

Roberts Retires

After a nearly 30-year association with Louisiana Sea Grant, Ken Roberts, associate vice chancellor and associate director of Extension for the LSU AgCenter, is retiring.

Roberts' relationship with Sea Grant began in the late 1960s as a graduate student at Oregon State University where he was a Sea Grant trainee. Upon earning his doctorate there, he took a position as an Extension specialist with South Carolina Sea Grant. He also spent a year in the National Sea Grant Office as a program monitor before becoming a Marine Extension research economist at LSG in 1978.



Ken Roberts

"As an economist with experience on the West, East and Gulf coasts, Ken offered valuable experience, skills and insights to the

Louisiana Sea Grant College Program. That appealed to me," said Dr. Jack Van Lopik, retired LSG executive director. "We needed an economist like Ken, with both a research and extension background. We needed someone to look at issues from an economics, research and sociological standpoint. He offered that."

Roberts, a native of Louisiana and son of famed New Orleans television meteorologist Nash Roberts, welcomed the opportunity to return home and pioneer a new concept for LSG.

"Jack took a risk when I was hired by having the position split 60 percent

Extension-40 percent research," Roberts said. "That hadn't been done at Louisiana Sea Grant before. I appreciate him giving me that opportunity."

During his involvement with Louisiana Sea Grant, Roberts has served as program coordinator for Marine Extension, as a marine economics specialist and director of the LSU AgCenter's Agricultural Leadership Development Program. Since 2001, he has been associate vice chancellor and associate director of Extension at the LSU AgCenter. Officially, he retires on Oct. 31, but Roberts will volunteer some of his time to several AgCenter projects through the end of the year.

"Last year's hurricanes were a factor in my retirement," Roberts said. "They had a profound effect on my immediate and extended family, and I'm going to be spending the next couple of years helping with recovery and managing family affairs."

Replacing Roberts at the AgCenter is Dwight Landreneau, who was secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. •



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COASTAL CLIPS

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Debris Project Aids Hurricane Rita Recovery

Calcasieu Lake has something for everyone – a deep-draft channel with Gulf of Mexico access for the energy and shipping industries, a bounty of oysters and shrimp for commercial fishers, and red-fish and trophy speckled trout for the taking by recreational anglers.

Calcasieu Lake also has tons of marine debris left behind by Hurricane Rita. The debris is both unsightly and dangerous for those who ply the various parts of this roughly 18 by 10-mile estuary extending from Cameron Parish into Calcasieu Parish in southwest Louisiana.

As part of Louisiana Sea Grant's continuing effort to help the environment and economy recover from the 2005 hurricane season, LSG ports specialist Justin Farrell, LSG Communications editor Paula Ouder and Louisiana Sea Grant/LSU AgCenter Marine Extension agent Kevin Savoie teamed up with a host of public and private partners to begin addressing the problem. The resulting Calcasieu Lake Marine Debris Marking and Mapping Program is funded with a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Marine Debris Program through the NOAA Office of Coast Survey. Semptra Energy, the Lake Charles Pilots and the Lake Charles chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) also made financial contributions.

"We want to make the lake safer for all of its diverse users," Farrell said. "This area is important to so many individuals as well as large and small businesses."

"With so much national and state focus on Hurricane Katrina, we decided to pursue a project that would directly benefit people affected by Rita," Ouder added.

Not only did the project benefit lake users, it actively involved them. Volunteer

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Louisiana Sea Grant coastal ports specialist Justin Farrell (left) and Cliff Cosgrove of NOAA's Office of Coast Survey tie a foam buoy to a submerged tank on Calcasieu Lake as Louisiana Sea Grant/LSU AgCenter Marine Extension agent Kevin Savoie marks the area with a length of PVC pipe.

Floodplain Management Expert Joins LSG

Louisiana Sea Grant's newest staff member, Dr. Rod Emmer, is aiding community officials throughout the coastal zone in addressing hazard mitigation issues in the wakes of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Emmer is leading a team of experts in coastal zone and floodplain management with the intent of helping local officials navigate and implement state and federal regulations during the Katrina/Rita rebuilding process. Emmer has led many similar teams focused on environmental studies, impacts and coastal zone management practices.

"Given the urgency to assist coastal parishes with recovery and rebuilding

efforts, we feel that he can hit the ground running," said Mike Liffmann, LSG associate executive director. "Rod has experience, credentials and is well respected in planning as it relates to coastal zone communities."

Emmer specializes in coastal and floodplain management and the influence that federal and state policies, regulations and programs have on coastal systems. He has had contracts for developing and organizing multiple coastal initiatives. He has

taught courses on coastal zone planning, environmental planning and coastal geography

at Louisiana State University and at the University of New Orleans. Emmer also is the executive director of the Louisiana Floodplain Management Association.

He earned a doctorate in geography from Oregon State University and received his bachelor's and master's degrees in geography from LSU. •



Rod Emmer

Louisiana Sea Grant Receives APEX Award

The Louisiana Sea Grant Communications office is the recipient of the 2006 APEX Award of Excellence for One-of-a-Kind Crisis and Emergency Communications for LSG's Louisiana Hurricane Recovery Resources Web Site.

Responding to the need for information in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, LSG Communications launched the Web

site at www.laseagrant.org/hurricane/index.htm. Officially unveiled Sept. 19, 2005, it offered visitors information on topics such as wetlands, seafood, water quality, ports, economic impacts and rebuilding concerns. Through a question-and-answer format with experts from a variety of fields, residents, business owners and community leaders could find the information they needed to

make decisions about their immediate future. In its first 10 weeks of operation, more than 6,400 people visited the site.

Nearly 5,000 entries in 11 categories and 102 subcategories were submitted to the Eighteenth Annual Awards for Publication Excellence (APEX) competition, sponsored by Communications Concepts Inc. •

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Charles A. Wilson,
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Editors: Roy Kron, Paula Ouder. Art: Robert Ray
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Documentary Looks at Marine Extension Response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita

A documentary chronicling the response of Louisiana Sea Grant Marine Extension agents to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita has been released and is available for online viewing.

Sister Storms: A Louisiana Sea Grant Response explores the professional and personal challenges three Extension agents faced immediately following the storms and continue to face during the rebuilding process. On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated southeast Louisiana. Only a few weeks later on Sept. 24, 2005, Hurricane Rita caused similar destruction on the state's southwest coast. A year following the storms, much of south Louisiana still struggles with recovery.

Sister Storms can be viewed by visiting www.laseagrant.org. A copy on DVD can be purchased



Mark Schexnayder, Katrina Recovery Task Force coordinator with the LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Sea Grant Marine Extension agent, (center) shares his story with LSU AgCenter communications specialists Bobby Soileau (left) and Craig Gautreaux.

for \$3 by contacting Louisiana Sea Grant Communications, 103 Sea Grant Building, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, La. 70803, or by emailing rkron@lsu.edu or calling (225) 578-6564.

The film is a production of LSG and the LSU AgCenter. •

Volunteers Help Fisheries and Agriculture

The Gulf coast received an outpouring of support following Hurricane Katrina. Stories abound of strangers opening their homes and their wallets to storm victims. Other willing souls continue to flock to the area to lend a helping hand wherever it is needed.

Amanda Hardesty first came to Louisiana as a volunteer with a group of 30 students from Ohio State University in December 2005. After returning with a second group of students in March, Hardesty felt compelled to do more. She finished her master's degree in environmental science at OSU, returned to New Orleans and founded KARE, the Katrina Agricultural and

Coastal Resources Experience. Since the start of summer, organizing recovery projects in Greater New Orleans has been Hardesty's full-time job as she serves as Louisiana Sea Grant's volunteer coordinator under Mark Schexnayder, the Katrina Recovery Task Force coordinator with Louisiana Sea Grant and the LSU AgCenter.

"I've been here for so long it seems normal to be doing this," Hardesty said of her constant contact with devastation. "After graduation, I could have gotten a job somewhere else, but this place needed me. Being here and the fact that my work is agriculture-related is important to me."

"Other economic and social communities have received a lot of help since the storm. Agriculture needed attention but wasn't getting it. People don't pay much attention to the agriculture community, even though the whole nation relies on it. I know I can't single-handedly help, but each project puts us one step closer to restoring the agricultural and fishing industries."

Hardesty's main task is helping people in need. She orchestrates the volunteer effort (including numerous groups of OSU students), works with LSU Extension personnel, and meets with those seeking assistance. She has visited

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Debris Project . . .

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effort was a key component as dozens of area boaters used the project-provided orange buoys and PVC pipe to mark debris they encountered. Volunteers then collected GPS coordinates of the obstructions and reported them, either in person during one of two volunteer roundup days, or online at www.laseagrant.org/debris.



Marine Extension agent Kevin Savoie (left) and Louisiana Sea Grant/LSU AgCenter research associate Maurice Wolcott set up GPS equipment before heading out on Calcasieu Lake to ground-truth marine debris coordinates.

Volunteers Aid Storm Recovery . . .

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fishermen, farmers and nursery owners to assess each situation to determine if they would best be served by volunteers or by pursuing grants.

"The nicest thing is just working with individual people and families," Hardesty said. "You hear stories of people evacuating and losing track of family members. I've met several people who spent the night in trees, and I've dealt with a lot of people who are really trying to come back. I've learned a lot about how people deal with crises."



Amanda Hardesty

Project partners also spent several hours on the water searching for marine debris and ground-truthing reported coordinates. Telephone poles, industrial tanks, sunken boats, derelict fishing gear, hackberry trees and pieces of houses are among the more than 90 large pieces of debris that have been logged.

"Our ultimate goal is to clear obstructions from the lake. But before a cleanup can take place, we need to locate and identify the debris," Savoie explained. "This truly has been a community effort, and we are pleased with the progress we have made so far."

While the support of local boaters, businesses and other agencies has been impressive, there have been moments in the project that were less than smooth sailing. The first volunteer day scheduled for June had to be postponed after an estimated 3 million-gallon oil spill closed the Calcasieu River and Ship Channel, Moss Lake, Prien Lake, West Cove and the whole of Calcasieu Lake, known locally as Big Lake.

Hardesty works with Schexnayder in cooperation with groups like Common Ground, Operation Blessing and marketumbrella.org. They also have the support of the America's Wetlands campaign, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and several national corporations.

"It's a nice symbiosis that's formed," Schexnayder said.

Hardesty has helped provide manpower for projects removing debris from homes, churches, docks and businesses; refurbishing greenhouses; picking citrus; restoring homes; helping local nurseries and aquaculture operations get back in business; building playgrounds; clearing flooded community gardens; and conducting several wetland plantings. Their most recent project, Bayou Rebirth, drew 165 people to City Park for a day of cleaning, replanting and removing invasive species like the Chinese tallow tree.

"Hopefully it will look like a Monet painting again," Schexnayder said of the park, which suffered from saltwater inundation, prolonged flooding and wind damage.

LSG funded Hardesty's position through the summer, and a pledge of funding from private industry may extend it even farther. LSG also funded intern Colleen Morgan, a Tulane University alumna who is now a master's student at Yale. Under Schexnayder, Morgan assisted with the volunteer program and did work on issues of

The project quickly regrouped and combined efforts with the CCA to enlist volunteers among fishermen participating in the group's Trout Shoot Out on July 15. The rescheduled volunteer day Aug. 26 was a success despite heavy rains.

Preparations are now underway to provide data to the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' Underwater Obstruction Program, which has committed approximately \$250,000 to hire contractors beginning in November or December to remove marked marine debris.

"There is no way that we could have such a successful program as this without Louisiana Sea Grant being at the center of this effort," said project leader Tim Osborn of the NOAA Office of Coast Survey. "With its close ties to the local coastal communities and volunteer groups, as well as working ties to NOAA, Sea Grant has the ability to plan and implement a truly unique program dealing with such a large impact to these coastal parishes."

Other project partners include the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Lake Charles Power Squadron, LSU AgCenter, Calcasieu Parish Sheriff's Office and U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Local businesses have helped as well, with Capt. Sammie Faulk of Gotta-Go Charters, Sheron Faulk of Ship to Shore Co., and Stine Lumber providing professional support. •

coastal land loss and pursued grants for a wetland education center at City Park. As she returns to school, Morgan is forming her own student-based hurricane recovery group at Yale.

"Amanda and Colleen have been phenomenal," Schexnayder said. "We are coming back strong one project at a time."

More information on the student volunteer effort is available online at www.we-kare.org. Those wishing to volunteer can contact Schexnayder at (504) 838-1170 or email mschexnayder@agctr.lsu.edu, or Hardesty at the same phone number or at hardesty@lsu.edu. •



Ohio State University student volunteers Jill Yarnell (left) and Carrie Bailey carry mulch as they help prepare a playground at the Nelson UNO Charter School in New Orleans.

Ice Plants Donated for Fisheries Industry

Another element needed for the recovery of the fisheries industry following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is in place – ice.

"Ice is essential for preserving the catch on boats, at shore-side facilities and during transport to market," said Sea Grant Extension agent Rusty Gaudé, who along with Extension agents Mark Schexnayder and Kevin Savoie helped facilitate a gift of three industrial ice-making machines from Shell Oil Co.

"For the last year, ice-making capacity for 100 miles of shoreline has been virtually non-existent," Gaudé added. "Fishermen have had to make as long as a six-hour roundtrip to get ice."

Shell donated \$500,000 for the purchase, delivery and installation of the ice machines, each capable of producing 20 tons of ice per day. Two of the machines are located in Chalmette, and the third is located in Cameron.

"Storm-related destruction of ice-making and ice storage capacity has been a significant obstacle to re-starting fishing operations," said Ewell Smith, executive director of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board.

Gulf Coast hurricanes in 2005 caused extensive infrastructure damage to the annual \$2.3 billion Louisiana fishing industry. The arrival of the ice machines in late August in St. Bernard and Cameron parishes coincided with the start of white shrimp season. "White shrimp is an important crop for our industry," said Smith. "Now that we have ice, we can assure the highest quality catch possible."

More than 100 spectators, including Gov. Kathleen Blanco, were on hand for the dedication of one of the Chalmette ice machines on Aug. 23. Similar ceremonies were held in late



Rusty Gaudé (left) and Chuck Wilson of Louisiana Sea Grant, Ewell Smith and Harlon Pearce of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, Mark Schexnayder of Louisiana Sea Grant, Kell McInnis of the Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation and Fred Palmer of Shell Oil Co. dig in for a scoop of ice in St. Bernard.

September for the Cameron ice plant.

"All of us on the Gulf are neighbors," said Frank Glaviano, vice president-production, Americas Region for Shell Exploration and Production. "The fishing industry provides food and jobs; oil companies provide energy and jobs. Partnering with neighbors to help them rebuild makes good sense."

The ice machines are strategically placed to help as many storm-affected fishermen as possible. The facilities in Chalmette serve fishermen in St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Orleans and St. Tammany parishes. The machine in Cameron serves fishermen in the southwest part of the state. •



The new ice machines, like this one in Cameron, are the size of a shipping container and can each produce 20 tons of ice a day.

Fisheries Assessments Used in Funding Requests

Louisiana Sea Grant's ongoing assessments of damages to the state's fisheries by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are helping fishermen and state and local governments in their federal aid requests.

"Assessments will continue for some time because of the widespread devastation from both storms," said Rex Caffey, a resource economist with Louisiana Sea Grant and the LSU AgCenter. "At the moment, we're still looking at damages of between \$270 million and \$580 million for commercial fisheries alone."

LSG fisheries economist Hamady Diop partnered with Caffey on the assessments. "The storms had tremendous impact on fisheries' infrastructure, damaging or destroying boats, docks, ice houses, storage and processing facili-

ties, as well as markets," said Diop. In many areas affected by the hurricanes, that infrastructure is still off-line or operating only marginally, making it difficult for those fishermen who can harvest seafood to work.

"It's still a day-to-day process," said Ewell Smith, executive director of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board. "Rex and Hamady's assessments have been important in letting us know we're on the right track."

Using the Caffey and Diop work, the Louisiana Fishing Community Recovery Coalition (LFCRC), of which Louisiana Sea Grant is a founding partner, developed aid requests and determined financial assistance allocation formulas. Their work also was used in a \$50 million Community Development Block Grant

(CDBG) application and in an additional \$150 million federal aid request.

"Their work went to Washington, D.C., with us and was used to secure funding from the federal government," said Smith. "Sea Grant played an important role in the process."

In their assessments, the economists anticipate the recreational fishing sector will have a strong and relatively quick recovery. The commercial fishing industry, however, is less resilient – considering it already was in a state of decline before the storms – and will require more assistance.

Presentations Caffey has made on the fisheries' assessments can be found at <http://agecon.lsu.edu/~rcaffey/CaffeyWeb/newpage.html>. •

State's Shellfish Regulation Evaluated

As Louisiana's oyster industry matures from an aquaculture standpoint, questions concerning which state agency should regulate shellfish have surfaced. Louisiana Sea Grant's Legal Project is aiding policymakers in their determination of what changes, if any, should be made in state agency oversight of the oyster industry.

"We're looking at the pros and cons of moving shellfish regulation from a conservation agency, such as a department of wildlife and fisheries, to an agriculture agency," said Lisa Schiavinato, LSG Legal Project coordinator. "Many states have legally defined aquaculture as a form of agriculture. Therefore, these states have chosen to place aquaculture regulation within their respective agriculture departments."

Beginning this summer with Florida, LSG Legal is examining the rationale, benefits, detriments and process of moving government shellfish oversight in states that have done just that.

In the late 1990s, Florida legislators reorganized the state's Game Commission and, with it, shellfish regulation. Today, Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission determines shellfish season, bag limits and size limits, while the state's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulates water classification, openings and closings, as well as processing plant certifications for shellfish.

"Along with talking to agency officials, I'm also talking to Florida shellfishermen to get their point of view about the changes," said Schiavinato. The initial report to the Louisiana Farm Bureau – which requested that LSG Legal research the issue – should be complete and submitted by late summer.

The next step will be to survey all Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference states that have either implemented these changes or are in the midst of considering agency oversight changes, and to compare their regulatory frameworks to Louisiana's.

Currently, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries regulates public oyster bed season openings and closings, harvesting licenses, shellfish size limits, as well as oyster bed leases. The Department of Health and Hospitals monitors oyster bed water quality.

The Louisiana Sea Grant Legal Project provides timely, relevant legal information to the diverse users of the state's coastal lands and waters, including state and local governments, coastal businesses, commercial fishers, recreational fishers, non-governmental organizations and the general public. The program's Web site is www.lsu.edu/sglegal. •



The Next Storm Surge

More than 500 local leaders, business owners and citizens participated in programs about how the next hurricane storm surge could affect Iberia, Vermilion and St. Mary parishes.

Talks and exhibits concerning hurricane vulnerability, flood zones, storm surge models and how the surge from Hurricane Rita washed over each parish – prepared by Louisiana Sea Grant, the Louisiana State University AgCenter, LSU Hurricane Center and LSU Department of Geography and Anthropology – were presented this summer in the communities' libraries, as well as to local officials and civic organizations. The exhibits, organized by LSG and AgCenter Marine Extension agent Thomas Hymel, remained on display in the libraries through the end of September.

"The program provided primary information, and from the public comments made, that was of vital importance," said Susan Hester Edmunds, community relations director for the Iberia Parish Library. "In the days following the program, there was a strong surge of activity at our branch library that is housing the exhibit."

"People were visiting other branches in hopes of viewing the maps. One family had no transportation. They walked to their local branch hoping to see the maps," she added.

One of the more popular items during the presentations were the "What-if" scenarios.

Those maps showed what local landmarks – Wal-Mart, Lowe's, the library – would get wet if the storm surge had been 1-, 2-, 3- or 8-feet higher.

"The flood prediction maps from Tom (Hymel) really helped folks see how inland flooding could go beyond what occurred from Hurricane Rita," said Dane Dartez with the LSU Hurricane Center. "All the storm surge models were eye openers to those who never understood the effects of surge."

Software also was installed on library computers so residents can look at local Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data. "The LIDAR elevation map installed on our library's computers and the map exhibition continues to draw in the public," said Edmunds.

"At the Vermilion Parish Library meeting, we didn't leave until 10 p.m. due to overwhelming interest in the LIDAR data," said Dartez.

When the exhibits end, all the maps and displays will go to local sheriff's offices to help them assess area flooding potential.

Using satellite images and geographical information systems (GIS), Hymel devel-

oped Hurricane Rita storm surge maps for St. Mary, Iberia and Vermilion parishes immediately following the storm. Originally created to help the agriculture industry assess damages and lobby for state and federal assistance, the maps caught the interest of the insurance industry, homeowners and schoolchildren. That interest evolved into this summer's public presentations.

"The visuals of the storm surge height are impressive and have moved coastal communities to action," said Paul Coreil, LSU AgCenter vice chancellor. "It's another testament to the value of Sea Grant and the AgCenter and our ability to be responsive to local and state needs at the right time." •



LSU graduate assistant Stephanie Pedro explains storm surge maps to residents in Iberia Parish.