COASTAL CLIPS

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Some Consumers Still Have Seafood Safety Concerns

Despite it being more than a year since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, worries about general seafood safety continue to be at a high. Surveys sponsored by the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board and the Food Industry Center at the University of Minnesota show astonishing consumer concerns even though extreme precautions are being taken to ensure Gulf seafood is safe.

Beginning in May 2010, public concern over Gulf seafood was gauged through Continuous Food Safety Tracking (CFST), a national consumer perception tracking survey that is coordinated jointly by Louisiana State University and the University of Minnesota. At the height of the spill last July, nearly 75 percent of consumers nationwide were concerned about oil-contaminated seafood. A subsequent poll in October 2010 showed about 30 percent of consumers remained extremely anxious about the seafood coming from the Gulf of Mexico.

It appears consumers who are not eating or are avoiding seafood simply are unaware of the screening process, said Lucina Lampila, seafood technology specialist with Louisiana Sea Grant and the LSU AgCenter. Currently, Gulf of Mexico seafood is among the most scrutinized foods in the world.

When it comes to seafood safety jurisdiction, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries oversees oysters and fish species harvested within state waters, which extend three miles from shore. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) oversees fish species caught in federal waters beyond that three-mile boundary.

"When the oil spill occurred, NMFS closed any areas with oil sheen on the surface and put a cautionary buffer around that," said Lampila. "This meant: Don't go in this area, and you can't harvest any seafood inside of this locale."

As for seafood that was harvested from open waters, the first line of defense was having NMFS-certified field inspectors smell the product for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are in oil and put off a strong, pungent odor that is easily detected with a simple sniff. "They are very important because they are aromatic compounds that can be absorbed by humans if consumed, and very high molecular weight ones can cause cancer," said Lampila.

A highly trained inspector can identify contamination of one part per million, or about one drop of oil in a gallon of water. Sniffing is a fast, effective, low-cost screening tool. If anything is detected, NMFS destroys the seafood and keeps the waters from which it was harvested closed.

If nothing is detected in the field, samples are sent to the NMFS lab in Pascagoula, Miss., where a panel of seven inspectors sniff the seafood. If five out of seven don't identify any PAHs, they divide the sample, cook part of it and smell the cooked product to see if there is any odor. If there's no oil scent, then next is a taste test.

If five out of seven don't taste anything, the lab ships the sample to the NMFS lab in Seattle, Wash., where the seafood is subjected to chemical testing. A gas chromatography and mass spectroscopy (GCMS) unit is used to look for target levels of PAHs. If fish species from a specific area pass every one of these tests, then the waters are opened and remain open for harvest and the product is acceptable for market.

Many foods (kale, barbecued and smoked meats) contain a measurable level of PAHs, but that doesn't mean the food is toxic. Of all the seafood samples that have been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other federal agencies, none have PAH levels in concentrations that are of concern.

"The FDA is very demanding and very cautious. They are not going to say something is safe if they have doubts," said Lampila. "If you as a consumer smelled the PAHs at levels greater than 20 parts per million, your eyes, nose and throat would burn," added Lampila.

Before the oil spill, the FDA would randomly check seafood processors every one to two years. Those visits were to look for any potential hazards and to ensure impending problems were addressed. Sampling took place sporadically.

Currently, labs are continuously analyzing seafood, and inspectors are spot checking at the docks for contaminants. As of April 28, all federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico were opened to seafood harvesting.

Oysters, which are harvested from state waters, are tested by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. Although largely unaffected by the oil spill, the shellfish were impacted by freshwater diversions used to keep oil off the coast. Consequently, many oysters didn't have the salinity needed to survive.

For more information, visit *http://gulfseagrant.tamu.edu/oilspill/faqs_seafoodsafety.htm*.

Deepwater Horizon Environmental Impact Assessment Continues

It's been more than a year since the Deepwater Horizon rig exploded and sank 50 miles off the Louisiana coast, killing 11 workers and triggering the release of an estimated 4.9 million gallons of crude oil from the Macondo well into the Gulf of Mexico. The gusher was finally stopped after nearly three months, but assessing impacts to the environment is an on-going process.

That's where Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA, pronounced "nerd-uh") comes into play. NRDA for oil spills is a legal process under the 1990 Oil Pollution Act that determines the type and amount of restoration required to adequately compensate the public for injury to natural resources caused by an oil discharge. Injury is defined as a measurable adverse change in a resource or the impairment of a natural resource service, including human uses, explained Troy Baker, acting Southeast Branch chief for the Assessment and Restoration Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NRDA also is employed under different legislation and in other cases of environmental damage such as Superfund sites and vessel groundings.

For the Deepwater Horizon spill, the process is guided by a trustee council composed of natural resource and restoration agencies of the federal government and from affected states across the Gulf, from Texas to Florida. "Everybody has contributed to all phases of the assessment and restoration planning thus far, and no one agency is the ultimate authority," Baker said. The law also requires that the responsible parties be invited to participate in the assessment, and eight have been identified: BP, three divisions of Transocean, two divisions of Anadarko, Triton Asset Leasing and MOEX Offshore.

NOAA, along with other co-trustees, conducts three steps under NRDA. Preliminary assessment first determines whether an injury to public trust resources has occurred. It is based on field data collection and a review of scientific literature on the discharged substance(s). The second phase is injury assessment/restoration planning, which seeks to quantify the injuries and determine ways to restore, acquire, replace or rehabilitate natural resources and services. This is accomplished through the examination of certain animals and habitats to extrapolate a holistic accounting of overall damage. Finally, restoration implementation puts plans into action and may include projects like wetland replanting.

Ten broad environmental categories (see graphic below) are being examined simultaneously with the Deepwater Horizon incident – a daunting task, given the vast geography, diverse habitats and variety of human uses impacted by the spill.

In April, one responsible party – BP – signed an agreement with the trustee council in which it voluntarily pledged $1 billion for early restoration projects. This unprecedented down payment is the largest NRDA has ever received. Trustees expect it will kick start the restoration process once the projects have undergone public review. Trustees must agree on what projects will be proposed to the public for implementation and how much credit BP will receive for resulting positive impacts.

Agencies conducting assessments and restoration planning may seek reimbursement from BP and other responsible parties for this preliminary work separately, ensuring the company's billion-dollar pledge is set aside for actual restoration implementation. Despite the fact that BP may ultimately pay for portions of the assessment and is communicating with the trustee council, Baker emphasized that the natural resource agencies across the Gulf do not work for the responsible parties. "It's important to understand that the trustees have control over their activities and are acting solely in the interest of the public and resources in our collective trust," Baker said. "In some cases, working with the responsible parties can save time and money and can result in restoration being implemented faster and more efficiently.

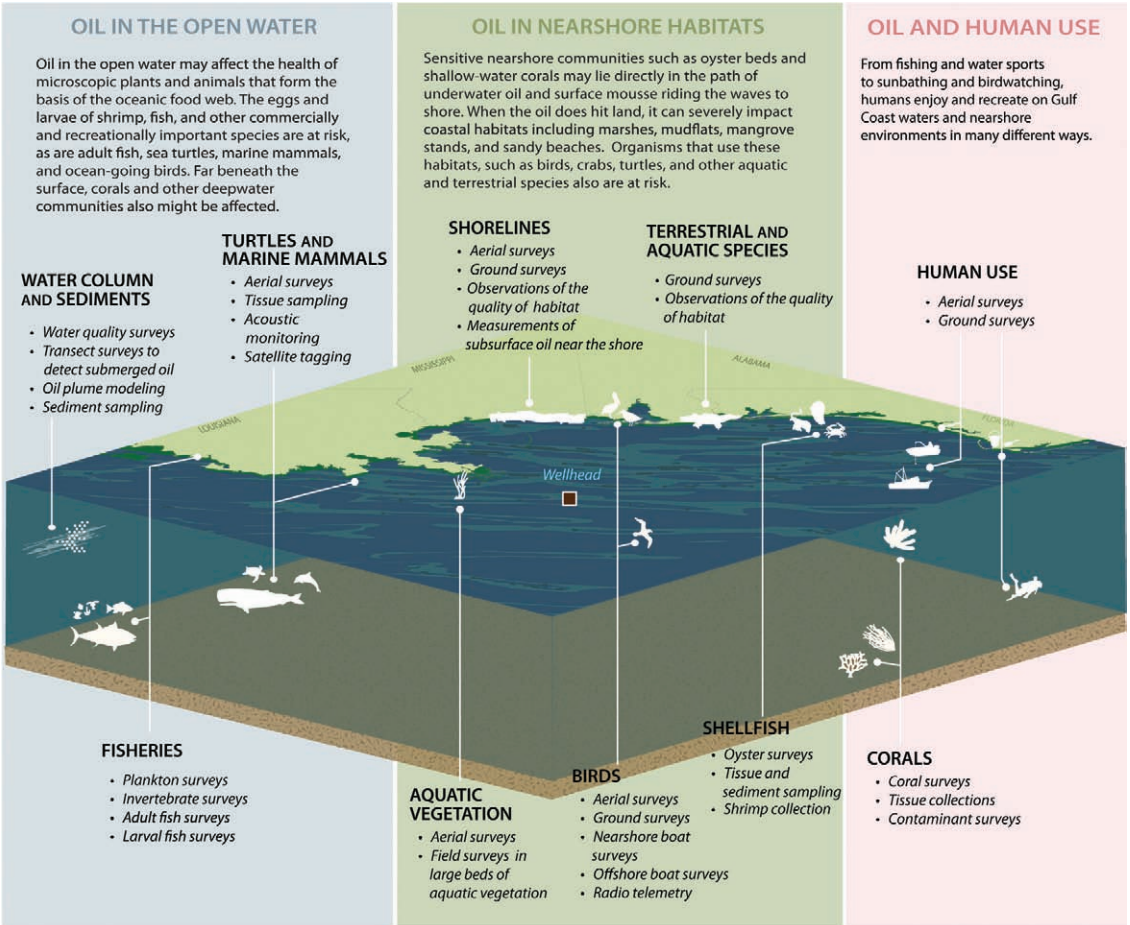
"My staff and I work on many of the NRDAs in the southeast United States. Similar to those pollution events, we want to make sure this injury assessment is as good as it can be and that we incorporate sound science into our technical interpretations. The litigation context in which NRDA is conducted requires an elevated level of scientific rigor for the studies to ensure results are accepted into court as evidence in the case. It takes some time to get it right – often years. We know there is a strong obligation to get it right."

Public input plays a vital role in NRDA and is mandated by the law. Baker said 11 public meetings were conducted in the spring, and the public will be able to comment in the fall when the trustee council plans to release an initial draft restoration plan.

"People will be able to tell us if we're on the right track," Baker said. "We're continuing to try to fine tune and gauge the magnitude of the injury so the public gets as many restoration dollars as are needed to compensate for all injuries. We believe we still have a lot of work to do to make sure other injuries are taken into account."

On the Web:
www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov
http://www.laseagrant.org/nrda/index.htm

NRDA Assessment Activities



Courtesy the U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Research Update

Coastal Roots Radio

Swamp tupelo isn't the only sweet thing growing in southern Louisiana. A new program using classroom-based radio stations is catching the imagination of children while giving teachers a new way to engage students.

The LSU Coastal Literacy Radio Stewardship Project for Kids (CLRSPK) was established in 2010 at three schools already participating in the Coastal Roots program – Belle Chasse Middle School in Plaquemines Parish, Bishop Noland Episcopal Day School in Calcasieu Parish and St. Charles Satellite Center in St. Charles Parish. Through Coastal Roots, elementary, middle and high school students grow plants at school – including tupelo gum – for wetland and coastal restoration.

Students at the three CLRSPK (pronounced "Clear Speak") schools also digitally record radio shows about what they're learning with respect to issues facing Louisiana's coast and share their insights with AM listeners through short stories, poetry and songs of their own creation.

"There are many ways to encourage students to be good stewards. I have found by using their words they can take action and understand what's going on around them. It makes learning more meaningful," said Pam Blanchard, associate professor in the LSU College of Education and director of Coastal Roots and CLRSPK.

Blanchard's idea for CLRSPK was brought to fruition by the Artist Boat organization in Galveston, Texas, which now operates similar school-based, educational radio stations. With funding from Louisiana Sea Grant and help from Karla Klay, Artist Boat executive director, CLRSPK hit the airwaves.

Students from all grade levels use digital audio recorders to make their recordings at school and at Coastal Roots restoration sites. Segments include interviews, songs, original poetry, rap and informational pieces that cover a wide array of environmental and coastal issues. Teachers and students edit their radio shows and then upload and broadcast from a low-frequency AM transmitter at school, which typically covers the entire campus. For those not in range of the stations, the broadcasts can be downloaded from the Coastal Roots website at *http:coastalroots.lsu.edu*

"This is still a learning process, and the program will continue to expand as the opportunity presents itself," noted Blanchard.

The program's success has allowed two teachers from Belle Chasse to attend the Environmental Education and Communication Conference in Saskatchewan, Canada, where they shared their experiences and brought back information about other stewardship projects.

Dissolved Organic Matter's Effects on Near-Shore Waters Examined

As coastal marshes degrade, more of the carbon produced in these wetlands is swept out to sea by the tide in the form of dissolved organic matter (DOM). Not enough is known about what ultimately happens to this DOM once it is carried away or the effects it may have on its final destination – the near-shore waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

With support from Louisiana Sea Grant, Malinda Sutor, assistant professor, research, with the LSU Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences (DOCS), is looking for answers to these questions in her study "Flux and fate of organic matter in Louisiana coastal wetlands: Rates of carbon export and its potential contribution to coastal production and carbon sequestration." With field work based out of Fourchon and the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium laboratory in Chauvin, Sutor is examining the planktonic community and how it responds to dissolved organic matter at Port Fourchon and Belle Pass. Sutor is investigating with two other associate professors from her department. Chunyan Li, a physical oceanographer, is measuring the actual flow of water in and out of the marsh, and John White is examining the chemistry and nutrients.

"The coastal ocean is important to a variety of commercial fisheries, and a better understanding of the flux and fate of dissolved organic matter can improve plans for coastal and wetland restoration and protection," Sutor explained. The increased amounts of DOM also may have an influence on the Dead Zone – the section of the Gulf of Mexico measuring up to 7,000 square miles that annually suffers from hypoxia in the summer months. This zone is primarily attributed to excessive nutrient input from the Mississippi River, which causes algal blooms that consume dissolved oxygen when the algae dies and is broken down.

DOM is an important source of carbon for bacteria, which are at the base of the foodweb, feeding plankton, which feed larger animals such as juvenile fish. Sutor is focusing on the gelatinous mesozooplankton known as larvaceans. These worm-like animals are usually less than a half-inch in length and greedily consume bacteria. They do this by surrounding themselves in net-like "mucous houses." Inside their houses, larvaceans beat their tails to pump water through the mesh, capturing meals of bacteria and plankton. The mucous houses also catch debris and clog frequently. Sutor said these animals can build and shed up to 30 or 40 houses a day. The houses sink, along with larvacean fecal pellets, shunting carbon straight to the water bottom. These discards are then broken down by bacteria, possibly accelerating hypoxia.

"They're pretty fascinating," Sutor said of the larvaceans she is studying. "And a lot of coastal hypoxia can't be explained simply by river input."

While sampling is complete, the analysis has been slowed by the researchers' involvement in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response, and Sutor and her colleagues are in the process of analyzing their data. The investigators expect the study will be applicable to other wetland systems, and they plan to use the preliminary data to support a proposal to the National Science Foundation for a larger, multi-year project.

Sea Grant Helps Communities Prepare for Rising Seas

Levees and other flood control structures provide Louisiana's coastal communities with one line of defense against tropical storms. With the prospect of sea level rise and other climatic changes by the end of this century, the cities and parishes with a wider array of armaments stand a better chance of combating and mitigating future natural hazards.

A multi-disciplined team from Louisiana Sea Grant is helping local policy makers – beginning with the City of Mandeville, located on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain – better fortify and prepare their communities.

"Some people on the North Shore and South Shore believe that Hurricane Katrina is the end all be all of storms – that it was a once in a lifetime kind of event. However, models show that it could be much worse under different circumstances," stressed Melissa Daigle, with LSG's Law & Policy Program.

One factor that could make the impact of future storms worse is rising seas. A recent study produced by the International Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program concluded that Arctic ice is melting at an accelerated rate. Because of that, sea levels could rise by 35 to 63 inches by 2100. Previous projections were a sea level rise of 7 to 23 inches.

With many of the state's coastal communities already in low-lying areas, as well as experiencing subsidence, sea level rise puts Louisiana at greater risk.

"St. Tammany Parish was a good place to start our program," said Daigle "They are already familiar with the threats they face, and they were interested in information about how sea level rise would intensify these hazards."

Daigle and her teammates conducted a series of workshops during the spring to educate St. Tammany Parish leaders about sea level rise, use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data to evaluate storm surge and sea level rise risk, risk perception and communication, and best practices in preparing for future hazards. Also discussed was legal liability of local governments if officials fail to act or act without consideration of pending hazards.

"We had a number of planning sessions with the city and figured out the things they needed most. They needed information, and they really hadn't considered sea level rise," Daigle said.

While a long-term plan that takes into account sea level rise and changes in climate is needed for Mandeville's sustainability and natural hazards resiliency, maintaining the community's cultural identity is also imperative. "For example, tree canopy is very important to Mandeville," said Daigle. "We need to preserve the most important things to the community while taking steps to prepare for sea level rise, such as raising houses. A community doesn't have to lose what makes it unique in order to prepare for hazards such as sea level rise."

At the end of the project, the city was provided with a toolkit on CD that will help policy makers incorporate what they learned into the development and decision making process. The planning team is currently working on selecting the next communities it will target.

Sea Grant
Louisiana

Sea Grant Responds to Mississippi River Flooding

Although Louisiana Sea Grant deals primarily with coastal and marine issues, the program recognized a need during the freshwater spring 2011 flooding of the Mississippi River and took action to fill that void.

"Some essential research related to algal blooms and coastal restoration surfaced prior to, but related to, the opening of the Morganza and Bonnet Carré spillways," said Charles (Chuck) Wilson, LSG executive director. "Louisiana Sea Grant jumped in and provided program development funding for that research."

Sea Grant personnel also aided in the flood response by providing constituents with information on how the flooding could affect fisheries and coastal communities. A web portal was established to deliver current flood information to the program's Extension agents as well as stakeholders, and LSG staff ventured into the spillways to collect baseline data that can be used during the recovery process. "Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Sea Grant has become accustomed to responding to disasters. Be it hurricanes, oil spills or river flooding, we're here to assist," said Wilson.

Morganza Spillway flooding during the June 2011 opening.

The three flood research projects funded by LSG are:

Project Title: Effects of Freshwater Input on Nutrient Loading, Phytoplankton Community Composition, Biomass and Cyanotoxin Production in Lake Pontchartrain from the 2011 Bonnet Carré Spillway Opening

Principal Investigators: Sibel Bargu and John White, LSU Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences

Project Description: After previous openings of the Bonnet Carré Spillway, Lake Pontchartrain experienced both harmful and non-toxic algal blooms believed to be caused by an increased influx of nutrients suspended in the Mississippi River water introduced through the spillway. The goal of this project is to evaluate nutrient enrichment and its impact on phytoplankton growth in the lake during and after the May 2011 opening of the Bonnet Carré. By monitoring the diversion, the researchers will be able to characterize and define the extent of the Mississippi River plume within the lake, determine the collapse of the plume and subsequent mixing dynamics of the diversion, and examine the response of algal growth (biomass) to the river water and nutrients entering the lake.

Project Title: Water, Nutrient and Sediment Flux and Fate from the Bonnet Carre' Spillway – 2011

Principal Investigators: Samuel Bentley, LSU Geology and Geophysics, and Chunyan Li, LSU Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences

Project Description: This project is coupled with the Bargu/White project. The opening of the Bonnet Carré Spillway is anticipated to deposit large quantities of freshwater and dissolved particulate material (sediment) into Lake Pontchartrain. Objectives of the project include developing a sediment budget (inputs or sources, and outputs or sinks) for fine sediment from the spillway into the lake, and determining the dynamic processes that control the plume, mass transport and dispersal of the water and sediment. Freshwater diversions, such as the spillway, have been identified as an important mechanism for future coastal restoration in the Mississippi River Delta.

Project Title: Sediment and Water Dynamics in River-Dominated Coastal Wetlands during the Mississippi River Flood of 2011

Principal Investigators: Alexander Kolker, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), and Ioannis Georgiou, University of New Orleans Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Project Description: An important issue facing coastal restoration is the need to understand the pathways and mechanics by which sediment is delivered to coastal marshes. The deluge of water from the Mississippi River flood of 2011 will almost certainly be accompanied by vast quantities of sediments, much of which will find its way into the Louisiana Coastal Zone. The project will look at the interaction between hydrodynamics and sediment transport in a series of crevasse splays in the lower Mississippi.

Louisiana Sea Grant Photo, Map Collection Available Online

A selection of Louisiana Sea Grant's (LSG) digitized photographic and cartographic collection is now available online through the Louisiana Digital Library (LDL). Sea Grant's digital archive contains more than 2,500 images from a variety of government publications and other sources, including personal photos, published pictures and maps.

LSG partnered with the LSU Libraries Special Collections to make the images freely available via the LDL. Sea Grant's image collection is part of a larger, ongoing oral history project that originated more than four years ago to keep a vital part of Louisiana's cultural and environmental past alive.

"Natural, man-made and economic factors are taking their toll on Louisiana's coastal communities and the traditional industries that have supported them," said Chuck Wilson, LSG executive director. "Whether caused by subsidence, hurricanes or global competition, the culture and landscape of the coastal zone are changing, and in some cases, disappearing. These online collections, along with the oral histories, are preserving this rich history for generations to come."

The image and map collections available online were assembled by Don Davis, LSG director emeritus of oral histories, and Carl Brasseaux, retired Sagrera Family Memorial Professor of History at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The duo has been digitizing images and conducting oral histories throughout the state's coastal zone for several years. Over the past 10 months, Gina Costello, LSU Libraries digital services librarian, and colleagues have cataloged and uploaded the files to the Louisiana Sea Grant Digital Images Collection and the Louisiana Sea Grant Digital Maps Collection.

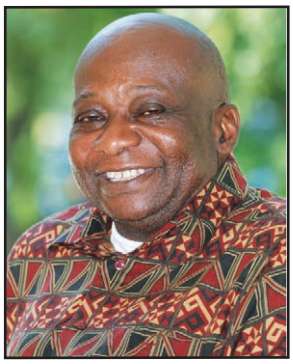
The maps collection contains U.S. Geological Survey drawings and other cartography of Louisiana. The images collection houses photos of coastal communities and landscapes that have diminished over recent decades. To visit the Louisiana Sea Grant Collections, go to *www.louisianadigitallibrary.org/index.hp?institution=Louisiana%20Sea%20Grant*.

Louisiana Sea Grant also has deposited copies of audio interviews and transcripts at the LSU Libraries Special Collections, and these will be made available online in the future.

The Louisiana Digital Library is an online library containing photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, oral histories and more that document the state's history and culture. Libraries, museums, archives, historical groups and other institutions across Louisiana contribute materials to LDL. The state-wide digital library is available to anyone with access to the Internet and an interest in the materials.

Brown Departs Louisiana Sea Grant

After a nearly 29-year relationship with Louisiana Sea Grant (LSG), graphic artist John Brown retired in May and is "gone like a turkey through the corn" – one of the many Brown-isms that make up the charismatic personality of a man who will be dearly missed.



John Brown

In 1973, Brown graduated from Southern University with a Bachelor's degree in fine arts. He also attended Louisiana State University (LSU) where he earned his Master's in art history in 1976.

Before the advent of desktop publishing and the '90s technology boom, line drawing in black and white was the technique of graphic artists, said Brown. The creative process was all worked out by hand and is what Brown originally set out to do. But when pixels pushed out pica rules, proportion wheels and zipatone, Brown learned the techniques used by the new generation of graphic artists and he became the master of InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop.

In 1977, Brown was making 21 flavors of pancakes at IHOP when he landed his first career-related job as a medical artist at the LSU Medical Center in New Orleans. He created illustrations for various publications and exhibits including graphs, charts and images of bones, muscles and tissues. Four and a half years later he decided to return to Southern University, but, this time to teach. He spent two years introducing students to art history, art appreciation and instructing a beginning painting course.

It was November 1982 when Brown started working at LSG. He was hired to create illustrations of southern Louisiana's bayous, including fish, plants, cypress, oaks and grasses. Brown was the go-to guy for researchers who needed diagrams, artworks and maps. Later, he played more of a supportive artistic role at LSG, and to certain extent, became the program's chaplain. "I have been blessed to be somewhat of a residential counselor over the last few years," said Brown. He served as mentor to many student workers, lending an ear to their stories and troubles.

"The office just doesn't seem the same without John," said Charles Wilson, LSG executive director. "I can't think of anyone more upbeat, and his positive attitude spread like an infection throughout the building. It's sad to see him go, but I know there are other things he wants to do with his time."

Brown also played an intrinsic part in LSG's annual coastal stewardship fair, Ocean Commotion. For the past 10 years, he has worked as an exhibitor, teaching grade-schoolers about invasive species and wetland wildlife. He's also assisted with event registration and getting the 2,000 public, private and homeschooled students to where they needed to be.

Brown's chief passion is his devotion to his church, The Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit. He spreads the church's message through his prison ministry at Angola State Penitentiary. "I like to help people turn their lives around and see them become rehabilitated," said Brown. In order to help prisoners become effective members of society in anticipation of release, Brown counsels three men every Saturday morning.

Never having time to play, Brown wants three months to relax and do nothing. After the summer heat and hurricanes pass, he is considering occasional employment at a friend's law firm. In his free time, he enjoys painting, photography, fishing, coin collecting and LSU football.

New LSG Research Associate Working on Enhanced GIS Products

Victoria Bell, a new Louisiana Sea Grant (LSG) research associate, is working with the Fisheries Division of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to implement a fisheries geographic information system (GIS).

Bell was hired on a three-year contract to guide the development of the GIS Management and Outreach Plan (GMOP) and is working from the UNO Research and Technology Park. The final product will be a fisheries GIS program that can be integrated with data from the Wildlife Division as well as data from other state and federal agencies. Since the 1960s, the Fisheries Division has collected numerous geographically based surveys for a variety of programs and projects. Bell is working with fisheries scientists to migrate that data into a format that can be incorporated into a GIS system.

For the first time this will allow a large amount of fisheries data to be "visually analyzed." This will assist and improve decision making processes, such as closing and opening particular areas to commercial and recreational fishing. "The Fisheries Division has not had the capability of looking at specific data on maps in a GIS program. The new system will allow researchers to see and determine trends and patterns on a map, as opposed to simply reviewing spreadsheets," said Bell.

Positioning base maps and data on a central server will create a platform from which fisheries personnel can work. "While we are still in the design phase, we are training fisheries staff in the current GIS software. The next step is working with our GIS Steering Committee on implementation," said Bell. She is enthused about a future application of the system that will be used to analyze the impact of land loss on fish populations in coastal Louisiana. The Fisheries Division also plans to use the system to create web-based products – such as maps with boat ramp and marina location and amenities information.

Bell managed the GIS and Coastal Zone Programs for Plaquemines Parish from 1999-2003. She also worked for the New Orleans City Planning Commission from 2003-2004 as a GIS planning administrator. She later moved to San Diego, where she worked as a GIS analyst for Technology Associates, an environmental consulting company. Bell attended the University of New Orleans, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in business and marketing and a Master's degree in political science.

EnvironMentor Students Win Awards at National Competition

The LSU chapter of EnvironMentors closed its first year with three Scotlandville Magnet High School students earning accolades at the EnvironMentors 2011 National Awards Ceremony, held in Washington, D.C.

Markeisha Hill won first place overall and a $1,000 college scholarship for her research poster "Why Does My Uncle's Water Taste Bad?" Jeronda Scott won first place in the content scholarship for excellence in energy efficiency research category for her research poster "The Effects of Light on Algae Growth for Use in Biofuels." Richada Ware won first place and a digital camera in the EnvironMentors photo competition for her photo "Measuring Turbidity at LSU's College Lake." All were juniors at SMHS in 2010-11. SMHS EnvironMentors also attending the national ceremony were Lorenzo Stallion and Alexandria Charles.

LSU is one of 10 universities with EnvironMentors chapters that help at-risk high school students prepare for college programs in environmental and related sciences. The LSU chapter is a cross-campus collaboration between the College of Education's GEAR UP, Louisiana Sea Grant and the School of the Coast and Environment. GEAR UP is a federal program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in college.

The 15 SMHS juniors came to campus twice a week during the 2010-11 school year and met with mentors, learned to work in a laboratory and use a college library, conducted basic research, as well as visited museums, aquariums and Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) in Chauvin.

For more information on the LSU chapter, visit *http://www.sce.lsu.edu/environmentors/*. EnvironMentors will continue in the 2011-12 school year with a dozen new SMHS students joining the program.

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Touching New Audiences with Technology

Louisiana Sea Grant is reaching new audiences with a video kiosk on loan to public libraries.

"The kiosk contains several short films Sea Grant produced about the cultural and environmental history of the coastal zone," said Roy Kron, LSG communications director. "The films are available online, but loaning the kiosk to libraries lets us reach children and adults who might otherwise not see them."

The films include "Shrimp Tales," which tells the stories of three of the many families that depend on Louisiana's shrimp fishery for their livelihoods; "Reflections on Chandeleur," which portrays the history of the vanishing Chandeleur island chain; and "A History of Louisiana Dried Shrimp," which recounts the dried shrimp industry's growth nationally and internationally. The kiosk debuted this spring at the Terrebonne Parish Library in Houma.

Placed near the library's entrance, the exhibit was popular with patrons, said Jennifer Hamilton, reference services supervisor for the Terrebonne Parish Library. "Visitors have been interested in the films, and the kiosk has seen a lot of activity," she added.

Based on feedback received from the library, content of the kiosk was tweaked to make it more user-friendly. "Some people are more computer savvy than others," said Kron. "So we've made some adjustments so users can better navigate the kiosk content and use the touch screen."

Eventually, the kiosk will be permanently housed at the Louisiana Fisheries Museum in Lafitte. Currently, the display is on loan to the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library at its main branch on Goodwood Boulevard.

LSG web coordinator Melissa Castleberry sets up the kiosk in Houma. The device is a free-standing, touch-screen computer designed for museums and libraries.