



## NEWSLETTER OF THE GULF OF MEXICO COASTAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEM

### GCOOS NEWS AND UPDATES FOR 17 APRIL 2014

#### GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL NEWS

##### **GCOOS-RA Congratulates Newly-Elected and Re-Elected Board Members, and Thanks All Candidates**

The results of the GCOOS-RA elections are in! A very heartfelt "Thank you" to all candidates. Welcome to our new and re-elected Board members. We look forward to working with you!

David Driver (Private Sector - BP) – Returning Board Member  
Steven Buschang (Government – TX General Land Office) – Returning Board Member  
Carol Dorsey (Government – AL Department of Public Health) – New Board member  
Pat Roscigno (Government – U.S. Bureau of Offshore Energy Management) – Returning Board Member  
Nancy Rabalais (Academic – Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium) – Returning Board Member  
Sara Graves (Education and Outreach – University of Alabama at Huntsville) – New Board Member  
Joe Swaykos (Education and Outreach – NOAA National Data Buoy Center) – Returning Board Member

##### **Thank You and Congratulations to Dr. Ruth Mullins-Perry!**

For an entirely too brief period of time, the GCOOS-RA was fortunate to have the skills, creative input, and enthusiasm of Dr. Ruth Mullins Perry. Perry was hired as a Graduate Assistant Research by the GCOOS-RA, primarily to assist the Communications Team. She rapidly became an integral part of the team, engaging with Gulf of Mexico stakeholders to identify and prepare articles for the GCOOS newsletter and website, and giving the communications portion of the website a new look with her web programming and graphic design skills. However, Communications is only one area where Perry's talents enhanced GCOOS-RA activities. Upon completion of her doctoral degree in Oceanography from Texas A&M University (TAMU), College Station, in 2013, she split time as a Postdoctoral Research Associate between the GCOOS-RA and TAMU's Department of Oceanography. Her work using Autonomous Underwater Vehicles in the study of hypoxia on the Texas shelf positioned her to make significant contributions to raise awareness and identify collaborations to assist GCOOS Data Product development. Her work also raised awareness of the work of the GCOOS Gulf Glider Task Team (see [http://gcoos.org/?page\\_id=4426](http://gcoos.org/?page_id=4426)). Prior experience as a National Science Foundation GK 12 Fellow also made her a valuable contributor to GCOOS Outreach and Education efforts. Dr. Chris Simoniello, GCOOS Outreach and Education Coordinator, stated "I first met Ruth when judging a student poster session at an international conference. Her work and grasp of its implications were very impressive. When I learned the GCOOS-RA was hiring her, I knew she would be a tremendous asset. She did not disappoint." Recognizing her unique skill set, diligent work ethic, and vision, Shell Exploration and Production Company recently hired Perry as their Marine Science and Regulatory Policy Specialist. The GCOOS-RA thanks Perry for being such a tremendous asset and wishes her every success in her new position. We will miss her greatly, but look forward to future collaborations. Read the article and see pictures at <http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=6261>.

##### **GCOOS-RA Members Meet in Florida; Board Tours Key Florida Climate Prediction and Emergency Response Facilities**

The GCOOS-RA held its annual membership meeting in Florida's capitol city, Tallahassee, on 17 March 2014, at Florida State University's Coastal Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies (COAPS) center. The members heard presentations on COAPS (Eric Chassignet), GCOOS activities and Board elections, the RESTORE Act and other Post-*Deepwater Horizon* activities (Monty Graham and Russ Beard), the U.S. IOOS (Zdenka Willis), and Information Management Resources in the Florida State Emergency Response Team (Richard Butgereit). Representatives from Senator Nelson's and Senator Rubio's Offices attended the meeting. Senator Nelson's

Outreach Coordinator, Lynn Bannister, shared FL outreach suggestions with GCOOS and encouraged participants to contact her if Senator Nelson's Office could be of assistance. On 18 March, the Board met for a closed meeting and toured the COAPS facility with Eric Chassignet, and the Florida State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) with Richard Butgereit and Brian Misner. The GCOOS-RA will hold its next Board meeting 11-12 September 2014 in Houston, TX. Read more and see pictures at <http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=6132>.

### **TAMU Geochemical and Environmental Research Group (GERG) Responds to Galveston Bay Oil Spill**

As part of the monitoring effort to mitigate the Galveston Bay Oil Spill on 22 March, 2014, the Geochemical and Environmental Research Group (GERG) at Texas A&M University, a GCOOS member and data provider, deployed a Responder buoy, which is part of the Texas Automated Buoy System (TABS) fleet funded by the Texas General Land Office (TGLO). TABS Responder buoys are specially designed to track currents, waves, and meteorological information and are easily deployed in an emergency, requiring no lifting equipment or complicated set-up. Read more and see pictures of the deployment at <http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=6007>.

### **GCOOS Editorial and Interview Articles Published in April 2014 "ECO" Magazine**

Chris Simoniello, GCOOS Outreach and Education Lead, was invited to write an Editorial piece on ocean observing in the Gulf for the April 2014 issue of "ECO" Magazine. Read the piece on Page 6 at <http://digital.eco-tsc.com/publication/?i=201904> Jan Van Smirren (GCOOS Board President), Worth Nowlin (GCOOS Board Treasurer), Ann Jochens (GCOOS Executive Director), and Landry Bernard (GCOOS Associate Executive Director) were interviewed in December for a feature article in "ECO" Magazine in April 2014. ECO magazine's audience of 16,500 people includes professionals in the environmental services field, as well as conference attendees from industry, government, and academics. They interviewees discussed the purpose of GCOOS, the diverse and committed membership, GCOOS' staff and members' roles in the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) response, the stakeholder-based GCOOS Build Out Plan and its current revisions based on the DWH lessons and additional stakeholder input, the GCOOS Data Portal and education and outreach activities, and the interesting and rewarding aspects of being part of GCOOS. See the article, starting on Page 20 at <http://digital.eco-tsc.com/publication/?i=201904>.

### **GCOOS at the 2014 "State of the Gulf Summit"**

GCOOS was well represented at the 2014 "State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit" in Houston 24-27 March. This meeting had 375+ attendees with representation from major federal and state agencies, representatives from Mexico and The Netherlands, non-governmental agencies, as well as members from academia and the private sector. Board members Mike Spranger, Nancy Rabalais, and Barb Kirkpatrick attended along with GCOOS staff-Matthew Howard, Landry Bernard, and Ruth Mullins-Perry. Barb Kirkpatrick gave a talk on Wednesday entitled "Ocean Observing as a Critical Element in Regional Restoration" and Nancy Rabalais gave a keynote address on Wednesday entitled "Ethanol and Hypoxia- The Unintended Consequences of Good Intentions." Several keynote speakers mentioned GCOOS throughout the event. Onsite at the meeting, GCOOS staff collaborated with the Texas A&M University Geochemical Research Group staff to post a GCOOS web story (<http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=6007>) on the rapid deployment of a Texas Automated Buoy System (TABS) responder buoy to the concurrent oil spill in Galveston Bay. GCOOS also had a display in the exhibit hall with membership information and success stories available. On Thursday, Barb, Ruth and Nancy attended the Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative (GOMURC) meeting and Matthew Howard attended an ecosystem monitoring meeting. And of course, the many meals and breaks provided ample opportunity to discuss the great things GCOOS is doing! Read more and see pictures at <http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=6237>.

### **GCOOS Data Provider Highlight: Wave-Current-Surge Information System (WAVCIS)**

WAVCIS (<http://www.wavcis.lsu.edu/>), a program based at Louisiana State University, Coastal Studies Institute (CSI), maintains several offshore real-time observing stations on oil and gas industry and other platforms. Founded by the late and distinguished Dr. Gregory Stone, the purpose of this program is to provide near real-time information for ocean and weather conditions to support research, education, model needs, and general information. WAVCIS partners with GCOOS as an important data provider to the GCOOS Data Portal. Read more at <http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=6224>.

### **BOEM Funds Shipwreck Study**

BOEM (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management) and the National Ocean Partnership Program are currently funding a new study that will investigate the current condition of several shipwrecks in the northern Gulf of

Mexico by analyzing and documenting the impact of the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) Spill of 2010 on shipwrecks and their associated infauna and epifauna. The study is titled, "Comparative Analysis of the *Deepwater Horizon* Spill on Shipwrecks: From Microbiomes to Macro Structures". This study fills the gap resulting from the fact that neither the Natural Resource Damage Assessment nor other Gulf research initiatives focus on the impacts of the DWH spill on the historically- and ecologically- important shipwrecks. This study is a unique collaborative effort of federal agencies, academic institutions, foundations, and corporate partners, including several GCOOS members. Read more at <http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=6168> .

### **Science Coordination Workshop for Oil Spill Response in Florida**

On 2 April 2014, Richard Knudsen, Florida's State Scientific Support Coordinator for Oil Spills, hosted 30 invited participants at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission-Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in St. Petersburg, FL. Among the meeting objectives were educating participants about the flow of information through the Incident Command System, and sharing information that can improve science coordination during oil spill events in Florida. Presenters included U.S. Coast Guard LCDR Kim Chesteen, Chief, Contingency Preparedness and Exercise Branch, District 7, NOAA Office of Response and Restoration Senior Scientist Bill Lehr, and several Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative-funded Primary Investigators working on the DEEP-C (Deep Sea to Coast Connectivity in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico), CARTHE (Consortium for Advanced Research on Transport of Hydrocarbon in the Environment), and C-IMAGE (Center for Integrated Modeling and Analysis of Gulf Ecosystems) projects. Chris Simoniello, GCOOS Outreach and Education lead, gave an invited presentation on the U.S. IOOS, including spill response capabilities of the GCOOS-RA, SECOORA, and CaRA. Impressed by the resources presented, LCDR Chesteen subsequently invited CaRA representatives Julio Morell and Jorge Capella to participate in a similar science coordination workshop focused on the Caribbean. Simoniello stated, "During a disaster is not the time to introduce data and products to response personnel. Advanced planning, preparing, and relationship building at the local level are prerequisites for successful coordination during an event." The workshop was a positive step forward to enhance science coordination for oil spill response in Florida.

### **BP Website Contains Oil Spill Data**

BP has a website to make all data from the "oil spill response and associated Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) publicly-available. The site includes data from the following sources: NRDA Cooperative, BP NRDA Independent, Trustee Independent, and Response. The data cover a variety of topics, including, for example: shoreline sediment and soil chemistry, Gulf sturgeon data, oil source interpretations, Coastal Wetland Vegetation Assessment, Breeding Shorebird Assessment, Live Bird Oiling, Bird Capture-Health-and-Telemetry, Surface Dispersant Application, and more. BP adds datasets, as they are available. See <http://gulfsourcedata.bp.com/go/doc/6145/1942258/>.

### **BOEM Extends Comment Date**

BOEM is extending the public comment period by 30 days for a proposal to administratively increase the limit of liability for oil-spill removal costs and related damages from \$75 million to approximately \$134 million. The increase would apply to offshore facilities in federal and state waters under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and is consistent with recommendations from the National Commission on the BP *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill and other studies that called for a statutory increase in the limit of liability. The rule would also establish the methodology BOEM would use for future inflation adjustments to the liability cap. The Department of the Interior has determined that these changes would further protect the environment by ensuring that any party that causes an oil spill would pay an increased amount to mitigate any potential damages. The adjustment is the maximum increase that may be implemented without legislation. For more please see: <http://gcoos.tamu.edu/?p=5990>

### **BOEM Announces Final Results of Recent Environmental Studies Program Projects**

BOEM announces the final results of studies funded through the Environmental Studies Program and posted to the BOEM website between 1 January and 31 March 2014. For the Gulf of Mexico, reports include archaeological analysis of submerged sites, several reports on corals, and improved methods for identifying chemosynthetic communities. For more information, see <http://www.boem.gov/note04112014/> .

## **NOAA Expedition Explores the Depths of the Gulf of Mexico: Live webcasting from the ocean floor through the end of April 2014**

Kelley Elliot, Expedition Manager for NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, reports that from 10 April to 1 May, a team of scientists and technicians both at-sea and onshore will conduct exploratory investigations on the diversity and distribution of deep-sea and marine life in the Gulf of Mexico basin. The 59-day expedition, of which the April-May leg is a part, is composed of three 'legs' focused on acquiring data on priority ocean areas identified by the ocean management and interested science community. Through discussions and information stemming from NOAA and the management/science community, priority areas have been identified in the Gulf of Mexico for focused mapping operations during Leg 1 and Leg 2. During Leg 3, a number of exciting targets for focused remotely operated vehicle (ROV) exploration have been put forward during the final cruise of the expedition. In the coming weeks, we expect to explore cold seeps, deep coral communities, undersea canyons, shipwrecks, and perhaps even mud volcanoes and brine pools. The expedition also marks the second field season using NOAA's 6,000-meter ROV, *Deep Discover*, and the *Seirios* camera sled and lighting platform on NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*. When these seafloor observing systems are deployed from the ship, we will be able to provide scientists and audiences onshore with real-time video footage from deep-water areas in important, yet largely unknown, U.S. waters. For more information and live video from the expedition, see

<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/okeanos/explorations/ex1402/background/intro/welcome.html>

## **Offshore Lease Sales Demonstrate Continued Commitment to Developing Nation's Domestic Energy Sources; Reducing Dependence on Foreign Oil**

As part of President Obama's All-of-the-Above Energy Strategy to continue to expand safe and responsible domestic energy production, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced that today's oil and gas lease sales for federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico garnered \$872,143,771 in high bids on 329 tracts covering 1,707,358 acres. "These lease sales underscore the President's commitment to create jobs and home-grown energy through the safe and responsible exploration and development of our offshore energy resources," Secretary Jewell said. "The Gulf is a critical component of our nation's energy portfolio and holds vital energy resources that spur economic opportunities for Gulf producing states as well as further reduce our dependence on foreign oil." For more on this, please visit: <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/secretary-jewell-announces-oil-and-gas-lease-sales-garner-872-million-in-high-bids-covering-1-7-million-acres-in-gulf-of-mexico.cfm>

## **The Northern Gulf Institute Partners with Mexican Researchers**

(From [www.northerngulfinstitute.org](http://www.northerngulfinstitute.org)) "A research consortium led by Mississippi State University has partnered with a group of institutions in Mexico to advance further the study of the Gulf of Mexico's ecosystem. The Northern Gulf Institute and the Consorcio de Instituciones de Investigación Marina del Golfo de México (CiiMar-GoM) signed recently a memorandum of agreement to support joint research activities of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and other organizations and governmental agencies with an interest in research and educational programs for the Gulf of Mexico region. "This agreement will facilitate an effective working relationship between NGI and Mexican researchers who share our focus on issues affecting the gulf," said Steven Ashby, co-director of the NGI. "We expect to develop projects related to water quality, habitat conservation and restoration, ecosystem integration and assessment, nutrients and nutrient impacts, coastal community resilience and environmental education, among others," he said. Headquartered at the MSU Science and Technology Center at Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, NGI is a NOAA cooperative institute whose members include the University of Southern Mississippi, Louisiana State University, Florida State University, Dauphin Island Sea Laboratory and MSU. In addition, NGI has an agreement with the Harte Research Institute of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to support joint research activities. (For more, see [www.northerngulfinstitute.org](http://www.northerngulfinstitute.org) )"

## **QinetiQ North America Awarded Key Oceanography Contract with Naval Research Laboratory**

QinetiQ North America (QNA) announced that it was awarded a three-year strategic contract for ocean modeling, remote sensing, and physical oceanography programs to support the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) at Stennis Space Center, MS. Ocean circulation patterns, temperatures and depths are constantly changing. Mapping and prediction models are critical to naval strategy, informing fleet and special mission deployment decisions, military planning exercises, satellite calibration, and fleet design for ships, submarines and other maritime vessels. For more on this contract please see:

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/01/prweb11534017.htm>

## IOOS/NATIONAL/LEGISLATIVE NEWS

### IOOS Releases Three New Videos

IOOS has three new videos on Ocean Acidification, Harmful Algal Blooms, and Search and Rescue. To view the videos, see the links below. If you'd like to use any of the videos on your websites, kiosks, and outreach efforts, please send your request for the video files to IOOS Communications Specialist, Jennie Lyons ([jennie.lyons@noaa.gov](mailto:jennie.lyons@noaa.gov)). Below are the three videos:

*Ocean Acidification:*

[http://www.ioos.noaa.gov/ocean\\_acidification/welcome.html](http://www.ioos.noaa.gov/ocean_acidification/welcome.html)

*Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) - Red Tide and Human Health:*

[http://www.ioos.noaa.gov/ioos\\_in\\_action/benefits/harmful\\_algal\\_blooms.html](http://www.ioos.noaa.gov/ioos_in_action/benefits/harmful_algal_blooms.html)

*IOOS Enhances Search and Rescue:*

[http://www.ioos.noaa.gov/ioos\\_in\\_action/benefits/improving\\_search\\_rescue.html](http://www.ioos.noaa.gov/ioos_in_action/benefits/improving_search_rescue.html)

### IOOS is Now on Twitter

Please follow IOOS to stay updated on U.S. IOOS activities, news, and announcements! They are now on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/usioosgov>.

### Capitol Hill Oceans Week 2014

Capitol Hill Oceans Week (CHOW) 2014 will be held 10-12 June at Washington's Newseum, Washington, D.C. For more than a decade, CHOW has provided marine professionals, government officials, and ocean enthusiasts with unique venues to network with colleagues, advance policy goals, and mingle with ocean champions – all in the heart of Washington, D.C. CHOW is hosted by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, with generous support from a variety of sponsors. For more information and the agenda, see <http://nmsfocean.org/CHOW-2014>.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Director, Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), State of Mississippi**

<http://www.mspb.ms.gov/>

**Program Director, NOAA Restore Act Science Program for the Gulf of Mexico**

<http://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov/miscellaneous/noaa-seeks-a-director-for-the-noaa-restore-act-science-program>

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**Water Power (e.g., Wave Energy) Funding Available from Energy.Gov**

<http://energy.gov/eere/water/financial-opportunities>

## COMING EVENTS & MEETINGS

### May

“Offshore Technology Conference 2014” 5-8 May, Houston, TX.

[http://www.otcnet.org/2014/?utm\\_source=Eco+Newsletter+Vol.1,+Issue+7+April+1,+2014&utm\\_campaign=EC+O+World+News+1&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.otcnet.org/2014/?utm_source=Eco+Newsletter+Vol.1,+Issue+7+April+1,+2014&utm_campaign=EC+O+World+News+1&utm_medium=email)

“2014 Coastal Bend Hurricane Conference”, 7-8 May 2014, Richard M. Borchard Regional Fairgrounds, Robstown, TX.

“Gulf of Mexico Alliance 2014 Priority Issues Team Meeting and 10-Year Celebration” 19-21 May 2014, Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel, Mobile, AL.

<http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e8u3lpao0cc03df3&llr=thgzaleab>

## June

“Capitol Hill Oceans Week”, 10-12 June 2014, Washington’s Newseum, Washington, D.C.  
<http://nmsfocean.org/CHOW-2014>

## July

“Ocean Global Change Biology Gordon Research Conference”, 6-11 July 2014, Waterville Valley Resort, New Hampshire  
[http://www.grc.org/progr\\_ams.aspx?year=2014&program=oceanglob](http://www.grc.org/progr_ams.aspx?year=2014&program=oceanglob)

“Conference on Ecological and Ecosystem Restoration”, 28 July–1 August 2014, Hilton Riverside, New Orleans, LA.  
<http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/CEER2014/links.html>

## September

“IEEE/OES/MTS Ocean’s 14”, 14-19 September 2014, Delta St. John’s Hotel, St. John’s Convention Center, St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada. **Deadline for Abstract Submission Extended to 18 April 2014.**  
<http://www.oceans14mtsieestjohns.org/index.cfm>

## November

“Restore America’s Estuaries 7<sup>th</sup> National Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration and 24<sup>th</sup> Biennial Meeting of the Coastal Society”, 1-6 November 2014, Gaylord National Convention Center, Washington, DC.  
<http://www.estuaries.org/summit>

2015

## February

“Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill & Ecosystem Science Conference”, 16-19 February 2015, Westin Galleria Hotel, Houston, TX.  
<http://gulfofmexicoconference.org>



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](mailto: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](mailto:lcaldwell@geos.tamu.edu)).