

Sea Briefs

News Highlights from the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium

March 2001



Welcome to *Sea Briefs*

There's one thing I've learned here at Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium since I started just over a year ago -- and that is the people at this Sea Grant program never stop producing exciting work that needs news coverage.

During the past year at the program I've covered such stories as the Gulf of Mexico jellyfish invasion and the deployment of the furthest offshore aquaculture cage in the world. These stories have drawn media attention from five countries and have produced excellent coverage in most national media forums.

Now, it's my turn to create my own media forum to spread the word on these stories as well as all the other great work MASGC is producing. It's been almost three years since MASGC has published a newsletter. A lot has changed including the program's priorities and much of its personnel.

Sea Briefs aims at keeping its stakeholders informed of all the on-going work and positive impacts of this program. The two sided single-page format was created to allow readers to scan through the headlines for articles of interest and then provide the most important information in a compact news bite. When available, a web site link is listed to provide readers with additional information on the story. Present plans call for *Sea Briefs* to be published monthly. This frequency may change depending on the amount of news generated for the newsletter.

Hope you enjoy *Sea Briefs*. Comments are always appreciated. Please send them to tim.reid@usm.edu

Current Gulf of Mexico Research Now Available on Web

MASGC/GOMP Join Forces to Create Research Inventory

Last June MASGC teamed up with the Gulf of Mexico Program (GOMP) to pull together and categorize all the current and planned marine science research occurring in the Gulf region. The end result is the Inventory of Marine Science Research which made its debut on the MASGC web site in December. Research assistant John Grigsby headed up the project that entailed extensive investigation into all academic, government, and private marine science research efforts in the region. Though there are available sources of past research, Grigsby says there were no existing sources of current research projects. The web site collects all of the data into one area where it is far simpler for an organization or individual to see at a glance what research is currently being performed in any specific region. The project considers the Gulf of Mexico region to be any open water, estuaries, rivers, lakes and wetlands that border on or near the Gulf of Mexico. The intent is that once this database has been completed, it will be maintained and updated weekly, providing a constant and current source of valuable information. The Inventory is part of a larger effort to develop a comprehensive research plan for the Gulf of Mexico, an effort co-chaired by Dr. Ray Wilhour at the EPA Gulf Breeze Lab, and Dr. Barry Costa-Pierce, MASGC's director. You can find the Inventory website at www.masgc.org/rschinvn/researchinventory.html.



The Inventory website contains over 250 current projects.

Graham Receives \$240K for Jellyfish Research

To help answer questions left from last summer's invasion of millions of Spotted Jellyfish in the Gulf of Mexico, several agencies have funded research proposals from Dr. Monty Graham, senior scientist at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. MASGC initiated the first rapid response funds as soon as the invasion was discovered. Since then the MASGC, National Sea Grant Office, Gulf of Mexico Program, and Department of the Interior/NOAA have approved additional research funds. Learn more about one of these projects, the MASGC/GOMP-sponsored Dockwatch program, at <http://dockwatch.disl.org/>.



Some of the invading Spotted Jellyfish (*Phyllorhiza punctata*) measured up to 24 inches in diameter.

Sea Grant Funds Jackson State MSI Proposal

Jackson State University (JSU), located in Jackson, Mississippi, has been selected as one of only four institutions in the country to receive an award from Sea Grant's Minority Serving Institutions Partnership Program. The three year award totalling \$189,000 will allow JSU to expand and strengthen the marine science program at the school.

Dr. Paulinus Chigbu, assistant professor and Director of the Marine Science Program at JSU, says the project's overall goal is to increase the number of undergraduates from JSU who obtain high quality educational/research experiences in marine sciences.

This award also will permit JSU to increase financial support for graduate student research, to bring more high school students into marine and coastal sciences, and to hire a technician to assist in laboratory and field studies. It will also create additional opportunities for collaborations in research and teaching such as JSU has had with The University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Lab for the past 12 years.

Reports

New Research

Projects Awarded

MASGC awarded more than \$6.5 million for research, education, and outreach projects at the start of its three-year Omnibus cycle which began last month. A list of those projects funded is located at MASGC's web site at www.masgc.org/omnibus.htm.

Ecosystems & Habitats Theme Team at Work

The Sea Grant Ecosystems and Habitat Theme Team's ongoing activities include organizing a special extension/advisory workshop at Sea Grant Week and hosting a special session on beneficial uses of dredge materials at the MIT Sea Grant Dredge Symposium. Visit the team's website at www.masgc.org/habitat.html.

Marine Science Scholars Deadline Nears

MASGC Marine Science Scholars Program provides opportunities for graduate students enrolled at member institutions to conduct marine science research through fellowships awarded for a full calendar year. Application information is available at www.masgc.org/fellowships.html. Deadline for submission is March 19, 2001.

MASGC Director Named Section Editor

Dr. Barry Costa-Pierce, MASGC's Director, has been selected as the new Section Editor of the Husbandry and Management Section of *AQUACULTURE*, the most prestigious international science journal in the growing field. Costa-Pierce will coordinate the solicitation, review, editing, and selection of all papers submitted for publication in marine and freshwater aquaculture husbandry and management.

Cage Recovered after Missing for Two Months

The Offshore Aquaculture Consortium (OAC) based at MASGC recently deployed a research aquaculture cage 22 miles south of Pascagoula, MS in federal waters adjacent to a Chevron gas platform. On December 20th the cage broke free of its mooring during heavy weather. It was finally recovered last month just off the Chandeleur Islands. Plans call for it to be redeployed with a new mooring system, says Chris Bridger, consortium coordinator. Find out more about the OAC at www-org.usm.edu/~ooa/index.htm



The OAC will raise fish in the cage this summer.

D.C. News

Report from MASGC Knauss Fellows on Capitol Hill

"I worked for the Oceans and Coastal Protection Division of the EPA. The staff members of this division are responsible for the majority of EPA's marine programs. My office administers the National Estuary Program and other non-regulatory programs. My most significant projects this year have been to coordinate review of the management plan of the Barnegat Bay Estuary Program and to help produce the first-ever "National Coastal Conditions Report." This fellowship has opened many doors to future opportunities in government and private efforts in environmental management and conservation." —Ted Stetts, graduate student in Marine Sciences, University of South Alabama

"As a Sea Grant Fellow in NOAA's Office of Policy and Strategic Planning (OPSP) this year, I've had the opportunity to work on a variety of issues. I serve as the liaison between OPSP, the NOAA Budget Office and the Recover Protected Species Strategic Planning Team, which directs all of NOAA's programs for marine mammals, sea turtles, Pacific Salmon, and other endangered species. I compiled a database of all government activities dealing with corals, which was published in the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs. I have developed many lasting friendships with past and current fellows — in fact, so many of us have infiltrated the public and private infrastructure of Washington that we are referred to as the "Sea Grant Mafia!" — Kelly Shotts, graduate student in Marine Sciences, University of South Alabama



Kelly Shotts & Ted Stetts at Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Read more about Ted and Kelly's work in D.C. at www.masgc.org/knauss_report.html. The next Knauss Fellow Deadline is April 2, 2001. View the Application at www.nsgo.seagrant.org/Knauss.html.

DISL Receives National Designation

Dauphin Island Sea Lab in South Alabama has been officially designated a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center — one of only 13 in the country. The designation allows the Lab to work with various federal agencies including the Navy, EPA, and the Corp of Engineers. Read the full story at <http://press.disl.org/pressreleases.html>

Office of Alabama Programs Established

MASGC's new Office of Alabama Programs opened its doors last year with a new Associate Director, Dr. LaDon Swann. Funded by MASGC and Auburn University's Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, the OAP is developing projects in many areas including marine aquaculture, coastal ecology, sustainable community development, and fisheries management. To find out the latest news from the OAP check out its web site at www.masgc.org/masgc_al.htm.

Events

Visit www.masgc.org/schedule.htm for a complete listing of MASGC events

MASGC Organizes Open Ocean Aquaculture Symposium

Papers on marine policy, ocean engineering, environmental impacts, candidate species, and integrated open ocean aquaculture will all be presented June 17-20, 2001 at Open Ocean Aquaculture IV Symposium in St. Andrews, NB, Canada. Details at www-org.usm.edu/~ooa/ooa_iv.html.

MASGC to Assist with NOAA/Jackson State University Conference
Expanding Opportunities in Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences is the theme of this year's NOAA Conference to be held at Jackson State University on April 1-2, 2001. Details at www.nefsc.nmfs.gov/opportunities.

MSU's Pete Melby to Speak at DMR Conference

Pete Melby, Professor in the Landscape Architecture Department at Mississippi State University, will discuss his Sea Grant beach restoration project at the Coastal Development Strategies Conference hosted by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. The conference (April 17-18, 2001) covers conservation design, watershed protection and sustainability development.

March 12-14, 2001
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting
Brownsville, TX

March 16-18, 2001
Alabama Rivers Alliance and Watershed Leadership Alliance
Gulf Shores, AL

March 21-24, 2001
National Marine Educators Association and National Science Teachers Association
St. Louis, MO

March 24-28, 2001
Sea Grant Week Meeting
Hilton Head, S.C.

April 1-4, 2001
American Fisheries Forum
New Orleans, LA

April 1-3, 2001
NOAA/JSU Conference
Jackson, MS

April 9-11, 2001
Second International Conference on Marine Bioinvasions
New Orleans, LA

April 24-27, 2001
EMAP Symposium
Pensacola, FL

May 10, 2001
MASGC Board of Directors Annual Meeting
Starksville, MS

June 17-20, 2001
Open Ocean Aquaculture IV
St. Andrews, NB, Canada