



NEWSLETTER OF THE GULF OF MEXICO COASTAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEM

GCOOS NEWS AND UPDATES FOR 26 JULY 2013

GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL NEWS

GCOOS Announces Changes to Newsletter and Seeks Your Help!

Publication of the GCOOS Newsletter will be transitioning from a bi-monthly to a monthly schedule, with dissemination on the 15th of each month, or the Friday before, if the 15th falls on a weekend or holiday. The Newsletter will continue to provide member highlights and timely information on local and national Gulf activities, issues, jobs, events, and professional development opportunities. GCOOS wants to hear from you! Because of positive feedback from members whose stories have been published in the Newsletter and associated website banner stories, we are expanding our efforts to highlight partner and member programs and activities. To make it easy to contribute, we have created guidelines that outline basic questions for you to answer about your programs or activities. GCOOS staff will draft the articles based on the information and work with you to make sure it accurately communicates your information. Guidelines for the stories will be provided in the August Newsletter. In the meantime, please visit <http://gcoos.org> to view our current member and partner showcases to see how GCOOS is spreading the word about exciting activities in the Gulf.

Natural Resources Damage Assessment Meetings Wrapping Up for *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill Early Restoration

The Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustees for the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill restoration are finishing their Programmatic Environmental Impact Scoping (PEIS) meetings on early restoration throughout the Gulf. On 16 July 2013, the NRDA trustees held a public meeting to hear comment on the scope of the PEIS at the University of Southern Mississippi at Long Beach. Over 100 people attended the meeting. Additional meetings were held 24 June (Galveston, TX), 27 June (Mobile, AL), 18 July (Houma, LA), 23 July (Washington, D.C.), and 25 July (Pensacola, FL).

The PEIS will evaluate the potential environmental effects of general types of early restoration actions, as well as specific projects, including those that the Trustees intend to propose. The PEIS will also evaluate the cumulative effects of early restoration. Comments for the PEIS process are due on 2 August and can be submitted online or via email or mail. Visit: <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/2013/06/trustees-open-new-public-comment-period-2/>. After 2 August, the NRDA Trustees will prepare a draft plan for the early restoration projects. This draft plan will then be open to the public for additional comments.

Visit this link for a video from the USM Long Beach PEIS meeting on 16 July, in which Debra McClain, U.S. Department of the Interior, explains the PEIS process: <http://vimeo.com/70511825>.

Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) Designated as AL Center of Excellence

The Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council named the DISL, the home of Alabama's Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC), as the RESTORE (Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourism Opportunities and Revived Economy) Research Center of Excellence for the State of Alabama. The designation was awarded by unanimous vote on 10 May 2013, during the Council's meeting at Five Rivers Delta Resource Center. For more information, visit: http://press.disl.org/5_13_13ace.html

Harte Research Institute's Research of Sea Level Rise Threatening Upper Texas Coast Receives Grant

The Harte Research Institute (HRI) for Gulf of Mexico Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has received a \$790,000 grant from Houston Endowment for a ground-breaking project to map and evaluate the

effects of sea level rise on the upper Texas coast and develop tools to address this critical issue. The program is the first of its kind in Texas to project changes to the environment caused by sea level rise and also examine the socio-economic impacts and public policy options for living with a rising sea. The natural and built environments of the greater Houston area are part of a low-lying coastal plain that is being impacted by sea level rise. Effects on the natural ecosystems include coastal wetland migration or conversion to open water. For more on this story, please see:

<http://www.hartheresearchinstitute.org/whats-news-news/grant>

Natural Hazards Handbook Available for Floridians

It's hurricane season and now is the time for homeowners to make the necessary preparations to protect their homes and loved ones. The new *Florida Homeowner's Handbook to Prepare for Natural Hazards* provides actions that can be taken to reduce vulnerability to these threats. The *Handbook* explains the forces of nature that act on structures during storms, including the dangers associated with high winds, heavy rain, storm surge and even wildfires. The *Handbook* lays out relatively easy things homeowners can do to minimize or negate the effect of natural disasters. The *Handbook* provides tips specific to Florida residents. These include preparing evacuation plans and kits, construction practices, retrofitting, shutter styles, insurance information and emergency contact numbers. The handbook is available at http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/disaster_prep/.

Scientists Determine Source of Dispersant Chemicals Found in Community-Led Water Study

After the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, the City of Orange Beach, AL collected water samples and contracted commercial laboratory analyses "for chemical constituents associated with the *Deepwater Horizon* event." Their results showed the presence of dispersant-related chemicals. Auburn University scientists examined the data to determine the chemicals' origin and concluded that, "they are likely related to point and non-point source stormwater discharge." The researchers published their findings in the October 2012 issue of the *Marine Pollution Bulletin*: "Provenance of Corexit-related chemical constituents found in nearshore and inland Gulf Coast waters." (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025326X12004146>) For more on this story please visit: <http://gulfresearchinitiative.org/2013/scientists-determine-source-of-dispersant-chemicals-found-in-community-led-water-study/>. This research was made possible in part by a Grant from BP/The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI) through the Alabama Marine Environmental Science Consortium (MESC).

NOAA Proposes to Designate Critical Habitat for Loggerhead Sea Turtles in NW Atlantic and Gulf

In accordance with the statutory requirements of the Endangered Species Act, NOAA Fisheries released for public comment a draft proposal to designate critical habitat for threatened loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in the northwestern Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. Critical habitat designations identify the habitat that is essential to endangered and threatened species. Once finalized, critical habitat designation would not necessarily result in any restrictions on human activities. Only if an activity required federal actions, funding or permitting would the agency in question need to work with NOAA to avoid, reduce or mitigate potential impacts to the species or its habitat. Members of the public can now submit comments on the agency's draft proposal to aid in the recovery of this species. Last year, the President directed that any potential future designations of critical habitat carefully consider all public comments on relevant science and economic impact, including those that suggest methods for minimizing regulatory burdens. Any critical habitat designation will include a full analysis of economic impact, including impact on jobs, and will strive, to the extent permitted by law, to avoid unnecessary burdens and costs on states, tribes, localities, and the private sector.

Written comments on the proposed regulations must be sent to NOAA Fisheries no later than 16 September 2013. The public may submit comments via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at: www.regulations.gov <<http://www.regulations.gov>> or by visiting the comment page on the Office of Protected Resources website at: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/comment.htm <<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/comment.htm>>.

Nesting Gulf Loggerheads Face Offshore Risks

Threatened loggerhead sea turtles in the northern Gulf of Mexico can travel distances up to several hundred miles and visit offshore habitats between nesting events in a single season, taking them through waters impacted by oil and fishing industries. Evidence from a U.S. Geological Survey study challenged the widely-

held view that sea turtles remain near one beach throughout the nesting season and suggested that the threatened species may require broader habitat protection to recover. The findings also cast new uncertainties on current estimates of the size of the species' Gulf of Mexico subpopulation. The study revealed detailed loggerhead movements during "inter-nesting" periods, showing patterns that vary for individual turtles. Generally, this period begins when a female returns from open seas around May and lasts roughly until September. To date, efforts to protect the species generally centered on beaches with high nesting activity under the assumption that once turtles had nested on those beaches, they either remained in their immediate vicinity or migrated back out to sea.

<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3641-.Ue6jklOGE7k>

IOOS/NATIONAL/LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) Framework Document Accepted by the IOC

The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) Steering Committee presented an updated framework document to its administrative body, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The document, *GOOS Regional Alliance Policy 2013*, provides a vision and framework for the roles and responsibilities of the GOOS Regional Alliances and the terms of reference of the GOOS Regional Council. As the current chair of the GOOS Regional Council, the NOAA-led U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) helped draft the document at the GOOS Regional Forum last month. The IOC adopted this governance document, *GOOS Regional Policy 2013 (IOC/INF-1308)*, at the IOC assembly.

VIMS Professor Elected President of International Wetland Society

Professor Jim Perry of the College of William & Mary's Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) has been elected President of the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS). Perry began serving his three-year term in June 2013 at the Society's annual meeting in Duluth, Minnesota. The SWS is an international non-profit organization with more than 3,200 members dedicated to promoting understanding, scientifically-based management, and sustainable use of wetlands around the world. Perry's research at VIMS includes determining the development of biological function in restored and created wetlands, monitoring stress and documenting long-term changes in vascular plant communities of tidal and non-tidal wetlands, as well as studying the relationship of those changes to changes in environmental parameters within watersheds.

<http://www.wm.edu/news/stories/2013/vims-professor-elected-president-of-international-wetland-society123.php>

Loss of Natural Buffers Could Double Number of People at Risk from Hurricanes

About twice as many Americans would be exposed to dangerous storm surges and other hurricane threats if the United States lost its shield of natural coastal defenses, a new study suggests. Protective natural features like mangroves, wetlands and oyster beds currently buffer about 67 percent of the nation's seashores from ocean forces. If they disappear, more than a million additional people and billions of dollars in property value will be vulnerable to damage, says a paper published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*. The East Coast and Gulf Coast would feel the largest impacts from depleted ecosystems, because they have denser populations and are more vulnerable to storm surge and sea-level rise.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=loss-of-natural-buffers-could-double-number-of-people-at-risk-from-hurricanes>

<http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nclimate1944.html>

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Director, Political Affairs, Environmental Defense Action Fund

<http://www.edf.org/jobs/director-political-affairs-environmental-defense-action-fund>

Marine Resources Data Management Specialist, Silver Springs, MD

<http://ch.tbe.taleo.net/CH08/ats/careers/requisition.jsp?org=ERT&cws=1&rid=906&source=Indeed.com>

Coordinator, Coastal Training Program, Rookery Bay, Ft Meyers, FL

<http://www.higheredjobs.com/state/details.cfm?JobCode=175774625&Title=Coordinator, Coastal Training Program, Rookery Bay>

COMING EVENTS & MEETINGS

August

“15th Conference on Mesoscale Processes”, 6-9 August 2013, Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Portland, OR.
<http://www.ametsoc.org/meet/fainst/201315meso.html>

September

“OCEANS’13 MTS/IEEE San Diego”, 23-26 September 2013, San Diego, CA
<http://www.oceans13mtsieeesandiego.org/>

“GCOOS-RA Board of Directors Meeting”, 25-26 September 2013, University of Alabama at Huntsville, Huntsville, AL

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

October

“Sea Level Rise Summit”, 16-17 October 2013, Fort Lauderdale, FL
<http://www.ces.fau.edu/SLR2013/>

“NOAA’s 38th Climate Diagnostics and Prediction Workshop”, 21-24 October 2013, College Park, MD
<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/outreach/CDPW38.shtml>

November

“Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation Conference”, 3-7 November 2013, Hotel Mission Valley San Diego & Country Convention Center, San Diego, CA
<http://www.sgmeet.com/cerf2013/>

“IOOS/RA Fall Meeting”, 6-8 November 2013. Details TBD.

“Clean Gulf”, 12-14 November 2013, Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, FL.
<http://www.cleangulf.org>

December

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

2014

January

“Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference”, 27-29 January 2014, Mobile, AL
<http://gulfofmexicoconference.org/>

February

“94th Annual Meeting of the American Meteorology Society”, 2-6 February 2014, Atlanta, GA.

“2014 Ocean Science Meeting (with AGU and TOS)”, 22-28 February 2014, Honolulu, HI.



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).