



Media Alert:
Students Will Stop Leaking Oil Well
With Own Underwater Vehicles
April 2 at Chatham County Aquatic Center

Twenty-one teams of students from around the region will compete to see which team can stop a mock leaking oil well first using remotely operated underwater vehicles they have built themselves.

The sixth annual Gray' Reef National Marine Sanctuary sponsored competition takes place all day April 2 at the Chatham County Aquatic Center. Students will have to cap elaborate mock oil wells using a "top kill" procedure similar to the one used during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. And, they have to do it with ROVs (remotely operated underwater vehicles) they have built themselves from PVC pipe, cable ties, pool "noodles" and small motors.

Real ROVs were essential in shutting off the Deepwater Horizon spill and are used routinely at Gray's Reef and other National Sanctuaries to explore the underwater environment. The student-built ROVs give participants an opportunity to learn how marine exploration is conducted as well as a hands-on opportunity to apply principles in engineering, math and other technical fields. Competition teams are tasked with securing a leaking oil well by deploying their ROVs and maneuvering a top-kill method, closing a valve and removing a damaged riser pipe, along with additional challenges.

The April 2 event is the southeast regional match-up for the Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) ROV competition. Winners of regional meets get the chance to move onto the 2011 international competition taking place June 16-18 at the NASA Johnson Space Center's Neutral Buoyancy Lab in Houston, TX

There are 16 teams entered in the Ranger Class, high school teams and middle school teams that have competed before, three teams of middle schoolers in the Scout Class and two college teams, one from the Georgia Tech Savannah Campus and one from Georgia Southern University.

The public is invited to watch the exciting competition and cheer on their favorite teams at the aquatic center located at located at 7240 Sallie Mood Drive in Savannah, Georgia.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, headquartered in Savannah, is one of the largest near-shore live- bottom reefs of the southeastern United States. It is one of 14 national marine protected areas that make up the Office of the National Marine Sanctuaries and is governed by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. It is managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Gray's Reef is the only natural reef area protected offshore of the Georgia coast. The approximately 22 square mile sanctuary (about 14,000 acres) protects habitat that is recognized both nationally and internationally.

To arrange media coverage of the ROV competition, contact Gail Krueger at Gray's Reef (912) 598-2397. Visit us at <http://graysreef.noaa.gov>. To learn more about MATE go to <http://www.materover.org/main/index.php>



Students at the Southeast Regional ROV Competition get ready to deploy their ROV at the Chatham County Aquatic Center.