

## EPA & UNO-CHART MONITORING AIR QUALITY

On May 24, 2010, UNO-CHART faculty associate Earthea Nance went on a coastal site tour with EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and staff, CEQ Chair Nancy Sutley and staff, EPA Region VI Administrator Al Armendariz and staff, Anne Rolfes of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, and Charles Allen, III of Tulane University. The group traveled to Venice, LA on one of EPA's two Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) buses, a state-of-the-art air monitoring system. The TAGA bus had been outfitted to measure parts-per-trillion levels of indicator components of Corexit 9500 and Corexit 9527, the two versions of dispersant being used by BP in response to the oil leak. In Venice, the group met up with representatives from several academic and non-profit environmental groups (including Environmental Defense Fund, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, National Audubon Society, Gulf Coast Restoration Network, BTNEP, LSU and University of New Orleans Center for Hazards Assessment, Response & Technology--UNO-CHART) and held a briefing about steps that should be taken for long-term recovery from the disaster. Following the briefing, the group boarded three boats and visited the oil that had come into the marshes at Pass A L'outré (at the mouth of the Mississippi River).

**TAGA Bus Monitoring** – The EPA has assigned its two TAGA buses to the gulf coast area to monitor air quality throughout the region. The TAGA bus we were riding was measuring 2-butoxy-ethanol and another chemical that could not be named because of BP's proprietary license. EPA decided to start monitoring for Corexit as a result of concerns voiced by local officials and citizens. There is no information on ambient background levels and there are no EPA action levels established for Corexit; the monitoring is intended to establish baseline levels for future interpretation. EPA contractors are doing additional monitoring at fixed sites for semi-volatiles, particulate matter (PM), hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S), volatile organic chemicals (VOCs), and benzene-toluene-ethylbenzene-xylene (BTEX). Anne provided an analysis of air monitoring from the refineries that demonstrated alarming air emissions and requested action by the EPA. She also highlighted the fact that all of Jefferson Parish has only two air monitoring stations, and that with the small number of monitoring stations no one can possibly know background pollutant levels. Earthea discussed the role of community-based monitoring by emphasizing that while EPA conducts monitoring for regulatory purposes and academics conduct monitoring for research purposes, community-based monitoring is done for other reasons; namely, for capacity-building, environmental justice, and immediate screening. **All agreed that EPA needed to join forces with local groups to provide immediate testing in response to air pollution complaints and to make all testing information widely available.**

**Briefing with the EPA Administrator** – Chair Sutley (CEQ) and Administrator Jackson (EPA) invited the local groups to brief them on what should be done for long-term recovery. The National Wildlife Association representative complained about the lack of coordination in the response up to this point, the lack of an overarching plan, the inadequate mobilization of the fishers, and fact that the marshes had already been stressed prior to the spill. EPA Region VI Administrator Al Armendariz agreed that there had not been enough coordination between NOAA and the Coast Guard, and that boom cannot be manufactured fast enough. Chair Sutley stated that there is also a logistical problem in transporting the boom here. EPA staff (Janet Woodka) mentioned the lack of support from environmental groups on the sand berm proposal. In response, the National Audubon Society representative (Paul Kemp) said most of the oil is going into the passes, not on the islands, and that there has been no coordinated scientific effort to deal with oiled passes – more effort is needed on this problem. Chair Sutley referred to the science-based Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Roadmap (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/gulfcoast>), but agreed that some of this is “science on the fly.” The Lake

Pontchartrain Basin Foundation representative (John Lopez) stated that from their perspective, the source of the oil is now the entire Gulf of Mexico rather than the leak site, and that his group did support the sand berm proposal for the east side of the river but not the west side; however, that sand berms are only a partial solution. BTNEP representative (Kerry St. Pe) stated that there is no science that supports any sand berms, and that the only scientifically supported action was building back the barrier islands. He said that redesigning mother nature is what got us into this problem in the first place. The sand berms may be washed away and the sand not be available for legitimate uses such as barrier island rebuilding. He continued, saying that after covering thousands of local oil spills, he has seen how bureaucracy prevents action. He recommended the establishment of a mini-command center in each parish.

The Environmental Defense Fund representative (Paul Harrison) said that the most effective course of action is not known. He recommended mobilizing resources for spot-response capability, rapid response teams, and mitigation.

**Tour of the Oil Spill at Pass A L'oultre** – Led by Administrator Jackson and Chair Sutley, everyone present boarded into three boats and travelled to the mouth of the Mississippi River at Pass A L'oultre. Photos of the boat tour show oil-stained marsh, oil-stained boom, sheen on the water surface, and hazard response crews skimming up the oil contained by the booms.

# WITNESSING THE OIL

Mouth of the MS River  
Pass A L'oultre, Louisiana  
May 24, 2010

# TAGA Bus Monitoring



# TAGA Bus Monitoring



# TAGA Bus Monitoring



# TAGA Bus Monitoring



# Briefing with EPA and CEQ



# Briefing with EPA and CEQ



# Briefing with EPA and CEQ



# Boat Tour of the Oil Spill



# Boat Tour of the Oil Spill



# Boat Tour of the Oil Spill



# Boat Tour of the Oil Spill



# Boat Tour of the Oil Spill



# Entering the Pass



# Oil Sheen Visible on the Surface



# Oil Sheen Visible on the Surface



# Oil-Stained Marsh



# Oil-Stained Marsh



# Boom Protecting the Marsh



# Oil-Stained Boom



# Oil-Stained Boom



# Taking an Oil Sample



# Taking an Oil Sample

