



**DOI'S Oceans and Coastal Newsletter**  
*From Continental Divide to Continental Shelf*

Dear Members of DOI's Ocean and Coastal Community:

With the goal of enhancing cooperation between DOI bureaus, *NewsWave* is a forum to share news, information, and upcoming events related to ocean and coastal issues. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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## Top Story

### DOI Partners to Monitor Marine Debris in Papahānaumokuākea MNM

Marine debris is a crucial management problem facing the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. From derelict fishing gear to plastic bottles and cigarette lighters, marine debris can have a variety of impacts on island systems by smothering coral reefs and harming wildlife through entanglement and ingestion. Knowing the types and abundance of marine debris locally and regionally is important if mitigation efforts are to be effective. A grant was recently awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to conduct a marine debris monitoring project on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, which is located within the Monument. FWS, NOAA, and the Hawaiian Coastal Restoration Fund contributed a total of \$100,000 which was matched by The Dow Chemical Company through a \$100,000 donation to the [Friends of Midway Atoll](#) (FOMA), a volunteer group that supports the FWS in its mission to preserve, restore, and protect the biological diversity and historic resources of the refuge. The protocol of the monitoring project is based on Ocean Conservancy's [Marine Debris Monitoring Program](#). Volunteers conduct the monthly surveys of beach debris documenting the number of items collected and weights. The primary goal of the project is to develop a statistically sound and biologically relevant marine debris monitoring protocol that can serve as the basis for a long-term monitoring program within the entire Monument.



*Albatross nesting amongst marine debris at Midway Atoll NWR*

### A Twist on Cleaning Up Marine Debris

When you think about cleaning up beaches, bagging plastic bottles, aluminum cans, medical waste, candy wrappers and other such human discards usually come to mind. In April 2008, USGS helped organize a different type of beach collection with the help of Tampa Bay Watch, a nonprofit group dedicated to preserving the Tampa Bay estuary, the Boy Scouts of America, Tampa Electric's Environmental, Health, and Safety Division, and other community minded groups. In 2006, volunteers helped bag 24 tons of fossilized shell material to use as the basis of a submerged 100-yd-long reef on the west side of Whiskey Stump Key. Then in 2007, 97 tons of oyster shells were bagged and installed around Tampa Bay. The Spring 2008 tonnage was even larger with the shell material hauled by a USGS drilling barge to Whiskey Stump Key. Does this annual effort make a difference? Yes, the artificial reefs are improving water quality, restoring hard bottoms and providing habitat for oyster larvae, which need to a solid surface to attach to before growing into an adult.



*Environmental, Health, and Safety Division make the afternoon run to the oyster reef. Credit: USGS*

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## America's 2nd Oldest National Wildlife Refuge in Jeopardy



*Chandeleur Island after Hurricane Katrina carved out much of the land. Credit: R. Bukatv/AP file*

FWS released a report warning that Breton National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), America's second NWR established in 1904 and the only refuge that Teddy Roosevelt actually visited, is in danger of being lost. The refuge, consisting of an arc of barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico southeast of the swamps and marshes that surround New Orleans, was established to protect and conserve habitat for colonial nesting seabirds and other wildlife. However, erosion from waves and hurricanes have eroded the islands to a fraction of their historical size. In 2005 alone, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita reduced the area of land above mean high tide by 50%. Since the

storm, the islands have not shown significant signs of natural rebuilding. The FWS report states, "Predicted sea level rise, accelerated by global climate change, will combine with the geologic processes that continually reshape Louisiana's coast to decrease the tremendous biological treasure of these Islands. Eventually, the barrier islands will no longer supply wave and storm buffering benefits to the mainland." The report suggests that planning and funding for restoration efforts are immediately needed to prevent total loss of the barrier islands. Other DOI bureaus also support habitat conservation and restoration in this region. In 2005, MMS established the [Coastal Impact Assistance Program](#) (CIAP), which authorizes funds to be distributed to Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas producing states to mitigate the impacts of OCS oil and gas activities. To learn about USGS activities in Breton NWR go to: <http://soundwaves.usgs.gov/2007/12/fieldwork2.html>.

## 11<sup>th</sup> International Coral Reef Symposium

2008, the [International Year of the Reef](#), is a critical time for coral reefs. At the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium held in July over 3000 experts from 75 countries assembled to face some hard truths: coral reefs are teetering on the edge of survival. High levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere have produced a lethal combination of hotter and less alkaline seawater. Overfishing, pollution, coastal development, and physical damage further undermine reef health, and consequently, that of the people and ecosystems depending upon them. The 11th ICRS gave a renewed sense of purpose and hope for the future. A consensus emerged that society has both the knowledge and the tools to bring coral reefs back from the brink. The 2008 ICRS was co-sponsored by DOI and NOAA while representatives from USGS, FWS, NPS, MMS, and the Office of Insular Affairs also attended. A brief overview of the 2632 papers presented can be found on [www.nova.edu/ncri/11icrs/outcomes.html](http://www.nova.edu/ncri/11icrs/outcomes.html).



*Winner of Best in Show at the Underwater Photography Contest at the 2008 ICRS. Credit Bill Goodwin, Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands.*

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## West Coast Governors Launch Ocean Action Plan

The governors of California, Oregon and Washington have launched a historic action plan to address challenging ocean and coastal management issues along the West Coast. The regional agreement, known as the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health, establishes a long-term partnership to confront issues facing the Pacific Ocean and its coastal communities. As part of the plan, the States will work together, along with a Federal Working Group led by DOI, EPA, and NOAA, on 26 bold action items to help combat polluted runoff and reduce marine garbage, advocate for stricter ocean going vessel emission standards, prevent the introduction of invasive species, explore the feasibility of offshore alternative ocean energy development, improve ocean research, increase ocean education and prevent and respond to offshore oil spills, among others. The governors also sent a joint letter to Congress asking for \$5 million in federal support for implementation of the action plan. To learn more about this historic Agreement, go to [www.westcoastoceans.gov](http://www.westcoastoceans.gov).



*Olympic Coast, Washington Credit:*

## MMS Highlights Accomplishments and Partnerships on the West Coast

MMS's [Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region](#) (POCS) [Environmental Studies Program](#) (ESP) started in 1973 and has cumulatively funded 189 studies at a value of almost \$124 million. The ESP has pioneered research in the ocean along the entire Pacific Coast of the Continental United States in the fields of physical oceanography, atmospheric science, and biology. In many cases, the ESP funded projects represent the only ocean research ever conducted along this coast. MMS has also funded social science projects including the creation of a unique database of archaeological and culturally significant marine sites and studies about the major factors that affect coastal recreation and tourism. Starting in the late 1970's, MMS pioneered the survey of marine mammals and seabirds along the entire California coast. These surveys were expanded into Oregon and Washington in the early 1980's and became the basis for the recent biogeography analysis of the [Channel Islands](#) and [Monterey National Marine Sanctuaries](#). Additionally, MMS funded the pioneering efforts to study California Sea Otters and to design methods to treat and rehabilitate oiled marine mammals. MMS is currently working with USGS to bring the marine mammal and seabird database to the Internet for public access. To learn more about the marine research that MMS is conducting in 2008 visit <http://www.mms.gov/omm/pacific/enviro/pocsrenvstud.htm>.



*A seal basks on an off-shore oil platform in the Santa Barbara Channel. Photo credit: MMS*

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## **Upcoming Meetings and Events around the Nation**

**2008 International Coastal Cleanup (ICC)**, Sept. 20, 2008. Ocean Conservancy's ICC is the world's largest volunteer event of its kind. Last year, **378,000** volunteers from **76** countries and **45** states cleared **six** million pounds of trash from oceans and waterways and recorded every piece of trash collected. [Sign up now](#) to join this year's cleanup effort. A local coordinator will get in touch with you about Cleanups in your area.

Events at National Seashores:

- Gulf Islands National Seashore, Naval Live Oaks Area
- Gulf Islands National Seashore, Davis Bayou
- Limantour Beach, Point Reyes National Seashore

### **The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC)**

The Executive Subcommittee invites public participation in a discussion on Wed., Sept. 17, 2008 from 2:00 - 3:30 pm CDT regarding ongoing and planned activities of the GLRC and for you to share

news about your actions to implement the GLRC Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes. Call-In #: 1-866-299-3188 Conference Code: 60604. Please see the GLRC Website for the latest information on the GLRC Initiatives (<http://glrc.us/initiatives/index.html>)



**Workshop on Alternative Energy Development in the West Coast Ocean Environment**, Sept. 23, 2008, 8:30 am – 5:30 pm, Portland, OR. The goal of the workshop is to provide the public with an opportunity to hear about the development of wave, tidal and offshore wind alternative energy activities in a regional and national context. For more information visit: <http://www.westcoastoceans.gov/meetings/>.

**Opening of Smithsonian's Ocean Hall:** On Sept. 27, 2008 the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History will open it's newest exhibit, the Sant Ocean Hall. As visitors step into the Ocean Hall, they will find themselves immersed in an immense undersea world. Here, visitors will explore the ocean in all its complexity and beauty and ultimately discover that all life on earth depends on the ocean. For more information visit: <http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/ocean%5Fhall/>

**World Ocean Conference 2009:** May 11-15, 2009, Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The World Ocean Conference (WOC) 2009 is a forum for the world community to discuss current issues in the marine field particularly those related to climate change. For more information visit the conference website: <http://www.woc2009.org>

**Coastal Zone '09:** July 19-23, 2009, Boston, MA. Our coastal and ocean landscape is changing, whether it's the climate, shoreline, habitat, or even the people setting and implementing policy. The attendees of Coastal Zone 09 will explore the many facets of change and share tools and information to help in managing our changing coastal and ocean resources. For more information visit the conference website: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cz/abstracts.html>.

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## [DOI Ocean and Coastal Calendar – events, meetings, workshops, and other important dates](#)

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Sincerely,

***Kameron Onley***

Assistant Deputy Secretary

***Chris Kearney***

Deputy Assistant Secretary

To submit a story for next month's NewsWave contact [bret\\_wolfe@fws.gov](mailto:bret_wolfe@fws.gov). Suggestions and comments are also welcome. We are also producing a DOI Oceans calendar to be accessed via the DOI oceans [website](#). Please forward details of any upcoming meetings or events concerning ocean, estuarine, or coastal issues.

To learn more about the ocean and coastal activities of the participating agencies visit their websites:



National Park Service



Minerals Management Service



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Office of Insular Affairs



U.S. Geological Survey



Bureau of Land Management