

Marine Debris

MARINE DEBRIS PROGRAM NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

NOAA

GULF

Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project



Project Background

During the 2005 hurricane season, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita inflicted severe damage on the Gulf of Mexico coastal region and deposited huge amounts of debris over large areas of the Gulf coast. This submerged marine debris poses a persistent hazard to vessel traffic and can adversely affect commercially viable fishing grounds.

In an effort to restore fishing grounds and improve navigational safety, Congress directed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Coast Survey (OCS) and Office of Response and Restoration (ORR) to survey and map the impacted Gulf coast areas. Survey work began in September 2006 in Alabama, Mississippi, and Eastern Louisiana and by the end of the first phase over 5,000 submerged potential debris items, referred to as contacts, were identified, mapped, and posted on the project Web site to advise boaters and assist with marine debris removal.

Efforts in Louisiana

In 2008 these efforts continue in Louisiana.

NOAA's ORR and OCS are cooperating closely with the United States Coast Guard (USCG), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) to survey the majority of the offshore areas of Louisiana's coastline, map the new sonar contacts, and post them on the project Web site. Contacts requiring additional investigation are re-surveyed with multi-beam sonar, which provides more accurate contact depth as well as a multi-dimensional visualization of the debris item found. Contacts considered a danger to navigation (DTON) are listed as such and promptly reported to the USCG for inclusion in a Local Notice to Mariners (LNM).



Removal of marine debris from Lake Pontchartrain. Photo courtesy of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Web site and Outreach

The information gathered is publicized through the project's Web site, supported by NOAA's National Coastal Data Development Center in Stennis, MS. The site provides both static maps and GPS coordinates that can easily be downloaded and printed as well as an interactive mapping option where users can zoom in to a specific area and select a contact icon to access more information.



Project Web site of South Louisiana with offshore survey areas.

www.MarineDebris.noaa.gov



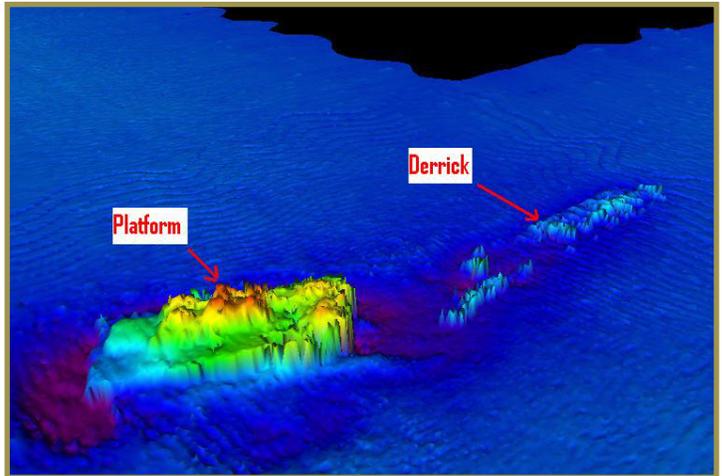
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The data analysis Web page provides a summary of contacts found to date, displaying their density and a graph of sizes for each map tile. In addition, the project team, in close cooperation with Louisiana Sea Grant, is undertaking an outreach effort to make local stakeholders aware of the survey and mapping efforts, and contacts found.

Removal Efforts

The USCG, in cooperation with FEMA, NOAA, state agencies, and Louisiana parishes, is conducting a large-scale survey and removal effort of Katrina and Rita-related debris items within inshore waterways. After environmental review and consultation and evaluation by Federal and state agencies, debris removal is conducted using best practices to minimize harm to habitat. Maps and photos generated by this effort are also posted on the project's Web site.



Multi-beam image of a sunken platform and derrick off the coast of Louisiana.
Photo courtesy of NOAA Office of Coast Survey

Critical Information

- An area 750 square nautical miles was mapped in the first phase of the survey from Perdido Bay, AL, to Lake Borgne, LA.
- Approximately 850 square nautical miles are being surveyed in Louisiana in the second phase of the survey, from the Chandeleur Islands west to the Texas border.
- The project's Web site provides survey maps that display the exact location and estimated depth, length, and volume of survey contacts found in offshore waters in Louisiana.
- Inshore waterway survey and removal efforts are posted on the Web site, and include maps of waterways surveyed and photos of debris found.
- Marine debris survey and removal in Louisiana is a close cooperation of Federal and State agencies, as well as local entities and private industry.



Damaged vessel in Bayou Thomas. *Photo courtesy of USCG.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Visit <http://gulfofmexico.marinedebris.noaa.gov> for the most current data, maps, and project updates where users can access printable maps indicating debris location and abundance.

The NOAA Marine Debris Program works with other NOAA offices, as well as other federal, state, and local agencies and private sector partners to support national, state, local and international efforts to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources, oceans, and coastal waterways from the impacts of marine debris.