

The NewsRoom

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Deep Wrecks Project Receives Prestigious Cooperative Conservation Award

Unique Team Garners Recognition From Department of the Interior

WASHINGTON – Members of the Deep Wrecks Project, a collaboration of federal agencies, private companies and universities, were recently honored for their contribution to science at the 63rd Department of the Interior Honor Awards Convocation. Acting Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett presented the Cooperative Conservation Award to the Deep Wrecks team, which was among 55 other recipients being awarded for their service.

The Cooperative Conservation Award recognizes cooperative conservation achievements that involved collaborative activity among a diverse range of entities including federal, state, local and tribal governments, private for-profit and nonprofit institutions, and other nongovernmental entities and individuals.

“Today we honor private citizens who heard the call of duty. They embody the concept of cooperative conservation and partnership,” Secretary Scarlett said at the event in the Sidney Yates Auditorium of the Main Interior Building. “Regardless of where or how they serve, all of today’s awardees have inspired us with their service.”

The Deep Wrecks Project convened to conduct an investigation of six ships that were sunk by Hitler’s U-boat activities during World War II in the Gulf of Mexico and provide historical, archaeological and biological research.

The biological aspect of the study was meant to discover whether or not manmade artifacts function as artificial reefs in deepwater. Although the study is ongoing, preliminary findings show that artificial reefs can serve as a positive habitat and replace hard-bottom areas where they are lacking.

The archaeological aspects of the study sought to document and identify the status of six ships sunk during World War II, including the submarine U-166, a process that requires historical research and field investigation.

The Deep Wrecks Project has far-reaching ramifications for deepwater oil and gas exploration and production. The results of the biological research serve to prove that deepwater shipwrecks and platforms in the Gulf of Mexico can and do serve as artificial reefs. Archaeologically, the study is one of the most comprehensive deepwater shipwreck investigations ever conducted.

Members of the Deep Wreck Projects Team include:

Federal Agencies

Minerals Management Service

Jack B. Irion, Ph.D.

Daniel (Herb) Leedy

National Oceanic Atmospheric Association

John McDonough

Universities

Montana State University

Dennis Aig, Ph.D.

University of West Florida
William Patterson, Ph.D.

The University of Alabama
William W. Schroeder, Ph.D.

Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi
Thomas Shirley, Ph.D.

Non-Profit Organizations

Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (C.O.R.E.)
Reginald Beach

Partnering Anthropology with Science and Technology Foundation (P.A.S.T.)
Annalies Corbin, Ph.D.

Private Companies

C&C Technologies, Inc.
Robert Church

Droycon Bioconcepts Inc.
Lori Johnston-Hill, M.Sc.

Sonsub, Inc.
Robert J. Keith

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[MMS: Securing Ocean Energy & Economic Value for America](#)
U.S. Department of the Interior