



FEATURE RELEASE

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Federal Agencies Join JASON Expedition to Spark Local Interest in Science and the Environment

VENTURA, Calif. ---Nutria and crawfish of the Louisiana wetlands met the island fox and pacific rockfish of California at the February, 2005 JASON Project live broadcasts in Ventura County, California.

Local 5th and 6th grade students journeyed to the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools' Conference Center recently to explore the wetlands of Louisiana through real-time live satellite and Internet broadcasts. Students communicated with onsite scientists and students explorers, called Argonauts, to investigate the unique environments and strange creatures found in Louisiana wetlands.

This event was made possible, in part, by The JASON Foundation for Education, a non-profit educational organization, founded in 1989 by oceanographer Robert D. Ballard who in 1986 discovered the wreck of the ill-fated *Titanic*. JASON uses multimedia and cutting-edge technology to engage students in scientific research and annual expeditions to interesting environments around the world. Its mission is to inspire students to take an interest in science, math, and technology through hands-on, real-world scientific discovery.

The live broadcasts were supplemented with learning stations led by local JASON partners from the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Interior's Minerals Management Service and Channel Islands National Park led learning stations along with NOAA's Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Through hands-on activities, the three federal agencies introduced students to coastal and ocean environments along Ventura County.

"Our JASON agency partners really helped bridge the science and technology themes of the live broadcasts to our local environment," said Cathy Reznicek, JASON coordinator for the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools. "Thanks to the wonderful collaboration between the Minerals Management Service, the Channel Islands National Park, and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Ventura County students were able to learn about local habitats and ongoing federal research being conducted right off our coast in the Santa Barbara Channel."

MMS learning stations focused on the agency's ongoing environmental studies through hands-on activities. Students tracked winds, waves and currents in the Santa Barbara Channel using real-time data and conducted mussel counts from photo plots taken of MMS-monitored California rocky intertidal sites. Students also learned about rockfish populations found around local offshore platforms in the Channel.

"JASON is cool!" exclaimed an enthusiastic 6th grader from Bard Elementary School in Port Hueneme, CA. "I learned how non-native species, like nutria, can cause problems for the native environment. We have non-native species here along our coast too!"

Although JASON's standards-based Expeditions and Science and Math Adventures curricula are geared to students in grades 4 through 9, teachers draw on the programs to engage students throughout the elementary and high-school grades.

According to JASON representatives, the program serves nearly 1.7 million students each year, and is used by approximately 33,000 teachers in the U.S. and abroad.

MMS, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, oversees 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf, managing offshore energy and minerals while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments through advanced science and technology research. The OCS provides 30 percent of oil and 23 percent of natural gas produced domestically, and sand used for coastal restoration. MMS collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands, with Fiscal Year 2004 disbursements of approximately \$8 billion and more than \$143 billion since 1982. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which pays for cooperative conservation, grants to states, and federal land acquisition, gets nearly \$1 billion a year.

MMS Main Website: www.mms.gov

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