

# Local Experts Lend Their Voices to Protect the Gulf of Mexico

*Commissioner of the U.S. Ocean Policy to Speak*

The Galveston Bay Estuary Program, a program of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, will host the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Upper Texas Coast Community Workshop to give local experts an opportunity to participate in planning efforts to protect the Gulf of Mexico. The workshop will be held September 20, 2005 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Texas A&M University at Galveston, 200 Seawolf Parkway, Galveston, Texas.

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Representatives of a diverse array of local stakeholders, from environmental organizations to industry, will come together to discuss critical issues facing the gulf. These issues include: water quality, restoration of coastal wetlands, identification of habitats, nutrient loading, and environmental education. Paul Kelly, Commissioner of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, will provide an overview of the U.S. Ocean Action Plan and opportunities for protection of the Gulf of Mexico. The five goals of the workshop are: to gain local perspectives on issues and solutions related to a healthy gulf; identify programs, resources and networks that can better inform the Gulf of Mexico Alliance process; gain support for creation of future alliance actions; build better relationships between local, state and federal entities; and educate and inform stakeholders at all levels about gulf issues and potential solutions.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is the gulf states' response to the U.S. Ocean Commission report, part of the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, released by the White House in December 2004. These reports noted certain ocean-related problems nationwide, and among other solutions, called for an integrated management approach for the Gulf of Mexico led by surrounding states.

At meeting hosted by the State of Florida in June, the five gulf states and participating federal entities agreed to develop a plan of action for the Gulf of Mexico. The plan will detail ways the government will work with stakeholders to address the five issue areas, integrating recommendations presented in the federal plan. The Upper Texas Coast Community workshop will be an important opportunity to add local voices to the final action plan.

Workshop sponsors include the Bayou Preservation Association, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department – Coastal Fisheries Division, Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation, and Texas A&M University at Galveston.

If you would like more information about the workshop, please visit [www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org](http://www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org) or contact Scott Allen Jones at 281-486-1245 or [sjones@tceq.state.tx.us](mailto:sjones@tceq.state.tx.us). To learn more about the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, visit [www.gbep.state.tx.us](http://www.gbep.state.tx.us).