



Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc.

1305 N. Shoreline, Suite 205, Corpus Christi, Texas 78401 • 361-885-6202 • 361-883-7801 (fax)

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Monika K. De La Garza (361) 885-6246
Cell: (361) 946-6077
Dr. Paul Montagna (361) 749-6779

Local Experts and General Public Invited to Lend Their Voices to Protect the Gulf of Mexico

Commissioner of the U.S. Ocean Policy to Speak

Corpus Christi, Texas, January 10, 2006 --- The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program and the University of Texas Marine Science Institute have partnered together to host the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Texas Coastal Bend Community Workshop that will give local experts and the general public an opportunity to participate in planning efforts to protect the Gulf of Mexico. The workshop is open to the public and will be held January 19, 2006 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute Visitors Center located at 750 Channel View Drive in Port Aransas, Texas.

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 a 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 Texas Coastal Bend Community workshop will be an important opportunity to add local voices to the final action plan.

The Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program is a local non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to protecting and restoring bays and estuaries of the Texas Coastal Bend. The CBBEP implements management solutions and supports research with a focus on public health issues, altered freshwater inflow into bays and estuaries, condition of living resources, loss of wetlands and estuarine habitats, degradation of water quality, altered estuarine circulation, and bay debris.

###