitors easy access to view wildlife and vegetation within the ecosystem. For more information and directions to Joyce WMA, visit the LDWF web site at www.wlf.louisiana.gov.

'Dead Zone' Record Year Predicted

A team of scientists from Louisiana State University (LSU) and the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) is forecasting that the "Dead Zone" off the coast of Louisiana and Texas in July this summer will be the largest since shelf-wide measurements began in 1985.

The "Dead Zone" is an area in the Gulf of Mexico where seasonal oxygen levels drop too low to support most life in bottom and near-bottom waters. It is caused when phytoplankton growth, stimulated by nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers, settles and decays in the bottom waters. The decomposition of these algae consumes oxygen faster than it can be replenished from the surface, leading to decreased levels of dissolved oxygen. The excessive nutrient loading may also result in the growth of harmful algal blooms and a changed food web that is unfavorable to commercial fisheries. "Low oxygen conditions have been present off Terrebonne and Barataria Bays

since March, and the number of stations that are hypoxic is increasing," reported Nancy Rabalais of LUMCON. "We map the whole area on July 21-29."

The modeling effort, led by R. Eugene Turner of LSU, predicts that this summer's "Dead Zone" will be about 10,084 mi2 (26,118 km2), an area about the size of the state of Massachusetts. The average size of the annual hypoxia-affected area since 1990 has been approximately 6,046 mi2 (15,659 km2). Tropical storms and hurricanes have the potential of disrupting the physical structure of the water column and aerating the bottom layer. But if no strong storms appear, then this year's Dead Zone will be 17-21% larger than previously measured (in 2002), and will stretch into Texas continental shelf waters.

This is a preliminary forecast based on nitrate loads from the Mississippi River in May at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. "The prediction of a large hypoxic zone this summer is because the nitrate loading this May, a critical month influencing the size, was exceptionally high," said Turner in explaining the forecast. "The size of the hypoxic zone last year was only slightly below the largest zone measured. The nitrate concentration in May 2008 is 79% of that in May 2007, but the river discharge was 75% higher. This means that nitrogen loading to the Gulf of Mexico in May this year will be 37% higher than last year and the highest since measurements began in 1970. The intensive farming of more land, including crops used for biofuels, has definitely contributed to this high nitrogen loading rate." A final forecast will be made in early July that uses a more robust estimate of nitrogen loading provided by the U.S. Geological Survey.

There are multiple models of the size of the hypoxic zone that are useful in evaluating the influence of nitrogen load and variations in ocean currents on the size of the "Dead Zone."

These models do not always produce similar results, and model improvement is one focus of ongoing research. The LSU model is the most accurate model based on past performance, but the ecosystem is evolving. The size of the hypoxic zone for the same amount of nitrogen loading increases each year. Turner wonders if "the model might need to be adjusted to account for the limited space left on the shelf to accommodate the potential size of the hypoxic zone resulting from a nitrogen loading this big." Additional research for model improvement is required before predictions can become an operational forecast for other months. More information for the prediction and hypoxia research is on the Internet at: Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia website: http://www.gulfhypoxia.net/. NOAA Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Research: http://www.cop.noaa.gov/stressors/extremeevents/hab/features/hypoxiafs_report1206.html.

Insurance Officials Highlight Coastal Challenges at Regional Forum

NEW ORLEANS (June 16, 2008)— As states along the nation’s coast enter the third week of the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season, insurance officials from across the region gathered at the Insurability of the Coast forum in New Orleans today to discuss challenges and potential solutions for addressing the growing insurance crisis.

"Today’s forum brings a regional focus to one of the most critical issues facing Louisiana and many other states along the coast—the availability and affordability of property insurance,” said Louisiana Department of Insurance Commissioner Jim Donelon at a morning press conference.

“It is no secret that the 2005 hurricane season had a dramatic impact on our insurance markets and caused rates across the coastal region to rise. Recognizing this, we must continue working together to rebuild our coast and find other ways to mitigate risks from future storms,” he continued.

Commissioner Donelon was joined by insurance officials from several other coastal states including Commissioner Mike Chaney from the Mississippi Insurance Department, Commissioner Kevin McCarty of Florida, Deputy Commissioner Bill Kenny from the West Virginia Office of Insurance, Deputy Commissioner David Parsons from the Alabama Insurance Department, and Hector Cora Cadiz, Executive Aide to the Puerto Rico Insurance Commissioner.

"The bottom line is this—insurance affordability and availability and the sustainability of our coast are key to the long term recovery and future growth of our region," said Commissioner Chaney. "These issues must be addressed, and that's the reason we are here today," he continued.

Commissioner McCarty said, "This forum is a great opportunity for policymakers from the Gulf region to discuss the problems with insurance availability and seek solutions to maximize personal responsibility and private market participation. And if we ultimately rely on a federal backstop for a natural disaster, we want to be responsible stewards of taxpayer money."

Insurability of the Coast
Hosted by the America's WETLAND Foundation, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, the Louisiana State University (LSU) Agricultural Center, and the Louisiana Department of Insurance, the forum provides an opportunity for officials, policy makers and community leaders to address a variety of topics including: flood insurance, reinsurance, public and private providers, floodplain mapping, comprehensive planning for natural hazards, and the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

"As we continue pursuing our long-term goal of restoring the coast and creating a safer more sustainable environment that better protects our people, our culture and our national assets, we must also address the growing insurance crisis," said R. King Milling, chair of the America's WETLAND Foundation and vice-chairman of Whitney National Bank.

"The issues discussed at this forum will inform the Foundation's America's Energy Coast initiative as we bring leaders of the energy industry, national environmental groups and policy makers to the table to produce a coastal sustainability accord for the energy producing Gulf states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Because hurricanes and natural disasters know no boundaries, we must all work together to ensure protection across the region."

The one-day forum entitled, Insurability of the Coast, is the fourth in a series of Presidents' Forums on Meeting Coastal Challenges.
"Without insurance, people are unlikely to financially and emotionally invest in our recovering communities—thus we are here today with partners from all over the region to learn what we can do to ensure the insurability of our coast," said LSU President Emeritus Dr. William Jenkins.

The America's WETLAND Foundation developed a comprehensive public education campaign to build public support for wetland restoration. The Campaign was launched to raise public awareness of the impact of Louisiana's wetland loss on the state, nation and world. The initiative is supported by a growing coalition of world, national and state conservation and environmental organizations and has drawn private support from businesses that see wetlands protection as a key to economic growth. For more information on the Foundation, visit www.americaswetland.com. Video from the conference will be available online at www.laseagrant.org/forum/june08.htm later this week.

LaHouse Formally Opening Doors in July

June 27, 2008

A home is the largest and most important purchase most people make. To help homeowners make the most of that investment while also doing their part for the environment and future generations, the LSU AgCenter and its partners have developed the Louisiana House Home and Landscape Resource Center. Known as LaHouse, for short, the completed center will open for a Preview Open House throughout the day July 15. It also will open Thursdays through Saturdays for several weeks following that event to allow the public to see some of the unique features incorporated into the home's construction. Full-service operations then are expected to begin in the fall.

Located on the LSU campus in Baton Rouge, the center focuses on housing and landscape techniques specific to our region's subtropical climate and hazards. The demonstration house is designed around the concept of being a sustainable home. Its design makes it energy and resource efficient, more comfortable, safer, more durable and healthier for its occupants – including exceptional indoor air quality and universal design.

An unusual and powerful strength of the house and landscape is that many different options are presented, and homeowners may pick and choose the options that are either most affordable or that meet their needs or desires for optimal performance.

Claudette Reichel, housing specialist for the LSU AgCenter, said she is excited LaHouse is nearing completion and will be ready to be seen as a finished product. It had been exhibited in its midconstruction phases since hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the state and forced many into major rebuilding efforts. "Both consumers and professionals can see first hand and learn about many solutions – from ways to protect their homes from hurricanes, floods, mold and termites to the employment of highly energy efficient and healthy building, air conditioning and lighting systems to interiors that combine beauty, comfort and convenience with eco-friendly benefits," Reichel said.

The house will not only serve as an educational showcase, but the garage is actually a multimedia classroom for audiences such as builders, designers and consumers to get the latest, science-based information or to rent for their own educational programs. Cutaways and an unfinished exhibit room will allow visitors to see the special components used in construction.

Featured attractions include not only the house itself but also the 7-acre site designed around being a sustainable landscape exhibit. A pond on the site will play dual roles in stormwater pollution prevention and in the heating and cooling of the house through a geothermal heat exchange system. Winding trails will lead visitors through drought-resistant native plants, a rain garden and other special horticulture exhibits, and a programmable irrigation system will minimize the amount of water used to keep the plants healthy.

The LaHouse Resource Center was made possible by the support of partners and private contributors who share its vision of shaping the future with sustainable homes and development. LaHouse key partners include the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Department of Energy's Building America Program. Top key contributors include Entergy of Louisiana, Paula Garvey Manship, the Borate-Treated Wood Alliance (U.S. Borax, Osmose and Louisiana-Pacific), Louisiana Home Builders Association, Roy Domangue, Roy O. Martin Lumber Co. and Building Science Corp.

For more information, visit www.lsuagcenter.com and click the "LaHouse" link listed under features. You also can find information by visiting www.LouisianaHouse.org or calling (225) 578-2378.

Louisiana Coastal Hazard Mitigation Guidebook

June 27, 2008

The recent experiences of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are costly reminders of the physical impact that coastal storms have on the landscape of south Louisiana. If you live here, history indicates that you have a 1-in-10 chance of being affected by a hurricane.

To improve coastal communities' ability to cope with a storm, the Louisiana Sea Grant Law & Policy Program has prepared the Louisiana Hazard Mitigation Guidebook. The 250-page book – which examines issues from zoning and building siting to construction methods and legal issues – is available for free.

"The intent of the guidebook is to present basic strategies that can help planners, managers and property owners in coastal communities better prepare for and recover from hurricanes," said Jim Wilkins, LSG Law & Policy Program director. "Even though Hurricane Katrina was the most destructive and costliest tropical cyclone in the history of the United States, it is important to remember that many previous storms were likely more powerful and that there are more storms in our future.

"It is up to us, as individuals and local governments, to take the lead in protecting our lives and property and to establish resilient and sustainable communities through our decisions on where and how to build. The techniques discussed in the guidebook can be implemented by local governments as well as individuals without dependence on state or federal governments. In other words, this is a 'self-help' book," Wilkins said.

The strategies outlined in the guidebook will reduce, but not eliminate, the risks from coastal natural hazards such as storm surge, other flooding, subsidence and sea level rise, and are meant to serve as an extra layer of protection or an additional line of defense. The guidebook also demonstrates how communities can adopt a flexible approach to hazard planning and accommodate a wide range of attitudes toward restrictions on the use of property to mitigate hazards.

An electronic copy of the book can be downloaded from the LSG Law & Policy Program Web site (www.lsu.edu/sglegal), or a printed copy can be ordered by contacting Jessica Schexnayder, 105 Sea Grant Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803. Please include a check or money order for $5 when ordering a printed copy to cover shipping and handling. For general information about obtaining a book, e-mail jsche15@lsu.edu.

MEMA to Assist Iowa with Flooding Disaster

Pearl – Mississippi Emergency Management Executive Director Mike Womack announced Friday that MEMA will be sending a representative to Iowa to help with the Midwest flooding disaster. The request made by Iowa was approved as part of the National Emergency Management Assistance Compact or EMAC. MEMA's Director of Response, Tom McAllister, will leave Saturday, June 21 and spend a week working at the State of Iowa Emergency Operations Center in Des Moines. McAllister will help coordinate and process requests for emergency resources needed by residents and businesses that have been devastated by flood waters. "We are proud Mississippi will play a role in helping Iowa recover from this ongoing disaster." said MEMA Executive Director Mike Womack. "After Hurricane Katrina, Iowa sent emergency management staff to our Gulf Coast who were a tremendous asset to us. We are honored to be able to return the favor." EMAC is a national interstate mutual aid agreement that enables states to share resources during times of disaster. States that provide resources through an EMAC request are reimbursed any expenses from the requesting state.

2008 Mississippi Shrimp Season Off to Good Start

BILOXI, Miss.– The 2008 shrimp season officially opened in Mississippi territorial waters at 6 a.m. June 17, with reports of average-size shrimp and catch volumes, but the outlook remains good for the rest of the season.

DMR Marine Patrol MSgt. R.T. May performs a routine inspection of the shrimp vessel Midnight Blues, as Judy Lesso of Pass Christian sifts through her morning catch.

The Department of Marine Resources' (DMR) Marine Fisheries staff was on the water conducting interviews and surveying shrimp boats the morning of opening day. About 308 commercial and recreational shrimp boats came out to work the opening day, which is about equal to last year's count of 300 and 2006's count of 306.

As of June 17, the number of commercial resident shrimp licenses sold was 404, up 48 from last year. The number of out-of-state commercial shrimp licenses sold was 144, up 24 from 2007.

The majority of boats were congregated inside of Horn Island along the Intracoastal Waterway and the west end of Petit Bois, where they were catching fair to good numbers of 40/50-count brown shrimp. Other boats were working around Cat Island and West Ship Island.

"With the high cost of fuel, many fishermen decided to wait until they had more information on how the season would be," said DMR's Shrimp and Crab Bureau Dircetor Traci Floyd. "Those that did head out onto the waters agreed that location was key to success. Great reports were coming from the area inside Horn Island along the Intracoastal Waterway."

The DMR's Marine Patrol was out in full force starting at 6 p.m. June 16 and worked around the clock to ensure a smooth shrimp season opening. This included 26 officers, two reserve officers and three dispatchers. Marine Patrol officers conducted patrols from 12 patrol boats throughout the Mississippi Sound.

"We are thankful for the good weather this year. As of 3:30 p.m. (June 17), we had no distress calls," said Lt. Col. Claude Pittman, assistant chief of the DMR's Marine Patrol. "Compliance rates were much higher than in previous years."

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.

Northern Gulf Institute Marshals Research and Outreach Activities

MSU led annual meeting provides forum for researchers to collaborate on ecosystem management issues facing the Northern Gulf of Mexico

Ecosystem management is the new approach natural resource managers in the Northern Gulf of Mexico region are using to ensure healthy marine populations of increased social and economic value. This new management direction expands human impact focus, crosses political boundaries, and involves multiple partners. The goal of large scale ecosystem management requires significant concerted efforts to marshal the disparate efforts by government, academia and NGOs to get them all pulling in the same direction. To help integrate these distinct activities, the Northern Gulf Institute hosted its 2nd Annual Conference on May 13-14, 2008 in Biloxi, Mississippi at the Beau Rivage Resort and Casino.

Mississippi State University is the lead academic institution for the NGI, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Cooperative Institute. Under the auspices of the Institute, MSU coordinates the research, education and outreach of five (5) universities who collaborate with each other and resource agencies and non-governmental organizations in the Northern Gulf of Mexico region and its environs. According to Dr. David R. Shaw, Director of the NGI, "This is the primary event of the year that brings together the foremost scientists working in this region to share results, and to work toward integrating research that addresses important problems facing the Northern Gulf."

A diverse group of over 150 researchers, students, and resource program coordinators attended the conference. Organizations represented include the five NGI academic member institutions of Mississippi State University, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Florida State University, Louisiana State University, University of Southern Mississippi, NOAA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, various state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations. Dr. Richard Spinrad, Assistant Administrator of NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, delivered the conference keynote address, highlighting the cooperative institute's role in NOAA's success, and the importance of quality, relevance, and performance.

NGI project principal investigators participated in an in-depth poster session which showcased the accomplishments of the 39 NGI projects. Graduate students competed in poster and photography contests for prizes donated by the Hancock Bank and Mississippi Power Company. The conference included sessions to provide an opportunity to share results of the ongoing research and to discuss opportunities to collaborate on new projects. Breakout sessions focused on how to coordinate research data collection and sharing, and on how to expand the research efforts to the scale of the entire Northern Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. Graduate students enjoyed a special career development session while cruising on the historic Biloxi schooner sailing vessel. A special presentation was made to honor Dr. George F. Crozier, who recently retired after directing the Dauphin Island Sea Lab for 30 years, for his years of dedication to the

research and stewardship of the Northern Gulf region, and for his contributions in the establishment of the Institute.

NGI External Affairs Officer Sharon Hodge who helped organize the conference was pleased with the success of the event. "Bringing together the researchers and coastal program managers at the NGI Annual Conference is an important step toward helping NGI supply research and outreach for this entire region in order to support NOAA's ecosystem management goals. We received great feedback and are planning an even larger conference next year." For more information about the Northern Gulf Institute, please visit: www.NorthernGulfInstitute.org.

Project to Create Biofuel from Shrimp Parts

Fuel sources can be found in some unusual places. Scientists at Mississippi State University are working to turn shrimp processing waste into a diesel-like fuel. The shrimp parts that are not used to fill our stomachs could someday help fill tanks on fishing boats, vehicles and anything else runs on diesel fuel.
"The main purpose of this research project is to find a higher value for the shrimp waste," said Todd French, an assistant professor at MSU.

Seafood-based biodiesel would help processors eliminate some waste disposal costs, which have been estimated at about $145,000 per producer. As a building block for fuel, the waste also would bring additional income streams from the products is used to create.

Scientists already know that seafood waste contains the materials necessary to produce oil, French said. The main ingredient is chitin (a carbohydrate found in shrimp, crab and lobster shells). Researchers will take the seafood processing waste, pre-treat it with an acid and add it to vats of bacteria, yeast and fungi – a mixture French refers to as "our bugs." The microorganisms eat the chitin, convert it into fat and store it. The fat can be harvested as oil.

"The oil our microorganisms are making is similar to canola oil or corn oil," French said.

The process already is underway with synthetic seafood ingredients at MSU. The real seafood waste will arrive next month from Gollott's Seafood in Biloxi. Oil companies can take the oil produced from the seafood waste and generate diesel fuel, French said. The biofuel likely would be mixed at 5 percent or 20 percent biofuel to 95 or 80 percent diesel. The biofuel may help decrease dependence on imported oil.

"We are looking at an oil that can feed domestic use," French said. Funding for the biofuel research project comes from the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. For more information, visit www.masgc.org.

Sempier to Coordinate Coastal Storms Program Outreach in Gulf

Tracie Sempier has joined the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium as the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Storms outreach coordinator with duties that include developing, implementing and evaluating a Coastal Storms Outreach Program over a three-year period in Alabama, Mississippi and southeastern Louisiana. The Gulf of Mexico Coastal Storms Program is funded through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A native of Tuscaloosa, Ala., Sempier is completing her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction at Mississippi State University, where she was a graduate research assistant for the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence: Central Gulf of Mexico program.

Sempier will produce a Coastal Storms Resource Directory that will include an inventory of land-use models, risk and vulnerability tools, storm-related workshops, funding opportunities and partners.

Her office is located at the Sea Grant administrative office at The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Lab.

Galveston Seawall No Longer A Barrier

AUSTIN — The beaches in front of the Galveston Seawall are about to become fully accessible, announced Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. Work begins this month on a $431,000 project to build a beach access ramp at 57th Street and Seawall Boulevard. Once completed, the ramp will provide the first access point for the mobility impaired along the 10-mile long seawall since it was built in 1902.

“The Galveston Seawall won’t be a barrier to the disabled anymore,” Patterson said. “Everyone should be able to enjoy a day at one of the premier beaches in Texas.”

Construction on the ramp is expected to last 45 to 50 days once construction begins and won’t affect traffic on Seawall Boulevard. Precautions will be taken to avoid disturbing any potential nesting sea turtles. Longtime Galveston resident Margaret C. Barno welcomed news of the project. Barno can see the beach from her home, but hasn’t been able to visit since having to rely on an electric scooter.

“This is fantastic news,” Barno said. “I can’t wait to go to the beach again.” The city of Galveston, Galveston County and the Galveston Parks Board have all partnered with the Land Office on the beach access ramp.

Constructed after the great hurricane of 1900, in which more than 6,000 Texans died, the Galveston Seawall has grown into a protective barrier that’s never been topped by a storm. The wall is about 17 feet high and 16 feet thick at its base.

Economic Research Supports Need to Protect Freshwater Flows to Texas' Bays and Estuaries

(THE WOODLANDS, Texas - June 27, 2008) Texans are willing to contribute financially to protect the state's bays and estuaries and to pay more for recreational trips to experience these valuable coastal ecosystems, economic researchers have found. Those were among the key findings of two reports released by the Valuing Nature in Texas program of the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC), based in The Woodlands, Texas, and the Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Almost a thousand individuals in the Coastal Bend and Lower Rio Grande Valley participated in the survey.

The reports detail the results of "The Economic Value of Water and Ecosystem Preservation in Texas," a two-part research project examining the economic value of freshwater inflows that support the sensitive estuaries and coastal wetlands in two important locations. They are San Antonio Bay on the Central Texas coast and the Rio Grande Estuary at the state's southernmost tip. Research areas included ecotourism and commercial fisheries. The research received financial support from The Meadows Foundation of Dallas and the Texas General Land Office.

Recent state policy measures such as Senate Bill 3, passed last year by the Texas Legislature, are important first steps toward preserving freshwater resources that are crucial to the health of the Texas coastal environment. The researchers who conducted the San Antonio Bay and Rio Grande Estuary studies said they demonstrate that such policies are needed, because Texans highly value their state's coastal ecosystems.

"Valuation studies like these demonstrate how important Texas' natural resources and ecosystem services are to its citizens and why we must factor their worth into resource policy decisions," said Eric Biltonen, environmental economist at HARC.

Surveys administered by the researchers revealed that residents and visitors to the San Antonio Bay and Rio Grande Estuary regions would be willing to contribute more than $120 each to protect freshwater inflows from rivers and streams that support their ecosystems. Extended to the relevant larger populations, these responses suggest that millions of dollars might be donated for ecosystem conservation - more than $4 million for San Antonio Bay and nearly $10 million for the Rio Grande Estuary, the economists concluded. The researchers also found that Texas residents who visited the San Antonio Bay region would be willing to spend about 18 percent more than they actually did spend - $273, as compared to actual travel costs of $231 - to experience the bay's recreational and natural benefits.

Texas' bays and estuaries are among the state's most valuable but under-appreciated natural assets. The unique habitats created where fresh river water mixes with salt water provide homes and nurseries to a remarkable diversity and abundance of aquatic flora and fauna. These coastal ecosystems provide the foundation for a variety of important economic activities, including recreational and commercial fishing, ecotourism, and other outdoor recreation. All ultimately depend on healthy bays and estuaries, which in turn rely on freshwater inflows.

"These studies can help policy-makers and all stakeholders to make resource-management decisions that are grounded on sound science," said David Yoskowitz, economist at the Harte Research Institute.

The authors of the two reports provide a detailed overview of previous studies assessing the economic value of Texas' bays and estuaries. They also make recommendations for future research, noting that the lessons learned from this research can be applied to the entire Texas Gulf Coast, not just to San Antonio

Bay and the Rio Grande Estuary. The reports are available on the Valuing Nature in Texas project website at: http://www.harc.edu/Projects/Nature/

A second phase research agenda is now being planned, which will build upon the accomplishments of the initial studies and expand the research focus to incorporate potential impacts of climate change.

HARC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization based in The Woodlands, Texas dedicated to improving human and ecosystem well-being through the application of sustainability science and principles of sustainable development. For more information, visit www.harc.edu. The Harte Research Institute (HRI) for Gulf of Mexico Studies is a recently endowed and developing research institute at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi dedicated to advancing the long-term sustainable use and conservation of the Gulf of Mexico. For more information, visit www.harteresearchinstitute.org

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Energy

Department of Commerce Decides Two Federal Consistency Appeals

June 26, 2008

The Department of Commerce today issued decisions on two appeals of state objections involving the proposed construction and operation of liquefied natural gas terminals in Maryland and Massachusetts. The states independently objected to the projects on the grounds that the proposals were inconsistent with their federally-approved coastal management programs. Under the Coastal Zone Management Act, federal agencies may not issue any permits required for a project if a state has objected, unless the Department of Commerce, on appeal, overrides the objection.

The decisions announced today are:
AES Sparrows Point, LLC and Mid-Atlantic Express, LLC
The Department overrode the State of Maryland's objection to the AES Sparrows Point, LLC and Mid-Atlantic Express, LLC proposal to construct and operate an LNG facility east of the Port of Baltimore. Based on information submitted during the appeal, the Department determined that the national interest served by the facility outweighs its limited adverse coastal effects.

The proposed project would help meet regional energy demand by providing enough natural gas capacity to heat approximately 3.5 million homes per day or to generate electricity for 7.5 million homes per day. The impact of dredging to fish and aquatic vegetation will not be significant.

Weaver's Cove Energy, LLC and Mill River Pipeline, LLC
The Department upheld the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' objection to a Weaver's Cove Energy, LLC and Mill River Pipeline, LLC proposal to construct and operate an LNG facility and associated pipeline near Fall River, Mass. Based on information submitted during the appeal, the Department determined that adverse coastal effects – particularly navigational safety concerns associated with delivering LNG to the terminal by tanker vessel up the Taunton River – outweigh the national interest.

Navigational safety concerns were articulated in a U.S. Coast Guard report that concluded the Taunton River is unsuitable for LNG tanker traffic of the size and frequency proposed by Weaver's Cove. When the Department overrides a state objection, federal agencies may proceed with normal permit and license processes for the project. The project will also be required to comply with all state and local permitting regulations, and complete all required environmental reviews.

Other News

Action Plan to Reduce Nutrients to Mississippi River from 31 States Released

Release date: 06/16/2008
Contact Information: Latisha Petteway, (202) 564-4355 / petteway.latisha@epa.gov

(Washington, D.C. - June 16, 2008) The Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force today is releasing an Action Plan that involves state and federal partners in reducing hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico. The 2008 Action Plan for Reducing, Mitigating, and Controlling Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico and Improving Water Quality in the Mississippi River Basin builds upon the 2001 plan by incorporating emerging issues, innovative approaches, and the latest science, including findings from EPA's Science Advisory Board.

"Our improved plan unites governments and citizens across the country to take action upstream and along the coast to reduce river nutrient pollution and increase Gulf of Mexico health," said Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles. "Sound science, cooperative conservation, and innovation will accelerate environmental progress throughout the 31-state watershed and this plan puts us on a course to do just that."

Improvements include more accountability through an Annual Operating Plan, better tracking of progress, state as well as federal nutrient reduction strategies, and a plan to increase awareness of the problem and implementation of solutions. The plan connects upstream and downstream problems to solutions in sustaining the Mississippi River Basin and its tributaries.

Nutrients are important to the environment, but too much, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, can harm water quality by feeding algae blooms and creating oxygen-deprived "dead zones" where marine life can not survive. Pollution from the whole 31-state Mississippi River watershed is carried downstream to the Gulf of Mexico by the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers. Excess nutrients flowing downstream from agricultural and developed land, soil erosion, factory and wastewater treatment plant discharges, and even from the air trigger excessive algal growth that deplete the oxygen in the water when they die, sink to the bottom and decompose.

The Task Force, made up of state and federal officials, leads efforts to promote and support nutrient management in the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin and works to accelerate efforts to reduce the size of the zone through building strong partnerships, developing voluntary and regulatory approaches, and increasing national awareness. EPA is committed to the work of the Task Force and to meeting its ambitious goals through innovative approaches such as numeric nutrient standards in permits, restoring or creating wetlands for purifying runoff, and encouraging nutrient cap and trade systems for improved water quality. More information on the 2008 Action Plan:epa.gov/msbasin/

New Report Available on Ecosystems and Climate Change

Release date: 06/20/2008
Contact Information: Roxanne Smith, 202-564-4355 / smith.roxanne@epa.gov

(Washington, D.C. – June 20, 2008) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released a report that can help reduce the potential impact of climate change on estuaries, forests, wetlands, coral reefs, and other sensitive ecosystems. The report, entitled Preliminary Review of Adaptation Options for Climate-Sensitive Ecosystems and Resources, identifies strategies to protect the environment as these changes occur.

"People always say 'Don't just tell us what will happen – tell us what we can do about it,'" said Dr. George Gray, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Research and Development. "By using the strategies outlined in this document, we can help managers protect our parks, rivers, and forests from possible future impacts of a changing climate."

To develop this assessment, scientists studied national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, national estuaries, and marine protected areas – all protected by the federal government. The report takes a unique approach by using the management goals set for each protected area to understand what strategies will increase the resilience of each ecosystem – in other words, increase the amount of change or disturbance that an ecosystem can absorb before it shifts to a different ecosystem. Using these strategies, managers can maintain the original goals set for these ecosystems under changing climatic conditions. The strategies will be useful to federal agencies and can also be broadly applied to lands and waters managed by other government or nongovernmental organizations.

The report finds that climate change can increase the impact of traditional stressors (such as pollution or habitat destruction) on ecosystems, and that many existing best management practices to reduce these stressors can also be applied to reduce the impacts of climate change. For example, current efforts to reverse habitat destruction by restoring vegetation along streams also increase ecosystem resilience to climate change impacts, such as greater amounts of pollutants and sediments from more intense rainfall. Our country's ability to adapt to climate change will depend on a variety of factors including recognizing the barriers to implementing new strategies, expanding collaboration among ecosystem managers, creatively re-examining program goals and authorities, and being flexible in setting priorities and managing for change.

The peer-reviewed report provides the best-available science to date on management adaptations for ecosystems and resources. It was developed following the guidelines developed by the U.S. Climate Change Science Program. The Global Change Research Program in EPA's Office of Research and Development led the development of the report. It is one of 21 synthesis and assessment products commissioned by the CCSP. The CCSP was established in 2002 to provide the Nation with science-based knowledge to manage the risks and opportunities of changes in the climate and related environmental systems. The program is responsible for coordinating and integrating the research of 13 federal agencies on climate and global change.

For more information on Preliminary Review of Adaptation Options for Climate-Sensitive Ecosystems and Resources: http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/recordisplay.cfm?deid=180143

The Office of Research and Development's Global Change Research Program: epa.gov/ord/npd/globalresearch-intro.htm

The U.S. Climate Change Science Program (CCSP): http://www.climatescience.gov/

Geospatial Intelligence and Imagery Aid in Midwest Flood Response

Release Date: June 20, 2008

WASHINGTON, D.C. --The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to support flood response efforts in the Midwest. NGA is providing analysis, unclassified commercial imagery of flooded areas and geospatial intelligence products to FEMA and emergency responders in the affected areas to aid in rescue and recovery efforts. The products include graphics of major infrastructure, such as the location of airports, hospitals, police and fire stations, emergency operations centers, hazardous material locations, highways and schools. FEMA, state and local responders use the products to aid in damage assessments, estimate housing needs, position supplies and other resources and coordinate relief efforts. The graphics also provide a common operating picture that helps enable local, state and federal officials work together more effectively and efficiently.

Through the NGA's crisis response portal, the public has access to some of the images, allowing property owners to broadly assess property damage without having to physically visit the area. NGA established its Earth site in 2005 after realizing victims of Hurricane Katrina could use commercial geospatial imagery to check damage to their property along the Gulf Coast.

The NGA Earth site uses the Internet to provide emergency responders and the public a single, easy-to-use entry point for locating timely, relevant, unclassified geospatial information in the event of a disaster or crisis. The NGA Earth site (http://www.nga-earth.org/) is updated as new images are made available. In addition to the images hosted at this location, the site provides links to other federal agency sites and is an access point to leverage other NGA geospatial expertise and products.

NGA's mission is to provide timely, relevant and accurate geospatial intelligence in support of the nation. The term "geospatial intelligence" means the exploitation and analysis of imagery and geospatial information to describe, assess and visually depict physical features and geographically referenced activities on the Earth.

Ceres and Heinz Center Launch Resilient Coasts Initiative

(http://www.ceres.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=895&srcid=423)

On May 7, Ceres and The Heinz Center announced the launch of the Resilient Coasts Initiative, a collaboration of private and public sector groups to find public policy and private market solutions to better protect coastal communities from rising sea levels and other potentially damaging consequences of climate change. The project is designed to bring together a coalition of insurers, regulators, environmental organizations, politicians, real estate developers and investors to address the need for adaptation in the U.S. due to the increasing coastal risks associated with climate change. Over the next 12 months the initiative will identify policy and market-based solutions that may limit new development in the most vulnerable areas, strengthen and upgrade existing buildings to prevent further losses, and promote infrastructure investments that will help communities adapt to sea level rise. For more information, contact: Sharlene Leurig, manager of the insurance program at Ceres (leurig@ceres.org) or Christophe A. G. Tulou, director of the Resilient Coasts Initiative (tulou@heinzctr.org).

Grant Opportunities

Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership Request for Preproposals

For Projects in the Gulf of Mexico and the U.S. Territories of the Caribbean
(Submittal Deadline: August 6, 2008)

The Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership (GCRP) invites preproposals for its citizen-driven habitat restoration projects. The partnership is seeking to fund on-the ground activities throughout the Gulf of Mexico and the U.S. Territories of the Caribbean which restore marine, estuarine, and riparian habitats benefiting living marine resources and provide educational and social benefits by significantly involving the community.

The GCRP is a multi-year, regional partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program (CRP), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Gulf of Mexico Program – Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) Initiative, and the Gulf States and Caribbean territories. The purpose of this partnership is to strengthen the conservation efforts of the CRP and GEMS by supporting on-the-ground restoration activities and fostering local stewardship of ecologically significant areas.

Project Specifications:
Preproposals will be accepted for projects that involve restoration, creation, or enhancement of coastal habitats. Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico proposals will be evaluated separately, and for Gulf of Mexico projects, priority will be given to projects which are located within GEMS sites.

All projects must:

- Result in on-the-ground habitat restoration;
- Provide significant, long-term benefit to "NOAA Trust Resources"
- Involve the local community through an educational or volunteer component tied to the restoration activities;
- Provide a 1:1 nonfederal match to the partnership cash contribution; and
- Include a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the success/failure of the project

The preferred project duration is one year, with projects beginning January 1, 2009. However, projects of shorter duration and projects taking up to 18 months for completion, but only requiring one year of funding, will also be considered. For more information visit http://gulfmex.org/documents/y8/crp_rfpre.pdf.

EPA Requests Grant Proposals to Reduce Hypoxic Zone in the Gulf of Mexico

Release date: 06/10/2008
Contact Information: Shakeba Carter-Jenkins (202) 564-4355 / carter-jenkins.shakeba@epa.gov

(Washington, D.C. - June 10, 2008) EPA plans to award up to $4.2 million in targeted watershed grants to reduce the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf of Mexico. 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.

"This is seed money to grow an innovative solution to nutrient pollution and cut the size of the Gulf of Mexico's dead zone," said Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles. 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.

Grant proposals must be submitted by Sept. 9, 2008. 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.

Targeted Watersheds Grants program: http://www.epa.gov/twg
Water quality trading: http://www.epa.gov/waterqualitytrading
Hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico: http://www.epa.gov/msbasin/index.htm

Training and Conferences

Building Sustainable Communities for the 21st Century

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.

The conference 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. Local case studies and presentation are being sought in the

following categories: 1) Building Greener Communities; 2) Saving Habitat, Farmland, Green Infrastructure and Community Character, and 3) Designing Resilient Communities.

Conference News:

Online Registration is OPEN!
Make Hotel Reservations Online
Conference Agenda and Schedule Now Available
Pre-Conference Workshops and Tours Announced!

For questions about the conference, please contact the Southeast Watershed Forum at 615-627-1310 or seforum@southeastwaterforum.org.

Texas Coastal Conference 2008: Caring for the Coast

Commissioner Jerry Patterson and the Texas General Land Office are happy to announce the Texas Coastal Conference 2008: Caring for the Coast! This conference will cover a variety of topics related to maintaining a healthy and stable coastal environment along our Texas coast.

Galveston, Texas
September 25-27, 2008

Early Registration Begins June 11, 2008

Targeted to anyone who cares about conserving and maintaining the Texas coast, informational sessions will include discussions of wetland and habitat loss and restoration, water quality, fisheries management, coastal hazards and more! An educational field trip highlighting coastal restoration efforts by the General Land Office is scheduled.

Texas GLO is currently accepting sponsors and exhibitors for this event. This conference offers great advertising and marketing opportunities. Please visit the website below for registration information, conference location, hotel accommodations and sponsorship information: https://www.texascoastalconnection.com. You may also contact Jenny Bragg at 512-475-0734 or Kate Perschau at 409-741-4073.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation/Sea Grasses: Ecology, Regulation and Restoration Basics Workshop

October 7, 2008
5 Rivers Delta Center
Spanish Fort, Alabama

Please join us for a 1-Day Workshop on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) and sea grasses at the 5 Rivers Delta Center in Spanish Fort. Topics to be covered include:

- Area SAV/Sea Grasses
- SAV/Sea Grass Status & Trends in Coastal Alabama
- Sea Grasses: Local Species & Ecology
- Freshwater & Brackish SAV: Local Species & Ecology
- State and Federal Regulatory Requirements for Construction In, On & Over SAVs
- BMPs for Construction In, On, Over or in Close Proximity to SAVs
- SAV/Sea Grass Restoration Basics

Information on registration and a formal agenda will be coming out soon. Please visit the website for more information: http://www.mobilebaynep.com/.

Restore America's Estuaries

October 11-15, 2008

REGISTRATION OPENS JUNE 2nd!

4th National Conference and Expo on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration Creating Solutions Through Collaborative Partnerships

Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence www.estuaries.org/conference

The Conference, hosted by Restore America's Estuaries, will be held October 11-15, 2008, in Providence, Rhode Island. This is the premiere nationwide forum focused on advancing the science, pace, practice, scale and success of coastal and estuarine habitat restoration. Incorporating the non-profit, government, scientific, business, tribal, and academic sectors, the Conference will enable networking and communication throughout this growing movement.

The 4th National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration will advance the science, pace, practice, and success of habitat restoration at all scales. Past Conference locations include New Orleans in December 2006 (1,400 attendees), Seattle in September 2004, and Baltimore in April 2003. This is the only national conference that brings together the entire coastal and estuarine habitat restoration community. It provides a unique blend of people and policy, science and strategy, business and best practices. The Conference Program will address all aspects of coastal and estuarine habitat restoration, in all habitats and at all scales. For More Information about the Conference visit www.estuaries.org/conference. For general conference information, call 703-524-0248 or email conference@estuaries.org.

Ninth Biennial "Basics of the Basin" Research Symposium and Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting

The “Basics of the Basin" research symposium will address the environmental status and restoration of the Lake Pontchartrain and Barataria Basins, in Louisiana with a session on the 2008 Bonnet Carré Spillway opening. It will be held jointly with the Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting on Gulf of Mexico Estuaries and Coasts.

Location: Lindy Boggs International Conference Center, University of New Orleans, New Orleans Lakefront Campus
Dates: November 5-7, 2008
Abstract/Proposal Submission Deadline: September 5, 2008
Contact Information: Basics of the Basin: John Lopez, johnlopez@pobox.com
GERS Information: Mike Poirrier, mpoirrie@uno.edu
Home Page URL: http://www.gers.org/

http://www.gers.org/

Fisheries & Harmful Algae: Can They Co-Exist?

The Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (TCAFS) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) cordially invite all American Fisheries Society members, fisheries and water quality professionals, harmful algae experts, academia, governmental agency staff, river authorities and other stakeholders to attend this combined conference of the annual TCAFS meeting and an International Symposium on the golden alga, *Prymnesium parvum*. The TPWD Golden Alga Task Force has invited international, national, and Texas researchers and workers to present their most recent research in management, control, bloom dynamics, toxicity and genetics of golden algae. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Don Anderson, from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and several national and international speakers have confirmed their attendance.

The meeting will include a special contributed session for inland and coastal harmful algal bloom topics as well as a general fisheries and poster session. The meeting will also feature the lively annual raffle and banquet, student awards, Texas fisheries workers awards, student/mentor luncheon and student social. Additional information will be posted soon on the TCAFS website.

Location: Radisson Fort Worth Fossil Creek Hotel, Fort Worth, Texas, USA
Dates: January 27-31, 2009
Early Registration Deadline: December 3, 2008
Abstract/Proposal Submission Deadline: July 31, 2008
Contact Information: Dr. David Sager: david.sager@tpwd.state.tx
Home Page URL: http://www.sdafs.org/tcafs/meetings/2009_Golden_Alga/09meethome.htm

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