

aqua-notes

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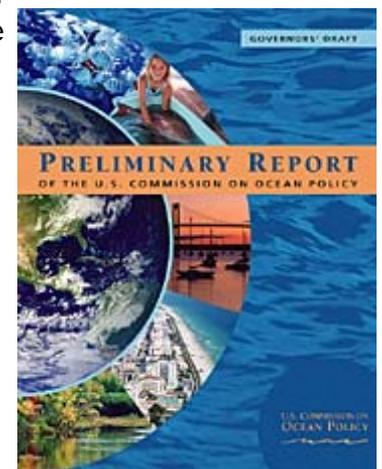
May, 2004

Mark your calendars...

- May 2, 2004—Tree Hill Butterfly festival at Tree Hill Nature Center, Jacksonville. Noon—5 pm.
- May 5—"Stop the Invasives" workshop at St. Johns County Ag Center. 1-4 pm. Please call 904-824-4564 for more information or to RSVP.
- May 13-16—First Coast Birding & Nature Festival, St. Johns Co. Call 904-826-1711 or see <http://www.visitoldcity.com/interests/nature/festival/>
- June 3-24—Coastal Master Naturalist Class (Duval Co.) See www.masternaturalist.org.
- More on back page!

Praise for National Sea Grant College Program

On April 20, 2004, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy released its Preliminary Report (see page 3 for more information). The National Sea Grant College Program, which includes 30 State Sea Grant programs, was mentioned favorably several times in the report. The Commission recommended that funding for Sea Grant be increased to allow it to "devote additional significant attention" to education programs. Overall, the Commission recommended that Congress double the federal ocean and coastal research budget over the next five years, with a portion of the new funds to be used to "significantly enlarge" the National Sea Grant College Program. What does this mean for Florida Sea Grant in particular? We'll have to wait and see, but I'm hopeful that we may receive money to fund additional extension agent positions (like mine) and perhaps see the creation of a marine education specialist position for the state (several other State Sea Grant programs have dedicated education specialists).



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Marine Extension Agent

Exploring our Environment—#2!

Nineteen people participated in the second offering of "Exploring our Environment—from the river to the ocean" in March. We welcomed several new resource people to the program—many thanks to Ed Perry (Florida Park Service), Gian Basili (SJRWMD), Nicole Adimey (US Fish and Wildlife Service), Beverly Fleming (St. Johns Co. Parks) and Patti Anderson (FL Museum of Natural History) for taking time to share their knowledge with the group. Registration for the September 2004 class is now open (see back cover for details).

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, IFAS, Florida A. & M. UNIVERSITY

Sea turtle nesting season is here again

May 1 marks the start of sea turtle nesting season. Frequent visitors to St. Augustine Beach will have noticed that there is no longer a 6-8 foot “cliff” between the upper and lower sections of the beach—the beach slope has been mechanically smoothed out to enable sea turtles to nest in this area. St. Johns County conducted its annual “Turtle town beach cleanup” on April 24. The goal of this event is to clean the beach prior to sea turtle nesting. Debris like plastic bags, rope and fishing line can potentially harm sea turtles as they crawl up the beach to lay their eggs. Beachfront residents should check their outside lighting to make sure it does not illuminate (or is not visible from) the beach. Those driving on the beach need to remember that they cannot drive or park on the upper section of the beach (coastal conservation zone). The beaches in St. Johns County will be closed to beach driving each night between 10 pm and 5 am from May 15 through October 15, 2004.



Volunteer opportunities

- Volusia-Flagler Turtle Patrol—check out <http://www.turtlepatrol.com/>
- Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol (Jacksonville Beach)—contact Mort Hanson at 716 Ocean Blvd., Room 8, Atlantic Beach, Florida 32233-5248; telephone: (904-241-7631).
- Anastasia State Park volunteer workday— May 22, 8 am-noon (meet at the shop). Stay for the Friends of Anastasia annual meeting (picnic) at the Windsurf picnic area at noon. Call 904-461-2035 to find out more about volunteer opportunities at Anastasia State Park or Fort Mose.
- Volunteers needed to empty monofilament recycling stations (monthly or less often) in western Flagler county, Crescent Beach, Jacksonville (Roosevelt Blvd and Heckscher Drive areas). Contact Maia at 904-824-4564 or mpmcguire@ifas.ufl.edu for more information.

Potential changes for commercial blue crab industry

The state's new Blue Crab Advisory Board will be making recommendations to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in June regarding changes to Florida's commercial blue crab fishing industry. These recommendations will include making the blue crab fishery a limited entry fishery (there is currently a moratorium on issuing blue crab endorsements) with a fixed number of either the number of endorsements or the number of trap tags issued. The board will likely propose an increased fee schedule, including a charge per trap tag; this money will be used to fund blue crab research, education initiatives and to finance the advisory board. There are some proposed gear changes and a rolling closed season (possibly 7 days at a time in each of the 5 regions around the state). The closed season will allow for organized derelict trap cleanups, following the example of other Gulf states. Reports from the Blue Crab Advisory Board meetings can be found at <http://consensus.fsu.edu/bluecrab/index.html>.

U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

The 16 members of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy were appointed by President Bush in 2001 and have spent the past three years analyzing the state of the U.S. oceans, with input from hundreds of people around the nation. They considered three areas: Governance; Research, Education and Marine Operations; and Stewardship. The Commission's 514-page report contains recommendations for major changes to current ocean management, research and education systems. The Commission recommends that Congress establish a National Ocean Council, with a nonfederal Presidential Council of Advisors on Ocean Policy and an Office of Ocean Policy. It also recommends the establishment of regional boards to administer regional ocean information programs. As part of the increased education effort, the commission suggests that there be a national ocean education office (Ocean.ED).

The Commission makes several suggestions for improving current management and education policies, some of which are quite specific. Many of the recommendations address topics that are already priority areas for Florida Sea Grant. Some of these include the following:

- Adopt the principle of ecosystem-based management
- Implement a national policy for environmentally and economically sustainable marine aquaculture
- Develop national goals and guidelines leading to a uniform process for the effective design and implementation of marine protected areas
- Develop national goals for ocean and coastal habitat conservation and restoration efforts
- Commission an independent, scientific review of existing US ballast water management research
- Coordinate public education and outreach efforts on aquatic invasive species
- Re-establish an interagency marine debris committee
- Develop a detailed plan of action to address derelict fishing gear
- Implement strong incentives for removal and disposal of derelict fishing gear
- Develop regional bycatch reduction plans
- Implement programs to permanently reduce fishing capacity to sustainable levels
- Provide better financial, technical and institutional support for watershed initiatives
- Establish significant reduction of nonpoint source pollution in all impaired coastal watersheds
- Enhance sediment management
- Provide incentives for boat owners to install improved treatment devices and increase support for building pumpout facilities under the Clean Vessel Act
- Create an incentive program for boat owners to install or use less polluting engines in recreational boats
- Organize an ocean workforce summit every 5 years to address the alignment of ocean education with workforce needs
- Strengthen the support for both formal and informal ocean-related education
- Expand professional development opportunities for teachers and teacher educators
- Fund the Integrated Ocean Observing Systems (IOOS—see February 2004's 'aqua-notes') as a line item in the NOAA budget

As described on page 1 of this newsletter, the Commission also recommends that the federal government double the funding for ocean initiatives over the next five years; some of these funds are to be used to enlarge the National Sea Grant College Program.

For more information about the Commission or to view the report, go to www.oceancommission.gov.



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More “Mark your calendars”

- June 5—9 am—4 pm—Beach Bash at Anastasia State Park. Call 904-461-2035 for information.
- June 8-11—Natural Resources 4-H camp (Duval Co.—call 904-387-8850 for information)
- June 21-25—COSEE teacher workshop; pairs up middle school teachers and researchers to give both partners a better understanding of the others' jobs. Expenses and stipend paid—contact Karen Blyler at 352-846-0996 ext. 246
- June 28—4-H Marine Camp (St. Johns Co.—call 904-824-4564 for information)
- July 10—Family Marine Day camp (St. Johns Co.—call 904-824-4564 for information)
- July 18-22—National Marine Educators Association annual meeting (St. Petersburg, FL). See www.floridamarine.org/NMEA2004 for information.
- July 26-28—Nassau Co. 4-H marine camp (call 904-879-1019 for information)
- August 4—Estuaries workshop for teachers (FSDB, St. Augustine; call Maia at 904-824-4564 for information)
- September 13-17—Exploring our Environment—from the ocean to the river. For information, see <http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu/sea/seagrant.htm>. Note that this program fills quickly. Space is limited to 20 participants.

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