



NEWSLETTER OF THE GULF OF MEXICO COASTAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEM

GCOOS NEWS AND UPDATES FOR 3 MAY 2013

GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL NEWS

GCOOS *Eco Hero* Game Wins Gulf Guardian Award

The GCOOS *Eco Hero* game is an example of what can happen when multiple institutions share expertise to develop a product for the common good. *Eco Hero* is an interactive, conservation game to understand the environmental value of the Gulf of Mexico and to “bridge the gap” between research conducted within the Gulf and the relevance of scientists’ findings to our everyday lives. The game was funded by a NOAA grant to the GCOOS-RA, which was subcontracted to the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies-Center for Marine Education and Research (IMMS-CMER), MS.

Game exhibits were developed for five informal learning centers throughout the Gulf of Mexico, including four Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers (the Florida Aquarium, Dauphin Island Estuarium, AL, Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, LA, and Texas State Aquarium), and the IMMS-CMER. Additional exhibits were subsequently leveraged for other facilities, and a portable version of the game was created for public outreach events. The intellectual content of the *Eco Hero* game reflects the collective expertise of the 23-member GCOOS Education and Outreach Council, representatives from each of the informal learning centers, and several subject matter experts. The company MindClay Creative, Inc., partnered with IMMS-CMER and the GCOOS-RA to render the game characters and help translate the science in a fun, engaging way.

The importance of the sharing of expertise that went into the creation of the *Eco Hero* game was recognized through award to the GCOOS-RA and IMMS-CMER of the prestigious U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of Mexico Program’s Gulf Guardian Award in the Civic/Nonprofit category that recognizes “the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful, and productive.” The success of the *Eco Hero* game exemplifies innovative solutions that develop when we pool resources and look for creative ways to positively impact our quality of life and economic well-being. The award reinforces the value of having a stakeholder-driven GCOOS-RA to leverage multi-institutional, interdisciplinary experts to address shared challenges facing the communities and ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico.

Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem (GOM LME) Project Wins Gulf Guardian Award

The GCOOS-RA congratulates Dr. Porfirio Alvarez-Torres, Coordinator, Marine Program for the Gulf of Mexico Caribbean, Center for Global Change and Sustainability of the Southeast, and former Chief Technical Advisor of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization GOM LME Project. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded the GOM LME project, and Alvarez-Torres as the project’s Program Director, first place in the Bi-National category. The project was selected from among more than 50 entries. The award will be presented at the Gulf of Mexico Alliance All Hands meeting in Tampa, FL, on 26 June 2013. Alvarez-Torres was quick to acknowledge that the success of the program is due to many people, committed to overcoming traditional barriers to collaboration, stating “this Gulf Guardian Award belongs and is dedicated to the people that have created the LME concept, one that has shown to be the most appropriate tool to enhance work in large marine areas of the world such as the Gulf LME region. A concept that once was put into practice and in the field, it helped to link the natural and socio-economic-political components of the Gulf and highlighted its transboundary issues, engaging people in both nations beyond the imaginary political boundaries surrounding the Gulf.” Alvarez-Torres provided model leadership and tireless commitment for nearly four years, building communities of experts with institutions and organizations in Mexico and the U.S. to foster the establishment

of a permanent collaborative and constructive dialog to safeguard Gulf of Mexico resources. The award is well-deserved, and the GCOOS-RA looks forward to continued collaborations with LME colleagues, and new collaborations with the Center for Global Change and Sustainability of the Southeast.

Earth Day Around the Gulf

From Texas to Florida, Earth Day activities brought thousands of people to the bays, bayous, marshes, estuaries and beaches of the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed. Art, music, food, movies, exhibits, and countless hands-on activities showcased the treasures of the Gulf of Mexico. GCOOS supporters and members led activities to educate students and the public about how the quality of their lives is intricately linked to the health of the ocean. Many of the GCOOS Education and Outreach Council members and partners led Earth Day activities and reached out to their Gulf neighbors. Examples of creative tools include:

- Texas - middle school students create Water Cycle Wristbands while learning a water cycle song,
- Louisiana - Party for the Planet hosted by the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas and Baton Rouge's city-wide Earth Day celebration,
- Mississippi - *Keeping it Green* Farmers Market, which included youth photo, essay and poetry contests, and an art contest for the new storm-water drain stencil,
- Alabama - Discovery Day at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, complete with a huge variety of environmentally-themed children's activities, open house for the research facilities and free admission to the Estuarium at the Sea Lab, and
- Florida - giant human food web, showing how even the tiniest marine life affects the entire ocean, and ultimately, all humanity.

The GCOOS-RA thanks its Education and Outreach Council members and partners for making the Gulf of Mexico a better place for all.

NOAA Holds the 4th Annual Hypoxia Research Coordination Meeting at Stennis Space Center, MS

The 4th Annual Hypoxia Research Coordination Meeting was held from 17 - 18 April at Stennis Space Center, MS. The two-day meeting was hosted by Mississippi State University and participants included stakeholders from across the Gulf of Mexico. Drs. Matthew Howard, Ruth Mullins-Perry, and Stephanie Watson represented the GCOOS-RA. The first day included a series of presentations highlighting the current research and status of monitoring hypoxia in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. GCOOS members and partners, including Drs. Stephan Howden, Nancy Rabalais, Steven Wolfe, and Steven F. DiMarco presented on their current research and monitoring efforts of Gulf hypoxia. The second day of the meeting revolved around two break-out meetings - the Gulf Hypoxia Glider Application meeting and the Gulf Hypoxia Modeling Technical Review meeting. GCOOS members participated in both meetings with Dr. Stephan Howden leading the Glider Application Meeting. The efforts during this meeting will include an Action Plan and recommendations for glider research related to hypoxia, which should be released later this summer. The results of the Modeling Technical Review will also be made available for public comment later this summer. For more information about the meeting, including technical presentations and notes, please visit <http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/activities/healthy-oceans/gulf-hypoxia-stakeholders/workshop-2013/>.

NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team meets in Stennis Space Center, MS

NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team (GoMRCT) met on 23 - 24 April at Stennis Space Center, MS and by webinar for those that could not travel. The GoMRCT is comprised of NOAA employees and partner members to support integrated and regional implementations of NOAA programs and communications. GoMRCT also works to collectively address major challenges to healthy and resilient communities in the Gulf of Mexico. The primary goal of this meeting was to develop an effective, coordinated approach for the GoMRCT's activities related to the NOAA Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring, and Technology Program (part of the RESTORE Act), as well as other RESTORE-funded programs in the Gulf of Mexico. The GoMRCT also discussed connections between RESTORE-related activities and the team's standing priorities. GCOOS participated in the meeting by presenting an overview of the RA's status, as well suggesting opportunities for continued regional collaborations with NOAA. GCOOS highlighted the critical need to sustain existing observing assets in the Gulf of Mexico to maintain support of the RESTORE Act goals. NOAA has posted a set of documents related to Gulf restoration, as well as information on a variety of other regional priorities on its iGulf information portal at <http://igulf.noaa.gov/>.

Drift Cards Dropped In Gulf Can Reveal Ocean Current Data *(from tamuTimes)*

Coming soon to a beach near you: a “drift card” washing up on Gulf of Mexico shores that is part of a [research project](#) at Texas A&M University to study ocean currents. The brightly colored yellow cards have contact information requesting that finders report where they were found as one way of tracking currents in the Gulf, says Piers Chapman, head of oceanography at Texas A&M. The project is conducted with funding from oil giant BP as part of its [Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative](#). “It’s a fun way to track currents and to get people involved,” explains Chapman, who has done similar drift card projects before. The Gulf Integrated Spill Research Consortium (GISR) will release about 5,000 drift cards over the next few months. The cards will enable oceanographers to improve prediction models and see how gas and oil travel along the currents of the Gulf. So far, cards have been retrieved from Alabama to Panama City, Fla., Chapman says. “The next several batches will be released farther west, so that’s when they will eventually wash up on Texas beaches,” he notes of the cards, written in English and Spanish because some of them will likely be found along the Mexican coast.

<http://gisr.tamu.edu/driftcards>

<http://www.gomri.org>

Sea Turtles Benefiting From Protected Areas

Nesting green sea turtles are benefiting from marine protected areas by using habitats found within their boundaries, according to a U.S. Geological Survey study. The study is the first to track the federally protected turtles in Dry Tortugas National Park. Green turtles are listed as endangered in Florida and threatened throughout the rest of their range. The habits of green sea turtles after beach nesting periods in the Southeast U.S. have long remained a mystery. Until now, it was not clear whether the turtle used of existing protected areas, and few details were available as to whether the areas were suited for supporting the green sea turtles. U.S. Geological Survey researchers confirmed the turtles' use of the protected areas by tracking nesting turtles with satellite tags and analyzing their movement patterns after they left beaches.

<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3575-.UYJ2ko1Yco>

BP agrees to pay \$340 million for Gulf of Mexico restoration projects

According to Louisiana Governor, Bobby Jindal, British Petroleum will pay \$340 million for restoration projects in states affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon accident. According to Jindal, a large portion of this money will be used to restore four barrier islands off the Louisiana coast that act as hurricane buffers. Money will also be used to build two fish research hatcheries, one in Lake Charles and the other in Pointe-a-la-hache. The money is a down payment on restoration to be paid for through the Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA), an amount that will be decided by the federal judge who will set fines under the Clean Water Act.

IOOS/NATIONAL/LEGISLATIVE NEWS

White House Office of Science Technology and Policy Release A National Strategy for Civil Earth Observations

The White House has released the National Strategy for Civil Earth Observations, which is the primary output for the 2011-2012 National Earth Observations Task Force. The National Strategy is a framework for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Nation’s Earth-observation enterprise. Currently, 11 Federal departments and agencies engage in Earth observation activities using an array of sophisticated tools and systems to routinely collect volumes of important data. The new Strategy outlines a process for evaluating and prioritizing Earth-observation investments according to their value to society in critical areas such as agriculture, global change, disasters, water resources, and weather. The report and blog can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/04/19/taking-pulse-our-planet-new-strategy-earth-observations>.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Chief Environmental Officer, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

<https://www.usajobs.gov/Getjob/ViewDetails/341876100>

COMING EVENTS & MEETINGS

May

[Offshore Technology Conference](http://www.otcnet.org/2013/), 6-9 May 2013, Houston, TX
<http://www.otcnet.org/2013/>

[“Optimising Enhanced Oil Recovery”](http://www.wplgroup.com/aci/conferences/eu-eor3.asp), 7-8 May 2013, Doha, Qatar.
<http://www.wplgroup.com/aci/conferences/eu-eor3.asp>

“Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure: A Two Day Workshop”, 14-15 May 2013, Weeks Bay Reserve, Alabama
for information contact Michael Shelton at 251.928.9792 or <mailto:michael.shelton@denr.alabama.gov>

“AGU Meeting of the Americas”, 14-17 May 2013, Cancun, Mexico
Abstract due date: 6 February 2013
<http://moa.agu.org/2013/>

“[5th Carbon Capture and Storage](http://www.wplgroup.com/aci/conferences/eu-ecc5.asp)”, 15-16 May 2013, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Interactive Platform for International Debate on CCS Developments & Innovations
<http://www.wplgroup.com/aci/conferences/eu-ecc5.asp>

June

“Capitol Hill Oceans Week”, 4-6 June 2013, Knight Conference Center, Washington, D.C.

“[OCEANS'13 MTS/IEEE Bergen](http://www.oceans13mtsieeebergen.org)”, 13-15 June 2013, Bergen, Norway
<http://www.oceans13mtsieeebergen.org>

“[2013 Rising Seas Summit](http://www.sealevelriserisummit.org)”, 18-20 June 2013, Fort Lauderdale, FL
<http://www.sealevelriserisummit.org>

“[World Conference on Disaster Management \(WCDM\)](http://www.wcdm.org/)”, 23-26 June 2013, Toronto, Canada.
<http://www.wcdm.org/>

“Gulf of Mexico Alliance All-Hands Meeting”, 25-27 June 2013, Tampa Bay, FL
<http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e6w82a9z0205fc34&llr=thgzaleab>

“[AGU Science Policy Conference](http://spc.agu.org/2013/)”, 24-26 June 2013, Washington, DC. Registration deadline 31 May 2013
<http://spc.agu.org/2013/>

July

“National Marine Educators Association”, 22-26 July 2013, Mobile, AL.
<http://nmea.disl.org/>

September

“[ADCs in Action Conference](http://www.rdinstruments.com/AIA_abstract_submission.aspx)”, 29 September – 2 October 2013, San Diego, CA
http://www.rdinstruments.com/AIA_abstract_submission.aspx

November

Restore America’s Estuaries Coastal Blue Carbon Workshop, 1-6 November 2013, Washington, DC. Note, the website lists this event in 2014, but it is scheduled for 2013.
<https://www.estuaries.org/coastal-blue-carbon-workshop-helps-coastal-managers.html>

December

“[AGU 2013 Fall Meeting](http://fallmeeting.agu.org/2013/)”, 9-13 December 2013, San Francisco, CA.
<http://fallmeeting.agu.org/2013/>



GCOOS is the Gulf of Mexico regional component of the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). Our mission is to provide timely, reliable, and accurate information on the open and coastal ocean waters of the Gulf of Mexico to ensure a healthy, clean, productive ocean and resilient coastal zone. Your input, guidance, support, and membership are important to the development of the data, products and services that you need.

Contact GCOOS Executive Director, Ann Jochens (ajochens@tamu.edu), to become a GCOOS member and for more information.

We welcome your feedback. If you have an item that you would like to share with others, please email that item to Laura Caldwell (lcaldwell@geos.tamu.edu).