



Sea Briefs

News Highlights from the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium



From the Director

Changing for the Future

This is my first opportunity to describe MASGC programs since I was named Director in late May. I am honored by the opportunity the MASGC Board has provided me and with their confidence in my abilities to work toward taking MASGC to even higher levels.

Diane Butler and I are finalizing our 2004-05 Omnibus timeline.

The request for proposals will be made this December and proposals due in February 2003. A couple of changes worth mentioning—First, Sea Grant will hold proposal writing workshops in Jackson, MS and Montgomery, AL in January. The second change will be an increase in our median funding level from \$50,000 to \$65,000 per year. We will only be able to do

this by decreasing the overall number of funded proposals. However, the success rate by principal investigators at the full proposal stage will continue to be one-to-four through a more rigorous preproposal review process.

On August 12, MASGC will host its Advisory Council meeting in Ocean Springs. We have reorganized the composition of our Council recently to ensure proper representation from

private sector, state and federal agencies, education, legal, communications and extension. We will be seeking their input as we complete a review of our Strategic Plan and develop our Implementation Plan for 2003-05.

We encourage you to contact MASGC anytime you have a question, suggestion or concern.

Swann Named Director

Dr. LaDon Swann has been named the new director of the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. At its annual meeting MASGC's Board of Directors voted unanimously to appoint Swann as director. The native Tennessean will become the Consortium's sixth director since its founding in 1972.

Dr. Swann had been acting as interim director since July 2001. Prior to becoming interim director, Swann held the position of Associate Director of the Consortium's Office of Alabama Programs.

local oyster gardening project. The extension program also promoted **Jody Scanlan** to oversee its environmental education projects. Scanlan will work with citizen groups and agencies to improve water quality through a watersheds approach. She is also facilitator for the Coastal Alabama Clean Water Partnership and Bon Secour Watershed Coordinator.

Fay Moseley, MASGC's Fiscal Officer, will be semi-retiring at the end of July after nine years of service to the Consortium.



Fay Moseley, MASGC Fiscal Officer

She will reduce her workload to part time, as MASGC's fiscal host, University of Southern Mississippi, absorbs the remainder of her duties.

MASGC's Legal Program, located at the University of Mississippi, has hired **Magnolia Bravo** as Research Counsel. Bravo, who received her J.D. from the University of Denver, will conduct research on ocean, coastal, natural resources, and related environmental issues. She will provide assistance to groups and agencies with interpretation of statutes, regulations, and case law.

"Dr. Swann did an outstanding job as Associate Director bringing the message and benefits of Sea Grant to the universities in the consortium and to stakeholders in Mississippi and Alabama, says Dr. Joan Lorden, Chair of the MASGC's Board of Directors. "The recent highly successful forum on methylmercury, organized by Dr. Swann, is an example of how he is giving visibility to important problems and to the Sea Grant Consortium."

Other Staff Changes

MASGC's Alabama Extension Program has hired **Phillip (PJ) Waters** as its new Agriculture Program Assistant in Aquaculture. He will work with local high school aquaculture programs by providing technical advice, as well as assist researchers on the offshore aquaculture project, local pond owners, and participate in the



Mercury Forum Successful

President Bush Assigns Special Task Force to Investigate Mercury in the Gulf

The Mercury Forum Meeting held May 20-21, 2002 in Mobile, AL was a huge success in itself, but promises more successes in the future as a launching point for a proactive program to deal with the high levels of mercury found in the Northern Gulf and elsewhere. More than 280 people from 17 states participated in the meeting, including U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama. His personal communication with President Bush just prior to the Forum has resulted in the establishment of a special task force to look into the Gulf Mercury issue. Senator Sessions' commitment set the tone for the meeting, and the other speakers and attendees echoed this commitment and concern in the discussions that followed each session of the meeting. The culmination of hundreds of ideas and opinions resulted in a list of 17 proactive recommendations that everyone prioritized at the end of the meeting. Action will be taken on these recommendations by various agencies and groups in the Gulf region. MASGC's mercury website, www.masgc.org/mercury, will continue to provide updates on the Forum's recommendations, and on new research and reports dealing with mercury in the Gulf.

Prioritized Recommendations

- Highest ranking recommendation, selected by over 60% of participants:**
 - ▶ Expand Gulf-wide environmental monitoring programs (inland and coastal) - Fish, sediments, plants, aquatic organisms, water, and air.
- Recommendations chosen by 20 to 30% of the participants:**
 - ▶ Adequate funding for involved entities
 - ▶ Health exposure study (include consumption)
 - ▶ Develop a Gulf-wide risk communication and outreach program
 - ▶ Investigate Hg pathways and risk in the ecosystem
 - ▶ Develop mercury reduction plan
- Recommendations chosen by 10 to 20% of the participants:**
 - ▶ Develop standard sampling methodologies
 - ▶ Develop consistent mercury advisories
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive data management system
 - ▶ Promote unbiased research
- Recommendations chosen by less than 10% of the participants:**
 - ▶ Free/subsidized hair testing for exposure
 - ▶ Investigate remediation options
 - ▶ Comprehensive cost benefit and health risk analysis
 - ▶ Comprehensive stakeholder collaboration in agency programs
 - ▶ Comprehensive inventory of current and historic mercury sources
 - ▶ Health impact study
 - ▶ Product labeling

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Shipley receives AFS/Sea Grant Fellowship

J. Brooke Shipley, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Marine Sciences at the University of South Alabama, recently was awarded an 18-month fellowship by the American Fisheries Society and the National Sea Grant Office. The fellowship essentially appoints Shipley to handle the planning and organization of the upcoming international symposium entitled *Aquatic Protected Areas as Fisheries Management Tools* to be held August 10-14, 2003 in Quebec City, Canada.

Billboard Campaign Pushes Stewardship

If you're driving along Interstate 10 this summer keep your eyes open for billboards promoting One Gulf...One Community. This is part of a Gulf-wide awareness campaign to encourage Coast residents to become involved in environmental stewardship along the Gulf Coast. The billboards direct the public to the One Gulf Web site--

www.onegulf.org, which is designed and maintained by MASGC's webmaster John Grigsby. The Web site lists resources and contacts for getting involved in protecting the environmental resources along the coast.

OAC Launches Live Cage Cam

As the Gulf of Mexico Offshore Aquaculture Consortium prepares to stock its Gulf research cage with Cobia this summer, the research team



Cage Cam catches researchers on a maintenance trip to the cage.

launched a web page which posts live 24/7 images of their cage. The images shot from a nearby Chevron gas platform will allow researchers to check on the cage's position, as well as the weather and sea conditions, and any boating traffic in the area. Chevron, an OAC partner, is providing the camera and the camera's internet services. Web surfers will find the live shots at www.org.usm.edu/%7Eooa/cagecam.html.



Lamar Advertising donated space on 10 billboards for the One Gulf Campaign.

Calendar

August 12, 2002

MASGC Advisory Council Meeting
Ocean Springs, MS
228-818-8838



September 10-12, 2002

Open Ocean Aquaculture Research Retreat
Isle of Capri Hotel, Biloxi, MS
228-818-8838

September 21, 2002

National Beach Cleanup Day
MS Beach Cleanup: www.masgc.org/cleanup
AL Beach Cleanup: 251-626-0042



September 28, 2002

Kids Discovery Day 10am-2pm
Dauphin Island Sea Lab, AL
www.disl.org



May 19-23, 2003

MASGC Program Audit by the
National Sea Grant Program Assessment Team



Education Update

Knauss Fellowship Finalists

Melissa Woods and Julien Lartigue, both from the University of South Alabama have been named Finalists for the Class of 2003 in the National Sea Grant College Program's Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship. Of the 38 Finalists selected through a



national competition, Woods and Lartigue were two of only 10 chosen as Legislative Finalists. Once each is assigned to the office of a member of Congress this fall, the pair become Fellows starting their term of service February 1, 2003.

Melissa Woods, a current master's degree candidate, anticipates completing her degree requirements this December. Melissa's thesis research, *Reproductive Biology of Red Snapper, Lutjanus campechanus, East and West of the Mississippi River* will be applied to red snapper fishery management plans.

Julien Lartigue anticipates receiving his Ph.D. this fall. Julien previously was the recipient of a Mississippi-Alabama Marine Science Scholars award in 1999 and is also the recipient of a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant.

Additional information about the Knauss Fellowship Program can be found at www.masgc.org/fellowship.

2002 MASGC Fellowships Awarded

Closer to home, MASGC awarded four of its own fellowships to graduate students in Mississippi and Alabama. These students will receive a \$5,000 fellowship from MASGC, and a matching amount from the university they're attending.

Patrick M. Erwin A graduate student in the Department of Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Erwin is pursuing his M.S. and Ph.D. in Marine Biology under the direction of Dr. Robert W. Thacker. He plans to complete his masters and doctoral degrees at UAB, focusing on sponge phylogenetics and bacterial symbiosis, and continue studying sponges as a post-doctoral researcher.

Alyssa A. Geis Geis is a doctoral student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Department of Biology under the direction of Dr. Thane Wibbels. The results from her research project, "Genetic Analysis of Loggerhead Sea Turtles from Alabama Coastal Waters," will be of fundamental importance to development of effective management strategy for loggerhead sea turtles in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

Amy E. Hunter Hunter is a doctoral student at the University of Alabama's Department of Biological Sciences under the direction of Drs. William W. Schroeder and Just Cebrian. The goal of her current research is to evaluate the causes and effects of human induced nutrient enrichment in marshes. This research should provide useful information to marine resource managers regarding the quantity of development a marsh can mitigate before the marsh itself and the adjacent embayment become impacted.

Deborah N. Vivian Vivian is a master's degree candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi's Department of Coastal Sciences, under the direction of Dr. Chet F. Rakocinski. The results of her current research project may be used by resource managers to assess proper potential functioning of restored salt marshes.