



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: David Hall, NOAA
301-713-3066

EMBARGOED UNTIL
2:00 pm CDT, June 23, 2008

New NOAA Ocean Observing System in Gulfport Supports Safe, Efficient Navigation

Mariners can now get free real-time information on water and wind conditions for the Port of Gulfport, Miss., from a new NOAA ocean observing system at the port.

The NOAA Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS®) at Gulfport provides observations of currents, water and air temperature, barometric pressure, and wind speed, gusts and direction through an easy-to-use Web portal at <http://www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/ports.html>.

"NOAA is committed to providing quality tools and services like PORTS® ensure safe and efficient navigation," said John H. Dunnigan, NOAA assistant administrator for the National Ocean Service. "NOAA is pleased to add the Port of Gulfport to the nationwide PORTS® network."

Administered by the NOAA Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, PORTS® can significantly reduce the risk of vessel groundings and increase the amount of cargo moved through the port by enabling mariners to safely utilize every inch of dredged channel depth. The system also allows large ships to time their arrivals and departures more efficiently.

"The PORTS® system is a valuable support tool that not only improves the safety and efficiency of our maritime customers, it also aids in coastal resource management with real-time environmental data," said Don Allee, executive director for the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport. "Our partnership with NOAA makes the Port of Gulfport a better port, and we are proud to be part of this dynamic program."

The Gulfport system brings the number of PORTS® in operation around the nation to 16. The Port of Pascagoula, Miss., was added to the PORTS® network in May 2008. Estimates of economic benefits directly attributed to the system range from \$7 million per year for Tampa Bay to \$16 million per year for Houston-Galveston.

"The real-time oceanographic and meteorological information provided by PORTS® will not only provide commercial and recreational mariners with reliable navigational information for safe and efficient travel but will also enhance local weather and coastal marine forecasting," said Sen. Thad Cochran. "I am proud to have this important technology located in the Port of Gulfport."

The Port of Gulfport, Miss., is the third busiest container port on the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and handled more than 1.6 million tons of cargo, shipping nearly 198,000 containers in 2006.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems

(GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services: <http://www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov>