



Industry

Yes, on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Marine Science Making an Impact

Marine Science is such an inherent part of the Mississippi Gulf Coast that it is frequently overlooked as one of the area's key industries. Yet from aquaculture to finding medical cures, marine science is an extremely important part of the area's economy that continues to grow.

A new marine mammal research center in Gulfport is adding to the marine science infrastructure on the Coast, which currently includes 18 federal and university research units located at Stennis Space Center, Biloxi and Ocean Springs.

The federal marine science effort alone is considerable and includes operating units of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Department of Defense. However, universities account for the largest portion of the marine science research units in South Mississippi. University of Southern Mississippi, Mississippi State University and the University of Mississippi all run research units with focus areas ranging from microbial ecology and genetics to remediation and hydrography.

With five buildings totaling 26,000 square-feet, the new Institute for Marine Mammal Studies (IMMS) Center for Marine Education and Research will include room for personnel from Mississippi State University, facilities for graduate students and much more. A 7,000 square-foot animal care building has food preparation facilities, pools, life support systems and a security room. Outside are three pools – the largest being 125 feet long, 60 feet wide and 12 feet deep. Next to the care facility is a 4,000 square-foot museum, which houses exhibits to teach visitors about the marine life that is studied there; a 4,000 square-foot auditorium/multimedia center will be used for presentations. The 5,000 square-foot administration building will house offices, including that of Dr. Moby Solangi, founder, president and executive director of IMMS.

IMMS is a non-profit organization dedicated to the understanding of marine life through research, education, conservation and innovation. Founded in 1984, IMMS is the only marine mammal organization in the Mississippi-Louisiana-Alabama sub-region of the Gulf Coast that has the capability to care for sick and injured marine mammals. The mission of IMMS is to support innovative and critical research on marine mammals, and with the new Center for Marine Education and Research, Solangi and his staff have the perfect place to do so.

Much can be learned from marine organisms and their unique characteristics. Currently, the research conducted on the Gulf Coast is an important resource for companies interested in applied marine science, including environmental consulting companies, dredging companies, equipment manufacturers, private weather forecasting companies, oil companies, hydrographic surveying companies, the medical and pharmaceutical fields and more. With a growing interest in the field of marine biotechnology, it is hard to imagine the impact marine science will have on the future.

For more information on Marine Science on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, visit www.mscoastmarinescience.com.



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