



Department of Interior's [Oceans and Coastal](#) Newsletter

With the goal of enhancing cooperation between DOI bureaus, NewsWave is a forum to share news, information, and upcoming events related to ocean and coastal issues. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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DOI Participates Across the Country During International Coastal Cleanup Day

On September 20, DOI employees around the Nation participated in Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup. Acting Assistant Secretary Kameran Onley joined USGS and FWS employees in the St. Petersburg, Florida area to collect marine debris, as a contribution to International Coastal Clean Up Day (September 20, 2008). During the four hours of the clean up, Onley pulled in fishing line and other debris that littered the shores of islands managed by the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Onley remarked "It was a wonderful experience to work side by side with DOI folks who make a difference to the health of ocean and coastal ecosystems. It was really hard work pulling fishing line out of the mangrove." Onley also participated in opening ceremonies sponsored by The Ocean Conservancy and Tampa Bay Watch. "It was a great pleasure to introduce the Little Mermaid Public Service Announcement which encourages each and every citizen to do their part to clean up the oceans and coasts."



(Left to right) Peter Clark (Tampa Bay Watch), Kameran Onley (U.S. Department of the Interior), and Keith Ramos (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), armed with boathooks and keen eyes, prepare to retrieve fishing line from the mangrove trees of Little Bird Key.

Some of DOI's other key ICC activities include:

- **Cape Cod National Seashore** - local high school and a community organization sponsored clean-ups at one of the park's salt marshes and collected several pick-up beds full of debris
- **Olympic National Park** - 1,176 volunteers from [Washington Coast Savers](http://www.coastsavers.org/washington.html), a program of the Washington Clean Coast Alliance, removed 22.84 tons of marine from Washington's Pacific Coast. Visit <http://www.coastsavers.org/washington.html> to see the pictures.
- **Canaveral National Seashore** - 290 volunteers removed 2,800 pounds of debris from approximately 12 miles of beach
- **Gateway National Recreation Area** - 184 volunteers removed 3,200 pounds of garbage at sites that included Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge
- **Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area** - staff worked with 80 volunteers to collect and categorize debris to determine its source
- **Assateague National Seashore** - held a public event that was managed by Assateague Coastal Trust (<http://www.actforbays.org/>)
- **Padre Island National Seashore** - 400 volunteers collected 31 tons of trash from 4 miles of shoreline. It's estimated that an additional 500 tons of debris remains along the 65 miles of the seashore piled up due to recent hurricane activity
- **Gulf Islands National Seashore** - 406 volunteers removed over 6,000 pounds of debris from 10 miles of shoreline (<http://www.nps.gov/guis/parknews/23rd-international-coastal-cleanup.htm>).
- **Point Reyes National Seashore** - partnered with the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the Point Reyes National Seashore Association to coordinate 120 volunteers in removing over 250 pounds of debris from Limantour Beach.
- **Channel Islands National Park** - members of the Channel Islands Foundation gathered 963 pounds of trash from Santa Cruz Island.

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Sperm Whales Reside in Deepwater Gulf of Mexico

MMS recently released the results of a six-year \$9.3 million study on sperm whales, an endangered species living in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The Sperm Whale Seismic Study (SWSS) focused on the effects of seismic activities on sperm whales living in an area that is highly industrialized with oil and gas exploration and production activities. The study found that the Northern Gulf of Mexico sperm whales are a distinct stock and that they show no discernible seasonal migration. The study also did not find any horizontal avoidance of seismic sounds, meaning the whales did not alter their visible behavior on the surface when exposed to seismic sounds. "I am very pleased that MMS could add such a large volume of data on this endangered species to the scientific body of knowledge," said Randall Luthi, MMS director. "As oil and gas operations expand further into the deepwater Gulf of Mexico, it is essential for MMS to understand the marine mammals in their environment." Fifteen federal and state agencies, universities, and organizations collaborated to meet the study's objectives: establish baseline information about the whales' biology and behavior; characterize the whales' habitat and how the whales use their habitat; and determine possible changes in the whales' behavior when they experience human-made noise. SWSS was supported by the MMS under a cooperative agreement through the Texas A&M Research. To learn more about the MMS funded sperm whale research in the Gulf of Mexico visit: http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/regulate/envIRON/marmam/sperm_research.html To view the press release go to: <http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/whatsnew/newsreal/2008/080821.pdf>



MMS Photo

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Endangered Laysan Ducks at Midway NWR Died from Avian Botulism

Avian botulism was confirmed as the cause of the episodic die-off of Laysan Ducks on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The National Wildlife Health Center found the toxin in all eight samples sent to its facility in Madison, Wisconsin for analysis. With this diagnosis, FWS and USGS biologists are taking additional steps to control the outbreak and to possibly prevent outbreaks in the future. At this point the episode appears to be over with a total fatality of 145 ducks. 27 ducks were treated and released. In 2004 and 2005, 42 wild mostly juvenile ducks made a 750-mile Pacific voyage and were released at Midway Atoll as a conservation action to increase the rare island duck's geographic distribution and reduce its risk of extinction. The endangered Laysan duck is considered the rarest native waterfowl in the United States and occurs only within the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands' Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Laysan ducks were once widespread across the Hawaiian Islands, but by 1860, they were extirpated from all but Laysan Island in the Hawaiian Island NWR.



Laysan Duck and Chicks at Midway Atoll NWR. Photo: J. WILSON/USFWS

To view the press release go to:

<http://www.fws.gov/news/newsreleases/showNews.cfm?newsId=EC540645-05AE-1779-E13671380E835C82>

To learn more about the successful reintroduction of the Laysan duck at Midway visit:

<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1843>

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USGS Participates in Arctic Seafloor Mapping Cruise

Scientists from the USGS and Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) recently completed a two-ship expedition to map the Arctic seafloor, one of the least explored ocean regions. This research will shed light on the Arctic's geologic history and help define the limits of the U.S. and Canadian extended continental shelf—the part of the seafloor beyond 200 nautical miles where the Convention on the Law of the Sea grants to coastal nations certain sovereign rights. The USGS conducted data collection from September 6-October 1 on the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy*, a polar icebreaker with state-of-the-art seafloor mapping capabilities to explore continental shelf areas and deep ocean basins in the Arctic Ocean. The USGS kept a [blog](#), which included a journal, photos and video of the daily activities during the cruise. This is the fourth summer that the U.S. has collected data in the Arctic using *Healy* in support of defining the limits of its extended continental shelf. The data will also provide greater scientific insight into these relatively unexplored regions of the ocean. The NRCAN research effort, on the Canadian Coast Guard ice breaker *Louis S. St-Laurent*, used a seismic-reflection profiling system to examine the geology of the sub-seafloor. While working together, each vessel alternately broke ice for the other in order to optimize the data quality. In support of the extended continental shelf effort, another mapping expedition took place on *Healy* earlier this summer. Research is coordinated by the Extended Continental Shelf Task Force, an inter-agency organization led by the U.S. Department of State.



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy*. Photo: USGS



Polar bears seen from the *Healy*. Photo: J. Robertson/USGS

For the full USGS article visit:

<http://soundwaves.usgs.gov/2008/09/fieldwork2.html>

To read Jessica's blog visit:

<http://www.usgs.gov/journals/arctic/>

To learn more about this multiyear effort visit:

<http://www.state.gov/g/oes/continentalshelf/>.

Additional information about the September cruise is on the [Scientists Map Unexplored Arctic Sea Floor](#) Web page AT <http://walrus.wr.usgs.gov/news/lawofthesea/>.

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MMS Inspection and Enforcement Actions Result in Sentencing of California Offshore Oil and Gas Operator

A multi-year investigation by the Minerals Management Service (MMS), the Department of the Interior's Office of the Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Justice, resulted with the sentencing of Pacific Operators Offshore, LLC for violation of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Lands Act. The company, which pled guilty to the criminal violation, was ordered to pay a fine of \$450,000 and will serve a 5-year probationary period for use of a Gas Lift Line (GLL) in direct contradiction to an MMS order. "The MMS is committed to safe and environmentally sound operations on the Outer Continental Shelf," said Randall Luthi, Director of the MMS. "The sentencing imposed by the court will send a clear message to all operators on the OCS that protecting the environment is a top priority for the MMS. We will not tolerate activities that undermine our Nation's commitment to the environment." In 2000, MMS notified Pacific Operators Offshore, the operator of two platforms offshore California, that the GLL was not fit for service. The MMS also informed the company that if they intended to utilize the gas line in the future, they would be required

to submit a repair plan for MMS's approval. Continued use of the GLL was judged to pose a significant workforce safety risk. In 2002, MMS Inspectors determined that the GLL was, in fact, still being used by Pacific Operators Offshore, and MMS referred the matter to the Office of Inspector General for criminal investigation. The protection of the environment and assurance of human safety are top priorities for the MMS, the agency responsible for regulation of the Nation's offshore energy resources. The goal of the MMS OCS Civil/Criminal Penalties Program is to ensure safe and clean operations on the OCS. Through the pursuit, assessment, and collection of civil penalties and referrals for the consideration of criminal penalties, the program is designed to encourage compliance with OCS statutes and regulations.

<http://www.mms.gov/ooc/press/2008/press1010a.htm>

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Upcoming Meetings and Events of Interest

Coastal Cities Summit 2008: November 17-20, 2008, St. Petersburg, Florida. One of the most challenging issues facing the ocean today is rapid coastal urbanization whose implications have yet to be assessed. Today, the majority of the world's population lives within sixty kilometers of the coast line and this is steadily increasing. Organized by the International Ocean Institute, the summit will address these topics in depth while bringing together public officials, nongovernmental organization, citizens and natural and social scientists to consider the values and vulnerabilities of coastal regions around the globe. For more information visit the conference website at: <http://www.coastalcities.org>.

World Ocean Conference 2009: May 11-15, 2009, Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The World Ocean Conference (WOC) 2009 is a forum for the world community to discuss current issues in the marine field particularly those related to climate change. For more information visit the conference website: <http://www.woc2009.org>

Coastal Zone '09: July 19-23, 2009, Boston, MA. Our coastal and ocean landscape is changing, whether it's the climate, shoreline, habitat, or even the people setting and implementing policy. The attendees of Coastal Zone 09 will explore the many facets of change and share tools and information to help in managing our changing coastal and ocean resources. For more information visit the conference website: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cz/abstracts.html>.

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[DOI Ocean and Coastal Calendar – events, meetings, workshops, and other important dates](#)

To submit a story for next month's NewsWave contact bret_wolfe@fws.gov. Suggestions and comments are also welcome. We are also producing a DOI Oceans calendar to be accessed via the DOI oceans [website](#). Please forward details of any upcoming meetings or events concerning ocean, estuarine, or coastal issues.

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To learn more about the ocean and coastal activities of the participating agencies visit their websites:



National Park Service



Minerals Management Service



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Office of Insular Affairs



U.S. Geological Survey



Bureau of Land Management