



Atlantic CoastWatch

Oil Spill Echoes from the Gulf

On March 31, before hell broke loose in the Gulf of Mexico, **President Obama** announced that he would approve significant oil and gas explorations off America’s coasts, while keeping some key preserves off-limits. In particular, the moratorium that has been in effect along the entire eastern seaboard since the 1980s would be lifted from central Florida up to the border of New Jersey.

The **Chesapeake Bay Foundation** lost little time in expressing its disapproval of drilling along the shores of Virginia and Maryland. Senators from the coastal states of New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maryland, Delaware, and Florida sided with environmentalists, saying the change would adversely affect fisheries and tourism in their states.

Detractors also pointed out that the economic benefits are not that evident. Even President Obama stressed in his remarks “the fact is that with less than 2 percent of oil reserves, but more than 20 percent of world consumption, drilling alone cannot come close to meeting our long term energy needs.” Said the *New York Times*: “The new production, if and when it occurs, will displace only a small fraction of the oil and gas the country now imports and consumes.” Furthermore, the paper continued, “much of the oil and gas may not be recoverable at current prices and may be prohibitively expensive even if oil prices spike.”
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Severe Hurricane Season Looms

This Atlantic hurricane season has a 70% probability of producing 14-23 named storms (top winds of 39 mph or higher), 8-14 hurricanes (top winds of 74 mph or higher) and 3-7 major hurricanes (winds at 111 mph or higher). If the upper numbers are reached, 2010 will be “one of the most active seasons on record,” said the Climate Prediction Center, **NOAA**. The above average forecast is based largely on the weakening of El Nino and warmer sea surface temperatures than last year.

Sea temperatures “are running at near-record levels,” according to a forecast from **Philip J. Klotzbach** and **William M. Gray** of **Colorado State University**. Their June 2 forecast predicted 18 named storms (average is 9.6), 10 hurricanes (average is 5.9), and five major hurricanes (average is 2.3).

May - June 2010

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Sayings

*(What follows, by **Josh Harkinson** with assistance from **Kate Shepard**, originally appeared in **Mother Jones** magazine, www.motherjones.com. This slightly shortened version is presented here with their permission.)*

For most of the 20th century, Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, was known for its boardwalk, amusement park and wide, sandy beaches, popular with daytrippers from Washington, D.C. “The bathing beach has a frontage of three miles,” boasted a tourist brochure from about 1900, “and is equal, if not superior, to any beach on the Atlantic Coast.” Today, on a cloudless spring afternoon, the resort town’s sweeping view of Chesapeake Bay is no less stunning. But there’s no longer any beach in Chesapeake Beach. Where there once was sand, water now laps against a seven-foot-high wall of boulders protecting a strip of pricey homes. Surveying the armored shoreline, **Jim Titus** explains how the natural sinking of the shoreline and slow but steady sea-level rise, mostly due to climate change, have driven the bay’s water more than a foot higher over the past century. Reinforcing the eroding shore with a sea wall held the water back, but it also choked off the natural supply of sand that had replenished the beach. What sand remained gradually sank beneath the rising water.

Titus, the **EPA**’s resident expert on sea-level rise, first happened upon Maryland’s disappearing beaches 15 years ago while looking for a place to windsurf. “Having the name beach,” he discovered, “is not a very good predictor of having a beach.” Since then, he’s kept an eye out for other beach towns that have lost their namesakes—Maryland’s Masons Beach and Tolchester Beach, North Carolina’s Pamlico Beach, and many others. A 54-year old with a thick shock of hair and sturdy build, Titus could pass for a vacationer in his Panama hat, khakis and polo shirt. But as he picks his way over the rocky shore, he’s anything but relaxed.

For nearly 30 years, Titus has been sounding the alarm about our rising oceans. Global warming is melting polar ice, adding to the volume of the oceans, as well as warming up seawater, causing it to expand. Most climatologists expect oceans around the world to rise between 1.5 and 5 feet this century. Some of the hardest-hit areas could be in our own backyard: Erosion and a shift in ocean currents could cause water to rise 4 feet or more along much of the East Coast.

Like his occasional collaborator, **NASA** climatologist **James Hansen**, Titus has decided to speak out. He’s crisscrossed the country to meet with state and local officials in coastal areas, urging them to start planning now for the slow-motion flood. Yet his warnings have mostly fallen on deaf ears. “We were often told by midlevel officials that their bosses did not want to plan for anything past the next election,” he says.

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Courts & the Seashore

⌘ The **University of Virginia** has filed a motion in Charlottesville, Virginia, arguing that **Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli** has exceeded his authority under state law and intrudes on First Amendment grounds with his demand for materials from UVA. Cuccinelli, using Virginia's Fraud Against Taxpayers Act, wants to know whether **Michael Mann**, a professor at UVA from 1999-2005 and now a **Penn State** climatologist, defrauded taxpayers when he received grants to fund his research, alleging that Mann tampered with data to reach his conclusions about global warming. Mann co-authored the "hockey stick" graph, which showed a rapid post-1900 increase in the Earth's temperature.

Penn State conducted a four-month investigation into the allegations, and found Mann completely innocent of research misconduct. Many worry that Cuccinelli's actions will deter scientists from studying politically controversial fields. Over 800 Virginia academics and scientists signed a letter in late May 2010 urging the Attorney General to drop the investigation.

Oil Spill Echoes (continued from p. 1)

Later Obama reversed his decision in light of the **BP** oil spill, canceling planned sales of drilling rights off the Virginia coast, only 50 miles from the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay. Politicians starting with Maryland's **Senator Benjamin L. Cardin** applauded that switch, going on to call for a full moratorium on all new drilling until a review of **Minerals Management Service** procedures has been completed as well as for "a full scale civil and criminal investigation into the oil spill."

What sharpened the tone of the Atlantic coastal discussion was the possibility that, even without new offshore drilling in the region, beaches and fisheries from eastern Florida to Maryland could be affected by the Deepwater Horizon disaster. If oil from the spill were to reach the southern tip of Florida, scientists said, small tarballs could get sucked into the northward-flowing Gulf Stream, possibly spinning off onto beaches south of Cape Hatteras. Though it would take "unusual and sustained northerly winds" to have that occur, geologist **Larry Atkinson** told the *Virginian-Pilot*, "stranger things have happened."

Even in Maryland, less likely to be affected since the Gulf Stream swings northeastward off Cape Hatteras out toward open water, precautionary steps are being taken. Calling emergency officials and state Cabinet members to a review session, **Governor Martin O'Malley** said that the risk of an oil plume entering the Chesapeake Bay was slight, he told the *Annapolis Capital*. "But this whole accident itself was supposed to be a minimal risk. I wanted us to be prepared."

People

V.J. (Jim) Henry, devoted to the preservation of the Georgia coast and founding board member of the **Center for a Sustainable Coast**, died in Savannah at age 78. One of his recent efforts was trying to retain the former Cumberland Island Wilderness, presently impinged by commerce. Among Henry's many academic positions, he was chair, Department of Geology, **Georgia State University**.

Les Line, longtime editor of the much-praised *Audubon* magazine, died at age 74. A ferociously competitive journalist who sought to broaden the magazine's coverage beyond birds, the central concern of its sponsor the **National Audubon Society**, Line found himself in frequent tiffs with its management and with others on the staff. To the indignation of many who admired the magazine's beauty and brash content, Line was fired in 1991 after 30 years of service. Later relations between him and his colleagues warmed, reported the *New York Times*, and the magazine resumed publishing his articles.

Awards

Winner of two LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold awards from the **US Green Building Council** were the \$54 million Center for Biotechnology and the \$154 million **FM Global** headquarters at the **University of Rhode Island**, the *Providence Journal* said. The energy efficiency measures in the Center building save about \$135,000

per year in energy costs, the *Providence Business News* stated.

George M. Woodwell, renowned for his studies of ecological systems and interests in global environmental issues and policies, has been given the 2010 Land Conservation Award by the **Open Space Institute**. Founder of the **Woods Hole Research Center** and previously director of the Ecosystems Center at the **Marine Biological Laboratory** in Woods Hole, MA, he was previously a senior scientist at **Brookhaven National Laboratories**.

Winner of this year's Grantham Prize, for excellence in environmental journalism, is the Canadian author **Alana Mitchell** for her book *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*.

Species & Habitats

An encouraging example of reef recovery comes from the Caribbean nation of Belize, whose reef system is viewed as one of the most endangered in the world. In an effort to counter the effects of overfishing and coral bleaching prevalent in this corner of the Caribbean, the government of Belize established an 87,000 acre Marine Protected Area around The Glover's Reef atoll about 28 miles off the coast. With fishing already severely restricted in the area, an additional 20% of the site was designated as a no-take zone. Enforcement of the rules is difficult because the Belize Fisheries Department has only four rangers in charge of policing the area. But, reports the *New York Times*, scientists

Media

⌘ New from **NOAA** is its evolving, interactive website titled *State of the Coast* (SOTC), whose purpose is to “highlight the crucial importance of healthy coastal ecosystems to a robust US economy, a safe population, and a sustainable quality of life for coastal residents. The site covers what we know about coastal communities, ecosystems and economies, linking data to information about climate change impacts.” NOAA advises users to “visit frequently as the site continues to grow and be updated.” <http://stateofthecoast.noaa.gov>

⌘ Even without offshore drilling or oil spills, shoreline residents have plenty to worry about from pollution, flooding, hurricane damage, and sea-level rise. An instructive summary of what can be done by citizens appears in the Spring 2010 issue of *Coastal Heritage*, the quarterly publication of the **South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium**. It highlights the useful discussions of a group called the **Kitchen Table Climate Study Group** in McLellanville, SC, which meets monthly to keep up with scientific findings and discusses the pros and cons of available remedial options.

⌘ *Schooner: Building a Wooden Boat on Martha's Vineyard* chronicles over fourteen years taken to conceive and hand build a 60-foot wooden schooner, the largest boat built on Martha's Vineyard in 100 years. *Rebecca* was the largest boat ever built by **Gannon and Benjamin**, the *Cape Codder* noted. The building process was recorded and photographed by the author, **Tom Dunlop**, and the photographer, **Alison Shaw**. “You may never own or even sail on a boat like *Rebecca*, but you'll never look at such boats the same way again,” *Capecodonline* commented.

⌘ *The Missing Centimetre: One Family's Atlantic Sailing Adventure* (Outworn Creed, 2009) by **Leon Schultz** combines sailing a 40 foot Hallberg-Rassy with a look at the return to life on land. This book describes the family's fears of their first Atlantic crossing and details the building confidence of each individual's cruising skills. Schultz, a *Cruising World* contributor, discusses preparing the family for the adventure as well as the split from house, job, school, and friends. The author gives one family's answer to the question why sail the oceans.

With Appreciation

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Federal Action on Chesapeake

On May 11, the **EPA** legally bound itself to reduce pollution to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, covering territory from Upstate New York to the Shenandoah Valley. The agreement, combined with a 2009 Obama Administration Executive Order empowering EPA to set more stringent standards and to penalize the six relevant states (plus the District of Columbia) that fail to meet them, includes creating a mandate that sets maximum daily limits on nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment flow contributions to the Bay. Each state must develop its own compliance plan. Historically, water pollution control laws have targeted only point source pollution (e.g., factory and sewage treatment plant output). Bills currently before Congress would give, for the first time, federal and state governments authority over a spectrum of polluters, including the greatest Bay pollution contributor, agriculture, as well the runner up, urban and suburban runoff.

The Last Maine Sardine

Bumble-Bee Foods closed the doors of their plant in Prospect Harbor, Maine in April. This was the last sardine (herring) cannery in the US. The State of Maine had as many as 50 canneries in its heyday in the early 1950's before depletion of the resource set in and a fast-diminishing number of canneries began looking to Canada for stock. "Around the world," said *Maine Boats, Homes, and Harbors* magazine, "sardines, fresh or canned, remain a staple of many diets. Many herring-like fish are canned as sardines; the exact definition of a sardine is elusive, with many producing countries claiming the superiority of the species they use." Bumble Bee used the Atlantic herring.

An article on the subject in the *Bangor Daily News* elicited 103 comments, many of them bemoaning the end of a proud era and reflecting rage at the quota imposed on the catch of herring by the **New England Fishery Management Council**, which went from 180,000 metric tons in 2004 to 91,000 for this year. Wrote one blogger: "The fish ain't there, that's why it's the last cannery." Bumble Bee blamed the federal quota, not scarcity of the resource, as the reason for the closure.

Marcellus Drilling Rules Tighten

With worries mounting about the consequences of natural gas drilling in northern Appalachia's vast Marcellus Shale (*Atlantic Coast-Watch* March-April 2010), states are tightening the rules. Pennsylvania, says *The Associated Press*, proposes to "prevent pollutants in briny drilling wastewater from further tainting public waterways and household drinking water." Said **Environmental Protection Secretary John Hanger**: "Drilling wastewater is incredibly nasty wastewater."

from the **Wildlife Conservation Society** in the Bronx, which helped establish this reserve in 1993, are seeing beneficial results. Not only are the fish stocks recovering within the no-take reserve, but they are re-populating areas outside the zone as well. Sea life in general is abundant, ray numbers are recovering, and shark populations, in severe decline elsewhere, are stable. This June, even the "critically endangered" Goliath Grouper--five feet long--was seen around a Glover's reef wall.

The seafood industry is looking at real and predicted effects of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and they already extend far beyond the Gulf. In New Jersey, menus will have homegrown seafood for the short term. But, the *Star-Ledger* observed, "What people need to worry about is shrimp two years from now, three years from now," as the spill affects plankton and larvae the shrimp feed on. In Maryland, the end of Louisiana oysters and domestic shrimp have pushed up prices for locally-caught supplies, said the *Baltimore Sun*.

Restorations

Jamaica Bay, a wildlife refuge within the Gateway National Recreation Area, encompasses 9,000 acres off the southern shores of New York City's Brooklyn and Queens boroughs. From the late 19th century and up to the 1940s, various efforts were made to turn the area into a large seaport. Dredging was even begun in places. However, delays and lack of funds spared the bay from that fate. But since

then major development along the shore, contamination and general environmental neglect have led to the shrinking of the salt marsh islands to 800 acres, less than half what was there in the 1950s, according to the *New York Times*; and the loss continues at the rate of 33 acres annually. Despite this degradation, Jamaica Bay remains an important refuge for hundreds of species of migratory birds and marine species.

These islands now benefit from a giant dredging project within New York Harbor which was started a decade ago when it became apparent that shipping channels would have to be deepened to 50 feet in order to accommodate ever larger cargo vessels. The **US Army Corps of Engineers** and the **National Park Service** have partnered with other state, federal and private agencies to use some of the excavated material to rebuild and restore parts of Upper and Lower New York Bay. In Jamaica Bay itself, 42 acres of wetlands have already been restored on Elders Island and a project is now underway to recreate 34 acres of salt marsh on Elders Point West. Next will be 50 acres of marsh on Yellow Bar Hassock.

Price's Landfill in Pleasantville, NJ, was heralded by the **EPA** 29 years ago as the "most serious environmental problem in the United States." Chemical contamination of groundwater was the culprit. The 26-acre site started as a sand and gravel excavation operation that closed in 1968. Shortly, it became a landfill where over 9 million

Cape Wind Moves Along

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's decision favoring the construction of 30 windmills in Nantucket Sound sent a very positive signal for a host of offshore wind energy projects on much of the mid-Atlantic and New England coast, as well as the Great Lakes and Texas. Events surrounding that decision indicate an increasing likelihood that the **Cape Wind** project may actually come to fruition after 9 years of debate and review, despite continuing promises by opponents to attempt to obtain injunctions to prevent it.

Following an onsite visit to the Horseshoe Shoal site earlier in the year, with Massachusetts **Governor Deval Patrick** (who sees the project as critical to the state's renewable energy efforts) standing at his side, Salazar appeared in Boston on April 28, to announce approval of the lease. He ordered several mitigating steps, including painting the windmills off white, reducing illumination, reconfiguring the windmill array, and requiring Cape Wind to conduct far more extensive archeological surveys in the Sound.

Massachusetts has waived regulations regarding a requirement to purchase alternative energy exclusively within the state that could have impeded Cape Wind because of its location in federal waters. Also the **FAA** has determined that as a result of an agreement with the developer to pay \$15 million to modify or replace an air traffic control radar at Otis Air Force Base, there would be "no hazard to air navigation."

The **Department of Energy's** National Renewable Energy Laboratory has validated a study indicating that the constant winds in the Sound are "outstanding" to "superb" for generating wind power. Very recently, Governor Patrick and 9 other governors with Secretary Salazar have established the **Atlantic Offshore Wind Consortium** to promote the orderly development of other wind projects.

Critical to prospects of obtaining financing, Cape Wind has signed a 15 year contract to sell power to **National Grid**, which will purchase 1/2 of the project's power while enabling financing for construction by offering the other half to other potential buyers on similar terms. (Under the terms of the MA 2008 Green Communities Act electric utilities must obtain 5 percent of their load from renewable sources or make up the difference with renewable energy credits). According to the companies' filing with the state **Department of Public Utilities**, National Grid will pay 20.7 cents per kilowatt hour for power in 2013, taking into account the required renewable energy credits.

A coalition of opponents announced intended court challenges, claiming likely damage to seabirds and marine creatures, potential fiscal impact on the town of Barnstable and desecration of sea views and former habitations sacred to the Wampanoag Native American tribe. Salazar reportedly remains confident that the decision, which has been scrutinized by 17 federal agencies, will be sustained.

Sayings, Continued from p. 2

Neither, it seems, does the federal government. Over the past decade, Titus and a team of contractors combined reams of data to construct a remarkably detailed model of how sea-level rise will impact the eastern seaboard. It was the largest such study ever undertaken, and its findings were alarming: Over the next 90 years, 1,000 square miles of inhabited land on the East Coast could be flooded, and most of the wetlands between Massachusetts and Florida could be lost. The favorable peer-reviewed study was scheduled for publication in early 2008 as part of a Bush Administration report on sea-level rise, but it never saw the light of day — an omission criticized by the EPA's own scientific advisory committee. Titus has urged the more science-friendly Obama administration to publish his work, but so far, it hasn't — and won't say why.

Living near the ocean has always come with the risk of getting wet. Yet coastal dwellers whose homes got swamped by the occasional storm surge could rely on the water to eventually recede. That certainty is gone. Titus has calculated that a 3-foot rise in sea level will push back East Coast shorelines an average of 300 to 600 feet in the next 90 years, threatening to submerge densely developed areas inhabited by some 3 million people, including large parts of New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. As **Margaret Davidson**, director of NOAA's Coastal Services Center in Charleston, South Carolina, puts it, "Today's flood is tomorrow's high tide."

The rising waters can be kept at bay by constructing dikes and bulkheads, pumping sand to fill out receding beaches, and elevating existing buildings and roads on embankments or pylons. But such efforts may prove prohibitively expensive: Titus says that in the lower 48 states alone, they could cost as much as \$1 trillion over the next century. He estimates that in the process, 60 to 90 percent of the east coast's wetlands could be destroyed.

So are developers getting ready for the water? The **National Association of Home Builders**, the housing industry's largest trade group, has no policy on adapting coastal projects to account for rising sea levels. "While sea-level rise may be a real issue in some areas," **Susan Asmus**, NAHB's senior vice president of regulatory and environmental affairs, told me, "it is but one of many considerations."

Nor is there any evidence that the issue has much traction with homeowners — and why should it? Property insurance is readily available in most coastal areas, if not through private insurers, then through state governments and FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program. Though the NFIP requires policyholders to live above

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gallons of chemical waste were dumped, the agency said. EPA identified 10 contaminants, all detrimental to human health, that were dumped at the site just in 1971 and 1972. Now, in an unusual burst of positive action, the landfill this year started to become a \$16.3 million ground-water treatment plant, handling about 500,000 gallons of polluted water a day.

The *Palm Beach Post* reports that, to rehydrate the Everglades and help overcome South Florida's needs, a pilot program led by the **World Wildlife Fund** is paying cattle ranchers north of Lake Okeechobee to store rain during the wet season for release during the dry season. Natural storage may cost less than reservoirs or deep storage wells.

Funding

Recreational boating support grants from the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** (FWS) have been given to six east coast states. Among the uses: Florida--\$1.2 million at Rybovich Marina, West Palm Beach, for replacing a seawall and building a long dock; and \$1.7 million for Riviera Beach Municipal Marina, dockage for 42 transients. New Jersey--\$807,051 for a 550-foot long dock and handicap lift at Trader's Cove Marina, North Carolina--\$106,000 to build 9 slips in Plymouth; \$647,000 to build a new marina in New Bern; and about \$504,000 for 10 slips in Morehead City. Harpswell, Maine--about \$363,000 for Dolphin Marina to provide 20 transient moorings and 16 slips. Virginia--\$344,000 for Cape Charles Marina to add 22 slips.



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Checks can be made payable to the Sustainable Development Institute.

Sayings, (Continued from p. 7)

the 100-year high water mark, it doesn't account for how that line may creep inland in the future. Most people plan to resell their beach houses long before they expect them to be swallowed by encroaching waves.

What about government? Most coastal states have done little to resulate shoreline development, often for fear of litigation. In 1988, South Carolina's Beachfront Management Act required new beach homes to be set back far enough from the water to be protected from at least 40 years of erosion.

A property owner named **David Lucas** sued, and the **US Supreme Court** eventually ruled that the construction ban had deprived him of any "economically viable use" of his coastal properties, a "taking" that required the state to compensate him. "After Lucas, fewer people spoke seriously about stopping development," Titus says. A few state and local governments have taken more constructive action. Several states limit development near tidal waters (Maine and Rhode Island have done this specifically in response to sea-level rise). Chatham, Massachusetts cites sea-level rise as one reason why it prohibits new homes, even elevated ones, below 100-year flood lines.

A handful of developers have also started to seriously grapple with sea-level rise. And in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the insurance industry drew up standards to fortify houses for stronger hurricanes and higher waves. So far, though, only 200 houses nationwide have been built to comply with the standards.

Most coastal dwellers are focused on riding out the next surge, not the next century. You can't really blame them-- nobody really wants to hear that their days on the beach are numbered. Case in point: **Beyoncé's** dad, **Matthew Knowles** has been locked in a bitter struggle to save his beach house in Galveston, Texas, which now sits on top of the high-tide line thanks to Hurricane Ike. In most states, Knowles would be allowed to shore up his home, but not in Texas, which is known for one of the most progressive laws in the country on beach access. The state's Open Beaches Act provides that beach is a public resource that must be protected. Titus views the Texas Open Beaches Act as one of the more promising tools for preparing for higher water. It has unintended environmental benefits, ensuring that beaches can migrate inland instead of being walled off and at the same time, it sidesteps any debate over climate change. "Developers who deny that the sea will rise would view the policy as costing them nothing," because it wouldn't prevent them from building near the shore, he notes. Only the diehard beach dwellers would stand to get soaked.