

Skidaway Scoop

November 2007

Skidaway Marine Science Day attracts 3,000 visitors

The 2007 edition of Skidaway Marine Science Day attracted approximately 3,000 visitors to campus on Saturday, October 13.

The day was highlighted by the grand reopening of the UGA MECA aquarium. Bob Williams shared the ribbon cutting honors with Dave Miller and Pete Schlein, two of the aquarium's first employees.



Bob Williams and Dave Miller (far right) watch the crowds enter the aquarium after the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Other popular activities included a model of the SABSOON tower system, tours of the RV *Savannah*, Plankton World at the Roebing House, Gray's Reef ROV driving experience and oyster shell bagging behind the Shellfish Lab.



RV *Savannah* crewman Michael Richter gives a young visitor the chance to sit in the captain's chair.

McCabe helps find Civil War ship

DNR underwater archaeologist Chris McCabe was part of a team that discovered what is believed to be the remains of a sunken Civil War gunboat. The *Water Witch* was found under 10 feet of mud in the Vernon River.

The *Water Witch* was built in 1851 for the U.S. Navy. It was a combination of both old and new technology, carrying both sails and a side-paddle steam engine. It was part of the Union blockade of the Georgia Coast during the Civil War. A team of Confederates captured the *Water Witch* in a daring night-time raid in 1864. When the Union army under General William Sherman approached Savannah in December of that year, the Confederates burned and sank the *Water Witch* to keep it from falling back into northern hands.



DNR dive team prepares to dive on the *Water Witch*.

The project was initiated when the Georgia Department of Transportation was required to survey a part of the Vernon River where it plans to build an extension of the Truman Parkway. Initially, the surveyors used a magnetometer to pinpoint the location where they believed the *Water Witch* was located. Divers then pushed a 20-foot long metal rod through the mud to locate the solid wood and metal of the gunboat.

It has not yet been decided how the project will progress from here.

Sanders appointed to EPA advisory board

SKIO Director Jim Sanders has been appointed to the Environmental Protection Agency's Science Advisory Board by EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson. The three-year appointment will run through October 2010.

Sanders will join approximately 30 other distinguished scientists from academia, industry and environmental communities on the Science Advisory Board. The board provides scientific advice to the EPA administration and various congressional committees.

Sanders was appointed director of Skidaway Institute in 2001.

Blanton to deliver paper on tritium release effects

SKIO's Jack Blanton and Al Garrett of the Savannah River National Laboratory (DOE) will deliver a paper to the 19th Biennial Conference of the Estuarine Research Federation to be held 4-8 November 2007. They have been invited to deliver a paper in a special session on the hydrodynamics of tropical and sub-tropical semi- enclosed systems.

The paper covers research findings associated with the release of tritium into the Savannah River in 1991. This release provided Blanton and Garrett with a unique opportunity to examine the transport and fate of a conservative tracer in extensive intertidal areas found in semi-tropical estuaries of the southeastern US.

Model simulations showed the manner in which tritium spread throughout a complex zone of interconnecting tidal creeks and salt marshes from its parent river to areas 100 km south along the Georgia coast. Of particular interest is the finding that large intertidal areas exposed to influx of tritium retained a portion before emitting it back to the parent tidal creek. The time scale of retention appears to be about 4-5 days.

Gray's Reef 2007 Ocean Film Festival a smash hit

Films about saving sharks and keeping the ocean safe from pollution drew crowds at the 2007 Gray's Reef Ocean Film festival proving that ocean conservation can be sexy, exciting and eye-opening.



More than 900 people were on hand opening night Sept. 21 to watch the U.S. premiere of the Canadian film "Sharkwater," a fast-moving documentary about keeping the world's sharks safe from the international shark-fining industry. Producer, director and underwater photographer Rob Stewart enthralled the many youth in the audience with his real-life passion about saving the world's oceans.

The excitement continued Saturday with the premiere of the National Geographic film, "Invasion of the Jellyfish," a documentary about how current changes in the ocean may be leading to the rise of jellyfish as the dominant species in some areas. Keenan Smart, head of the National Geographic Film and Television Unit and Kevin McCarey, National Geographic writer and producer lead the full-house audience in a discussion on our changing seas.

SURF's up for middle school students at UGA MECA

Saturdays on campus will be a lot busier starting this month. UGA MAREX has received funding from the Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Incentive Grant Program to support a new activity, "Students Understanding Resources for the Future" (SURF).

The goal of this program will be to provide middle school students with educational experiences that foster awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the importance of Georgia's coastal ecosystems and their inhabitants.



"Using the environment as context for learning and engagement, SURF will encourage youth to become life-long learners and stimulate their interest in the natural world," said Lauren Jensen, the program's marine educator.

A hands-on, feet-in approach will be the focus as students take part in learning sessions, citizen science projects and a summer research institute.

"They will be scientists for the day onboard the R/V *Sea Dawg*, slogging through the sloughs of Wassaw, photographing local dolphin populations, surveying spawning horseshoe crabs, restoring oyster reefs and more," said Jensen.