

COASTAL CONNECTIONS



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A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION FOCUSED ON TOOLS FOR COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGERS

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C O A S T A L M A N A G E M E N T P R O F I L E



Tracie Sempier
Coastal Storms
Outreach Coordinator,
Mississippi–Alabama Sea
Grant Consortium

Where you live: Ocean Springs, Mississippi.
Job description: Basically, I serve as a bridge between coastal resilience tools and resources and the people and communities that need them. I try to identify the right end users for these resources.

Education: B.S. degrees in marine science and biology, University of Alabama; M.S. in science and mathematics education, Oregon State University; Ph.D. in marine science curriculum and instruction, Mississippi State University.

Family: Husband, Steve, and three-year-old daughter, Savannah.

What you enjoy about your job: So many things, but I've especially enjoyed being in the coastal community resilience work group for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), a regional ocean governance initiative. Through my involvement

Continued on Page 2

FOCUS

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO OCEAN GOVERNANCE

State and federal partners are working side-by-side and seeing large-scale ocean management gains.

In recent years both the Pew Oceans Commission and U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy have issued a clarion call to the coastal resource management community: partner with agencies at all scales of government to coordinate across-the-region stewardship of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. In response, ocean governance initiatives have been established in four regions:

- The Gulf of Mexico Alliance (www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org/)
- Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (www.glrc.us)
- Northeast Regional Ocean Council (<http://community.csc.noaa.gov/nroc/>)
- West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (<http://westcoastoceans.gov/>)

What's more, an increasing number of coastal stakeholders and professionals hope to establish ocean governance initiatives in the regions of the Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Caribbean, and Pacific Islands.

But coastal managers urged to join the effort must first contend with a stark, daily reality—too many work obligations and not enough time and resources. Skeptics in the group can be forgiven for thinking, "Yet another initiative, regional ocean governance—what's in it for me and the coastal communities I serve?"

Plenty, say those who are involved. Governance initiatives still in the early stages are pooling resources and information, aligning similar projects, eliminating duplication of effort, and involving the full spectrum of governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders. Such broad-scale coordination enables regional partners to craft consistent, achievable responses to issues of maritime pollution and security, coastal resilience, alternative energy planning, coastal outreach and education, climate change adaptation, and a host of other concerns.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center plays an important role for governance partners by helping them to communicate and coordinate effectively, and the Center also identifies resources and tools that NOAA can contribute to the effort.

Continued on Page 2

Profile continued from Page 1

in the alliance, I've been able to broaden the scope of the Coastal Storms Program work by bringing coastal resilience outreach not just to Mississippi and Alabama, but also to Texas, Florida, and Louisiana. **Your proudest accomplishment:** I love being a mom. Some of my favorite times are spent kayaking with the family. Savannah sits in a child seat, and we explore the bayous.

Last fall, Gulf-region agencies and organizations received national kudos for the success of their Hurricane Gustav preparation and mass evacuation, acknowledged by all as a huge improvement over Hurricane Katrina preparations in 2005. Tracie Sempier and her colleagues at the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and on the GOMA coastal community resilience team can share in that achievement.

"GOMA partnered with NOAA's Coastal Storms Program and Regional Team to build a Gulf Storms website [<http://masgc.org/gulfstorms/>], and the entire site was put together in three days, right before the evacuation," says Sempier. The site featured tools and resources from local, state, and federal agencies and organizations on disaster preparedness and evacuation, as well as tips on short-term disaster recovery. In August and September, the site received 5,700 hits.

"The fast work on this website was made possible by all the coordination work GOMA had done and all the partnerships that were already in place," emphasizes Sempier. "We'll continue to keep the site on-line and track its use, and we hope sometime soon to add information on long-term disaster recovery."

Focus continued from Page 1

Choosing Ocean Governance Priorities Wisely

The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) was designed by New England governors to foster collaborative approaches among federal and state agencies as they address ocean and coastal issues that require a regional solution. NROC bolsters existing programs requiring additional support, such as the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, and tackles regional issues not yet addressed, like offshore energy siting and planning.

Members come from the six Northeast region states and from six federal agencies (NOAA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of the Interior, Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Agriculture, and Coast Guard.)

"In NROC, our federal and state partners share leadership duties, which we've found to be a very effective way of identifying regional priorities as a group," says Ted Diers, an NROC member and the director of the New Hampshire Coastal Program. "Once that's done, we're able to line up the appropriate state and federal resources to make progress on those priorities."

The power of effective regional coordination became evident to Diers at NROC's first Ocean Congress in 2007. "We invited people from all walks of life to talk about ocean-related issues that needed a regional response and to discuss how ocean governance priorities in the Northeast could be funded," says Diers. The feedback from attendees revealed that NROC did not need to take on a previously identified priority, maritime security, because other entities in the region were handling it.

"It was great to take that issue off the NROC agenda and know that we could devote our time and resources to other priorities such as coastal hazards resilience and ocean and coastal ecosystem health," notes Diers. "NROC Rocks!"

"Building a Better Mousetrap" for Ocean Health

In September 2006, the governors of California, Oregon, and Washington State signed the West Coast Governors' Agreement (WCGA) on Ocean Health, a proactive initiative to address ocean-related regional goals. The federal leads include the Department of Commerce, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Department of the Interior.

Initially, admits Brian Baird, he was a bit of a skeptic. "My first reaction was, 'Why in the world do we need one more coordination meeting?'" laughs Baird, a WCGA member and the assistant secretary for ocean and coastal policy at the California Resource Agency (a cabinet-level agency within state government).

He soon changed his mind. "We're building a better mousetrap for advancing ocean health on the West Coast," says Baird. "I now have solid relationships with several federal agencies that deal with coastal issues, as well as with academic institutions and nongovernmental organizations. Also, I'm in contact with a governor's office representative in Oregon or Washington State nearly every week to talk about our mutual issues and concerns. As a result, we're definitely accomplishing things," he adds.

With the help of eight action-coordination teams, the WCGA has made the following strides:

- The WCGA effectively advocated for the Maritime Pollution Prevention Act of 2007, a resolution that provides the U.S. with a voice in negotiating the reduction of ocean vessel emissions.
- In response to critical losses in the salmon harvesting industry, WCGA partners worked together to urge the release of federal disaster money.
- California, Oregon, and Washington State are preparing to work closely on climate change adaptation plans and on issues tied to alternative ocean energy, such as the siting of wave energy facilities.

“The Center’s West Coast Regional Office personnel have been absolutely outstanding, the hub of the WCGA wheel,” Baird says. “They convene most of our meetings, set out the agendas, bring focus to our ideas, and help refine our written reports.”

Making Resilience Tools Available to Gulf Coast Communities

Through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas are working with a host of regional and federal agency partners to advance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf region.

“With the help of our federal leads at NOAA’s Gulf Coast Services Center and the EPA, we’ve laid a great foundation for coordination and communication. We’re learning from each other which resilience approaches work, and we’re also developing products,” says Tracie Sempier, a coastal storms outreach coordinator for the Mississippi–Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and a member of GOMA’s coastal community resilience work group.

The Coastal Resilience Index is one such product now undergoing pilot testing in several Alabama,

Mississippi, and Louisiana communities. The index is provided in an easy “check-mark” format that enables coastal community stakeholders and officials to rate their resilience level (low, medium, or high) for dozens of factors. “For instance, town officials can get a sense whether their sewage system is highly resilient by answering a number of questions, such as whether the sewage system is in, or outside, a flood-hazard area,” says Sempier. Coastal communities are encouraged to make resilience improvements to any index factor that rates a “medium” or “low” score.

“So far, we’ve had a great response, and the feedback from communities is helping us to strengthen the index,” says Sempier. “We hope it will give local planners and managers incentives to increase resilience as a way of getting lower insurance rates or other benefits.”

Center Tools Build Ocean Governance Skills

Building partnerships and planning for the ocean and marine environment are two vital skills needed for effective regional ocean governance. The following resources developed by the NOAA Coastal Services Center can help your agency or organization get ready for region-wide ocean planning:

For Building Partnerships:

• **Introduction to Stakeholder Participation** – This publication provides guidance on identifying stakeholders, learning participation techniques, and evaluating stakeholder participation. To receive a hard copy, contact Tricia.Ryan@noaa.gov. On-line copies are available at www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/stakeholder_participation.pdf.

• **Introduction to Survey Design and Delivery** – This publication provides an overview of survey-related information, techniques, and terminology that can help coastal managers learn more about stakeholders. To receive a hard copy, contact Tricia.Ryan@noaa.gov. On-line copies are available at www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/surveydesign_delivery.pdf.

For Ocean and Marine Planning:

• **Multipurpose Marine Cadastre** – This interactive mapping tool for the outer continental shelf and state waters provides access to authoritative marine boundary information. It also supports planning efforts by providing ocean-use data about shipping lanes, protected areas, and other topics. It can be found at www.csc.noaa.gov/mbwg/html/multipurpose.html.

• **Digital Coast Legislative Atlas** – Users of this Web application can select any area on the map to locate coastal and ocean laws that apply to that area. Organizations involved in regional ocean initiatives can quickly access the complex set of laws that govern the nation’s ocean waters. The atlas is at www.csc.noaa.gov/legislativeatlas/.

To learn more about the work the Center is doing to advance regional ocean governance, contact Rebecca.Smyth@noaa.gov.

NEWS AND NOTES

Coastal Connections is a publication of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coastal Services Center, produced for the coastal resource management community. Each issue of this free bimonthly newsletter focuses on a tool, information resource, or methodology of interest to the nation's coastal resource managers.

Please send us your questions and suggestions for future editions. To subscribe or contribute to the newsletter, contact our editors at

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Conference to Spotlight Innovative Approaches to Waterway Management

"From Stem to Stern II: Boating and Waterway Management in Florida" will bring together an estimated 200 attendees on May 19 to 21 to learn about innovative methods of waterway and boating management. Conference organizers are the University of Florida and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. For additional information, visit <http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/boating2009>.

Guide Explains Economic Value of Tropical Natural Resources

A new guide features scientific estimates of the economic value of coral reefs, tropical mangroves, and tropical seagrasses in a format organized by ecosystem service, ocean region, and country. Producers of the guide include Conservation International, the World Resources Institute, International Coral Reef Initiative, Coastal Ocean Values Center, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The guide is available at www.coastalvalues.org/work/coralvalues.pdf.

Accolades

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association named Kuhio Beach in Waikiki, Hawaii, as a winner of its 2008 Best Restored Beach Award. **Dolan Eversole**, a coastal geologist with the University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program, spearheaded the restoration project.

In Sympathy

L. Scott Quackenbush, who in July 2008 had assumed the position of executive director for the Dauphin Island Sea Lab following the retirement of George F. Crozier, died following a brief illness on October 12, 2008. At the request of the Quackenbush family, friends wishing to memorialize Scott may donate to the Dauphin Island Sea Lab Foundation (<http://foundation.disl.org/go/index.html>).

In light of the tragedy, George F. Crozier has agreed to resume the directorship of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab to "keep the operations and programs of the Sea Lab moving forward as smoothly as possible."

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