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## U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PROPOSES POLAR BEAR CRITICAL HABITAT

On October 22, the FWS announced a proposal to designate critical habitat for the polar bear, and opened a 60-day public comment period on the measure. The total area proposed for critical habitat designation is approximately 200,541 square miles and includes barrier island habitat, sea ice habitat and terrestrial denning habitat within lands and waters of the U.S.

“This Administration is fully committed to the protection and recovery of the polar bear,” said Interior Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks Tom Strickland. “Proposing critical habitat for this iconic species is one step in the right direction to help this species stave off extinction, recognizing that the greatest threat to the polar bear is the melting of Arctic sea ice caused by climate change. As we move forward with a comprehensive energy and climate strategy, we will continue to work to protect the polar bear and its fragile environment.”

The polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*), or “nanuq,” as the Inuit call it, is the world’s largest terrestrial carnivore. Found throughout the Arctic Circle and adjacent land masses, the polar bear spends much of its life at sea, hunting seals along the perimeter of the polar ice pack. The bears are one of eight species for which the FWS is responsible under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Concerns about declining sea ice prompted their listing in 2008 as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.



(Susan Miller/USFWS)

To read the full press release go to:

<http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2009/pdf/PBCritHabPropNRFINAL.pdf>

Upon publication of the rule in the *Federal Register*, public comments can be submitted using one of the two methods below:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> (follow the instructions for submitting comments).
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery to Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R7-ES-2009-2042; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

On October 19, members of the President’s Ocean Policy Task Force attended a public hearing at the Audobon Aquarium of the Americas, a unique aquarium located on Riverwalk in New Orleans. Principals representing the Task Force included Laura Davis (DOI), Dr. Jane Lubchenco (NOAA), and Bob Sussman (EPA). The hearing was extended to satellite access sites in St Petersburg, FL, Dauphin Island, AL, Ocean Springs, MS and Corpus Christi, TX. Over three hours of comments were heard from a diverse cross section of stakeholders representing interests throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

Witnesses invited to speak at the meeting included Gary LaGrange, president and chief executive officer of the Port of New Orleans and Robert Twilley, the associate vice chancellor

for research at Louisiana State University. “Although the coast can’t be rebuilt to what it once was, we can build a smarter coastal footprint,” Twilley said. Paul Harrison, senior director for the Mississippi River for Environmental Defense Fund, said it’s important for the task force to understand that the health of the Gulf of Mexico is tied to the health of the Mississippi River delta.

U.S. Senator Mary L. Landrieu, D-La., released a statement coinciding with the hearing saying, “The Task Force should view our coordinated efforts in Louisiana as a model for the nation.” See Sen. Landrieu’s full statement at: <http://landrieu.senate.gov/releases/09/2009A19809.html>.

Read [Nancy Sutley’s blog](#) about the New Orleans event. The last public



(From left) Cheryl Brodnax (NOAA) , Jane Lubchenco (NOAA), Nancy Sutley, (Chair of CEQ) and Coast Guard Rear Admiral Mary E. Landry, touring Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge with biologist James Harris. (Chuck Cook, *The Times-Picayune*)

meeting, representing the Great Lakes region, was held on October 29 in Cleveland.

To view information about the hearings go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans/>

## VANCOUVER AQUARIUM BECOMES COASTAL AMERICA LEARNING CENTER

On October 21, the [Coastal America Partnership](#) designated the [Vancouver Aquarium](#) as the 23<sup>rd</sup> [Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center](#) (CELC) and the first in Canada. This honor recognizes the aquarium for its display and interpretation of the natural world and its work to educate and engage the public in conservation efforts. The CELC network was established in 1996. The sites are selected to serve as regional educational centers that work closely with the United States’ federal partners to educate the public about the nature and value of coastal resources.

Some commitments the Coastal America partners already have in place include initiatives to address salmon management, invasive species, marine debris, and marine protected areas. Commitments have also been made for collaborative outreach efforts related to environmental issues of regional significance. As a learning center, the

Vancouver Aquarium, together with the Seattle Aquarium, will help focus cross-border issues related to Puget Sound and the Georgia Basin. Additionally, the U.S. EPA will offer time to Environment Canada and the Vancouver Aquarium onboard an ocean survey vessel to support research and monitoring projects in shared waters.

At a formal signing ceremony, Vancouver Aquarium president Dr. John Nightingale said, “We are honored to receive this designation. In addition to expanded public education, our status as a Coastal America Learning Center will also enable scientific collaboration on ocean and coastal issues with US federal agencies and network partners. It is an opportunity for Canada to strengthen our leadership in this critical area.”

This designation is especially prestigious for the partnership. The



John Nightingale, president of Vancouver Aquarium (second from left) along with other officials at the designation ceremony. (John Healey/Vancouver Aquarium)

Vancouver Aquarium is Canada’s largest aquarium and as a CELC it will significantly increase the ability of the network to reach an expanded public. Partnering with the Coastal America federal agencies will enhance Vancouver Aquarium’s ability to educate the public about important ocean and coastal issues. More than four million visitors have toured the Aquarium since 2005.



## CELEBRATING NATIONAL ESTUARIES DAY

In commemoration of National Estuaries Day on September 23, Sam Hamilton, Director of the FWS, joined [Restore America's Estuaries](#) (RAE), and more than 100 guests from the government, non-profit, academic and private sectors, for a reception in the United States Capitol. The event was co-hosted by U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and U.S. Representative Kathy Castor (D-FL). It recognized the critical importance of the nation's estuaries—in particular the need to protect and restore them.

Estuaries are critical to the health of coastal ecosystems and economies. They provide spawning and nursery areas for recreational and commercial fish species, nesting and brooding habitat for migratory birds and protect communities from flooding caused by storm surges and sea-level rise. National Estuaries Day is celebrated each year on the last Saturday in September.

For more information about Restore America's Estuaries, visit <http://www.estuaries.org>.



From left to right: U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor (FL), Jeff Benoit, President and CEO, Restore America's Estuaries and Sam Hamilton, Director, USFWS speak during the Celebrating America's Estuaries reception.  
(Alex Robbins/Restore America's Estuaries)

## FWS COASTAL PROGRAM CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the Service's [Coastal Program](#) provides strategic conservation planning and assistance in coastal areas and works closely with Restore America's Estuaries as well as its member organizations. The Coastal Program is one of the Service's most popular and effective programs for voluntary, locally-based habitat restoration and protection efforts. Coastal ecosystems comprise less than 10 percent of the nation's land area, yet support 75 percent of migratory birds, nearly 80 percent of fish and shellfish and almost half of threatened and endangered species, including the rare piping plover and West Indian manatee. The program is a vital tool in helping to recover listed species and maintaining populations of candidate species that depend on coastal habitats.

The following are just a few of the activities the Service is affecting through this vital program:

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 the Coastal Program received approximately \$5 million which is being used to

support 24 habitat restoration projects in 10 coastal states. These efforts will help stimulate the economy, support fish and wildlife recovery goals and address communities' conservation priorities.

The Coastal Program is also working with The Galveston Bay Foundation to conduct a marsh habitat restoration project in Burnet Bay. The bay is considered to be an excellent nursery habitat for several important fish and shellfish species. The project will restore marsh functions and provide water quality improvements and shoreline protection. In addition, this project implements the high-priority actions continued in the Galveston Bay National Estuary Plan's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and the Galveston Bay Foundation's Habitat Conservation Blueprint. Both plans were developed in consultation with a wide diversity of stakeholders.

The Service also serves as a member of the interagency [Estuary Habitat Restoration Council](#), which is responsible for implementing the Estuary Restoration Act (ERA) of



2000. The goal of the ERA and the Council is to help reverse the deterioration of the health of America's estuaries by restoring essential habitat. The Service is also a lead-sponsor of the RAE National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration, the premier national conference on restoring coastal habitat. This November, the group Save Narragansett Bay is hosting a National Coastal Program Workshop in Providence, Rhode Island, and the Service is providing partnership support.

To learn more about the Service's Coastal Program, including the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, visit <http://www.fws.gov/coastal>

For additional information, contact Vanessa Kauffman, public affairs specialist, USFWS, at (703) 358-2138; [vanessa\\_kauffman@fws.gov](mailto:vanessa_kauffman@fws.gov).

## USGS LAUNCHES WEBSITE TO SUPPORT REMOTE-SENSING AND MAPPING

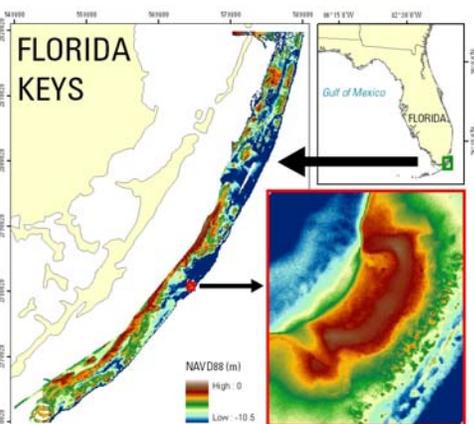
The [USGS Coastal and Marine Geology Program](#) has launched a new Website to support the [Decision Support for Coastal Science and Management](#) project. This project provides data products and details about the capabilities of various USGS remote-sensing technologies to help support research and decision making regarding important coastal and marine resources. This detailed up-to-date topographic data is valuable to coastal managers and emergency planners in low-lying regions that are vulnerable to flooding from hurricanes and other storms. The data also serves as a baseline for evaluating resources and tracking the effectiveness of resource- and conservation-management decisions.

At the core of the project is the Experimental Advanced Airborne

Research Lidar (EAARL) that collects and processes highly detailed elevation information. The EAARL system is unique in that it can simultaneously map elevations of both the land and the seafloor in clear shallow waters including features such as buildings, trees, coral reefs, or other submerged features.

The data can be used to describe the topographic complexity of a barrier island or to monitor changes caused by extreme storms. Since 2001, the technology has been used to [survey coral reefs in the Florida Keys](#). These data have enabled scientists to assess coral reef health by measuring differences in topographic roughness.

The Decision Support for Coastal Science and Management project is uniquely suited to serve various



partners and resource managers by providing fundamental information to address today's coastal and marine resource questions and challenges. To learn more about these and other USGS mapping technologies and their applications visit: <http://ngom.usgs.gov/dsp/>.

## USGS'S MOLOKA'I CORAL REEF REPORT RECEIVES MULTIPLE HONORS

The USGS report *The Coral Reef of South Moloka'i, Hawai'i-Portrait of a Sediment-Threatened Fringing Reef* has been selected as the Outstanding Publication of 2009 by the [Association of Earth Science Editors \(AESE\)](#). AESE's more than 250 member organizations include the editors of most of the North American earth-science journals; editing and publishing personnel with state, federal, and provincial geological surveys, professional societies, and commercial firms; and others interested in earth science publishing. The USGS also received an *Award of Excellence for 2009* from the [National Association of Government Communicators](#) a national not-for-profit professional association of federal, state and local government employees who disseminate information within and outside

government. Its members are editors, writers, graphic artists, videographers, marketers, broadcasters, photographers, information specialists and agency spokespersons.

The report is intended to inform the people of Moloka'i about what is happening to their reef and what they might do to preserve their vital resources. The scientific data and interpretations are expressed in clear and comprehensible language, free of the professional jargon that makes most technical publications impenetrable to the public yet without loss of scientific rigor.

Congratulations to Michael Field, Susan Cochran, Joshua Logan, Curt Storlazzi and everyone in the USGS publishing group.



To access the Moloka'i Coral Reef report go to:

<http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2007/5101/>

### **Ocean Quote of the Month**

“On Hawaii: The loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean”

**Mark Twain**

## U.S. TO SUPPORT LISTING ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

Tom Strickland, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, has announced that the U.S. will support Monaco's proposal to list the Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) in Appendix I of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). A CITES Appendix-I listing affords a species stringent protection and prohibits all international commercial trade. Strickland will lead the United States' delegation to the regular meeting of the CITES parties from March 13-24, 2010 in Doha, Qatar.

"We understand the dire situation with respect to Atlantic bluefin tuna, and the U.S. intends to vigorously support Monaco's proposal at the upcoming CITES Conference," Strickland said.

Bluefins are found in two distinct stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas, particularly the Mediterranean Sea. The species is highly sought for the global sashimi market often bringing in tens of thousands of dollars for a single fish. Bluefins are increasingly targeted by illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing (IUU) and increased demand has led to approximately 75% declines of both stocks. The majority of this decline has occurred over the last 10 years.

The management of the bluefin tuna is regulated by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), an inter-governmental regional fishery management organization with 48 member nations. The U.S. will be pursuing stricter regulation of bluefin tuna fishing at the next meeting of



(NOAA)

ICCAT from November 6-15 in Recife, Brazil.

"The eyes of the world will be focused on ICCAT and its effectiveness in addressing the threats of extinction for bluefin tuna," Strickland noted. "Unless, ICCAT adopts significantly strengthened management and compliance measures, specifically measures to address IUU harvest, the United States will exert complete and vigorous support for Monaco's CITES Appendix I listing proposal."

To view the DOI Press Release go to: [http://www.doi.gov/news/09\\_News\\_Releases/101409c.html](http://www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/101409c.html)

## MMS STUDY POSITIVELY IDENTIFIES GIANT SQUID PRESENCE IN GULF OF MEXICO

During a recent research cruise, a rare giant squid was captured in the Gulf of Mexico. The research cruise was partially funded through an interagency agreement between the MMS and NOAA. The 19.5 foot long, 103 pound squid was caught at a water depth of more than 1,500 feet in a special trawl net pulled by the NOAA vessel *Gordon Gunter* during a pilot study for the MMS, "[Sperm Whale Acoustic Prey Study](#)."

Additional field work for the "Sperm Whale Acoustic Prey Study" is scheduled for early 2010. A survey to assess the relationship between sperm whales and their prey based on lessons learned from this pilot study will be conducted.

The two-year, \$550,000 MMS prey study hopes to identify the species composition and biomass of squid and fish that represent the feeding base for sperm whales in the Gulf of Mexico.

Photos of the squid were sent to experts around the nation to confirm the specimen was indeed the *Architeuthis* (Ar-chi-teu-this) species. The giant squid is now at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History where it will be studied.

Read the official MMS Press Release at: <http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/whatsnew/newsreal/2009/090921.pdf>



Scientists with giant squid aboard the R/V *Gordon Gunter*. (NOAA)

For more information about ocean and coastal activities at DOI contact:

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## DOI Ocean and Coastal Button Contest

Answer the question below to receive a prize. Submit your answer to [DOINewswave@ios.doi.gov](mailto:DOINewswave@ios.doi.gov) and be sure to include the mailing address where you'd like your prize sent.



### This Month's Question.

**What percentage of the world's fresh surface water is contained in the Great Lakes?**

Last month's question: What is the tallest mountain on earth from base to peak? Hint: It's not Mt. Everest.

**ANSWER:** Rising an astonishing 33,476 feet (10,203 meters) from the depths of the Pacific Ocean floor, Mauna Kea on the Island of Hawaii is 1355 m (0.84 miles) taller than Mt. Everest.

The DOI Ocean and Coastal Activities Office has a new e-mail address. Please send your articles, questions, and comments to: [DOINewswave@ios.doi.gov](mailto:DOINewswave@ios.doi.gov).

**International Meeting on Marine Resources 09**, Peniche, Portugal, Nov. 16-18, 2009. The IMMR 2009 was planned to communicate the new scientific knowledge on marine resources for the understanding and sustainability of our planet. The scientific program will focus on innovative research in fisheries management, aquaculture, conservation and biodiversity, marine biotechnology, seafood technology and also on new resources areas.

(<http://www.immr09.ipleiria.pt/>)

**Alaska Marine Science Symposium**, Anchorage, AK, Jan. 18-22, 2010. Alaska's premier interdisciplinary marine science conference. Provides opportunities for scientists from Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, the Nation, and beyond to inform each other about their research activities in the marine regions off Alaska. ([www.alaskamarinescience.org](http://www.alaskamarinescience.org))

**2010 Ocean Sciences Meeting**, Portland, OR. Feb. 22-26, 2010. Stewardship of marine resources in the 21st Century demands the development of predictive tools based on models and field observations. The challenge of developing these tools forms the theme of the 2010 Ocean Sciences meeting. (<http://www.agu.org/meetings/os10/>)

**National Marine Educators Association (NMEA) Conference**, Gatlinburg, TN, July 18-23, 2010. From the mountains to the sea. The Tennessee Educators of Aquatic and Marine Science (TEAMS) invite you to Gatlinburg, Tennessee at the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. (<http://www.nmeaweb.org/gatlinburg2010/>)

**Send an email to [DOINewswave@ios.doi.gov](mailto:DOINewswave@ios.doi.gov) to be added to the new DOI Ocean and Coastal Activities SharePoint site (DOI employees only). This site includes our events calendar, past NewsWaves and other information resources.**



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