

MISSISSIPPI PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Greetings from the Magnolia State. We're beginning to dry out from the "Great Flood", and the oil spill of April 2010 continues to consume much of our staff time as we assess the damages to our state's natural resources along the gulf coast. We are looking forward to fall in Alabama at the annual SWPBA Meeting. In the meantime, here is our news:

Our Phone Numbers Have Changed

Our phone system has been changed for some time now. Although the SWPBA Contact List has now been corrected, we thought it best to ensure that everyone has our new numbers. Our new phone numbers are below:

Main Laboratory Number 601-961-5701
Fax Number 601-961-5704
Valerie Alley (601)961-5182
Mike Beiser (601)961-5681
Chip Bray (601)961-5687
Erica Scarbrough (601)961-5770
Alice Dossett (601)961-5664
Jenny Ulmer (601)961-5632
Albert F. Gibson (601)961-5763
B. Will Green (601)961-5762
Natalie Segrest (601)961-5150
Charles M. Thompson, Jr. (601)961-5795
Doug W. Upton (601)961-5155
Gary "Pete" Howard (601)961-5724
Elena Woodard (601)961-5780

Natural Resource Damage Assessment Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

We are now ~~in our second~~ preparing for a third year of conducting the Natural Resource Damage Assessment in response to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. State agencies from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas are involved as well as the Department of Commerce (NOAA), ~~and the~~ Department of the Interior, EPA, and the Department of Agriculture. ~~Within days after the incident, biologists from these agencies began meeting to discuss the incident and to plan studies to assess the impacts to the natural resources of the Gulf.~~ Technical Working Groups (TWGs) were formed to concentrate on specific categories of injuries. Among the TWGs were Birds, Fish, Shoreline, Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Water Column, Human Use, and several others. The TWGs, working in cooperation with the responsible party, have developed a large number of study plans related to potential injuries. Studies that are currently ongoing in Mississippi waters in 2012 June included: Oyster settlement, Marsh grass, submerged oil, Gulf Sturgeon health assessment, Osprey nesting material survey, and ~~toxicity studies, and benthos studies.~~

Fish Tissue Monitoring Program

The Fish Tissue Monitoring Program has been reinstated after being put on hold as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Mercury Study for Marine and Estuarine Fishes

~~The fishing rodeo season is almost upon us once again. Since s~~Seafood is important to the economy of the coast as well as the health and quality of life of many coastal residents. ~~We~~ We ~~as~~ continueing our study of mercury levels in marine and estuarine fish tissue. We ~~have~~ are looked ing at approximately 80 different species of fish with 10 fish representing each of three size classes. We have ~~included in finished~~ our collections ~~of~~ many of our large pelagic species (i.e., tuna, wahoo, mackerel), but are still looking for many of our deep water species such as groupers and snappers. ~~Earlier this fall we hosted a workshop on the Mercury:Selenium ratios in marine fishes as a part of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission~~ We are also missing some of our smaller inshore species such as hardhead and gafftopsail catfish, pompano, and pigfish. ~~We are hoping the rodeos and fishermen will continue to help us and bring us the species we still need.~~

Ambient Coastal Monitoring

MDEQ has continued an effort to monitor the water quality of along the state's 3 coastal county areas. Currently 25 probabilistic sites will be used to assess the water quality of the Gulf Coast.

This program is crucial to evaluating the quality of coastal waters as communities rebuild and grow following Hurricane Katrina and the Deep Water Horizon Incident. It is additionally imperative as the implementation of the Governor's Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan comes into effect.

Ambient Beach Monitoring

Sampling for MDEQ's ambient beach monitoring program continues and includes approximately 22 sites along the 3 coastal counties. Current data and status of all beaches monitored in Mississippi can be seen at



the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's website:

<http://www.usm.edu/gcrl/msbeach/index.cgi>

Or at the MDEQ's website:

http://www.deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/Main_Advisories?OpenDocument

Then follow the link to Beach Advisories.

Gulf of Mexico Alliance

MDEQ along with its sister Gulf of Mexico states has taken an active role in supporting the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, and it's Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts. This plan is aimed at protecting and restoring water quality and habitat in the Gulf of Mexico and its estuaries, and improving

public awareness of the Gulf through environmental education. The Alliance is devoted to accomplishing these goals through regional collaboration within the 5 US Gulf of Mexico States and its neighboring 6 Mexican states. Current information is available at the Gulf of Mexico Alliance website <http://www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org/welcome.html>

Ambient Fecal Monitoring

Ambient fecal monitoring is continuing and includes approximately 41 sites. Our personnel are currently collecting samples from primary recreational areas throughout the state.

Ambient Fixed Station Monitoring

Ambient fixed station monitoring continues and includes approximately 30 sites. Our personnel are collecting samples from bridges throughout the state.

Wadeable Streams/§303d Monitoring

MDEQ has currently completed its ninth year of wadeable streams sampling. Results from this M-BISQ effort will be used to assess the status of §303(d) listed water bodies and to steer future biological monitoring and assessment activities that are focused on wadeable streams and rivers.



Ambient Lake Monitoring

Ambient lake monitoring continues and includes the sampling of 20 lakes. Our personnel are currently collecting samples from lakes throughout the state.

Personnel

This past year we welcomed Brian Bosch to our Surface Water Monitoring Section. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor's degree in Ecology. We welcome Brian onboard as he is currently learning to drink straight from the firehose.