

Gulfport standouts earn major recruiting interest, 1B



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Gulfport channel deepening at state port explored again

BY ANITA LEE
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A report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says Gulfport's state port would fetch an additional 5 cents for every dollar spent to deepen and widen the Gulfport Ship Channel for larger ships.

After 3½ years of study, the Corps' chief engineer has recommended the project to Congress at an initial cost of more than \$548 million. The plug was pulled more than a decade ago on a previous plan to deepen the channel because the cost could not be justified. At 36 feet, the channel is too shallow for larger ships stacked with more con-

tainers. State leaders, including Sen. Roger Wicker and Gov. Tate Reeves, are hoping Congress will approve the channel deepening. Both politicians have sent out news releases lauding the chief engineer's report and recommendations. Wicker said he will push this year for project authorization by Congress. But

approval doesn't guarantee funding. "The signing of the chief's report is an important milestone, but it does not authorize construction or establish a construction timeline by itself," said a statement that Army Corps media relations in Mobile emailed to the Sun Herald. Many steps remain, including

engineering and design work that takes an estimated two years. "At this stage," the Corps email said, "we do not have a construction start date or a firm timeline for each step." The state is hoping to attract new shipping lines to join long-time cargo carriers Dole, Chiquita and Crowley. Products shipped at the port include bananas, other fruit, cotton, textiles, and paper. A deeper channel also could mean more rail, truck and barge traffic. Rail service in Gulfport has been and continues to be up-

SEE GULFPORT, 4A



LILLIAN FOSTER Sun Herald

Volunteers from The Potter's House Ministry assist in clean-up efforts in Perkinston on June 24.

Body found in search for South Mississippi teen

BY MARGARET BAKER
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A body was found Monday morning during the search for Nolan Wells, an 18-year-old who did not return home after spending Saturday on Horn Island celebrating Independence Day.

Jackson County Sheriff John Ledbetter said search crews recovered the body in the water around 8:40 a.m. Monday around the western tip of the Horn Island, where he was last seen.

However, the identity of the person found is pending confirmation from the Jackson County Coroner's Office.

Jackson County Coroner Bruce Lynd confirmed late Monday morning that the body found matched the description of Wells, but he said positive identification is pending an examination at the state medical examiner's office.

"We are going to confirm positive identification through DNA," Lynd said.

Crews took the coroner by boat to the island once the body was found.

"We have been in touch with Nolan's family," Ledbetter said Monday morning, but then stressed that positive identification of the person found dead is pending.

In the hours after the discovery, the 18-year-old college sophomore's mother, Christine Wonsley, commented on social media on the behalf of the family.

SEE BODY, 4A

As flood threat grows, fewer Mississippians covered by flood insurance

BY LILLIAN FOSTER
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El Niño is expected to bring increased rainfall to the Mississippi Coast this year, leaving residents particularly vulnerable to severe flooding.

In June, floodwaters from Tropical Storm Arthur devas-

tated parts of the southeastern United States, damaging nearly 500 homes in Mississippi alone. With fewer than 4% of the state's homeowners covered by flood insurance, most residents are paying for damages out-of-pocket.

Nonprofits are working to help repair homes across the state, but some residents ex-

pressed uncertainty about full community recovery.

HEAVIER RAINFALL EXPECTED

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted a below-normal hurricane season for 2026, but United Cajun Navy chief meteorologist Amy Metz said residents

should still prepare for severe flooding.

"The Pacific moisture will trail across and likely cause more flooding than usual, even though we probably won't have as many major hurricanes in the Gulf and Atlantic," Metz said.

Weather conditions brought on by El Niño allow for larger raindrops to form, meaning increased precipitation and flash flooding in southern states.

"Tropical moisture makes a lot more rain," Metz said. "We actually have an above average rainfall forecast, even though it is going to be less likely to have the wind events with a hurricane."

Mississippi has the fifth-high-

SEE FLOOD, 4A

Gulf beaches see more sharks, but attacks remain rare

BY MARTHA SANCHEZ
NewOrleansAdvocate

The growing crowds on Gulf Coast beaches are beginning to confront an uneasy truth: They are now sharing the water with more sharks than they have in decades.

After years of conservation work, the population of many

shark species that live near the coastline and out at sea are returning to levels not seen since the 1970s.

Their return is helping restore nature's delicate balance. It is also raising new safety questions as record numbers of visitors arrive to swim and fish across Gulf beaches.

"People are just going to have to get used to seeing sharks,"

said Dean Grubbs, an associate director of research at Florida State University, who has studied the animals for more than two decades. "And they're going to have to take precautions."

Florida Panhandle residents were rattled earlier this summer when a shark attacked and severely injured a man swimming

SEE SHARKS, 3A



Photo via Walton County Sheriff's Office

Medical personnel carry a shark attack victim from the beach in Walton County, Florida, on Friday, June 7, 2024.



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