

Coastal Research and Extension Center



Marco Nicovich

The Coastal Research and Extension Center is Mississippi State University's "southern exposure," linking residents of the coastal region to the university. The center's mission is to conduct research and education programs aimed at developing a better understanding and use of renewable and nonrenewable resources in south Mississippi. Its applied research and educational programs with biological, physical and social systems focus on enhancing the quality of life of residents of Mississippi and other Gulf states.

The center's research facilities include the South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station in Poplarville, the Seafood Processing Laboratory in Pascagoula, the Coastal Aquaculture Unit in Gulfport, the Beaumont Horticultural Unit in Perry County, and the McNeil and White Sand Units in Pearl River County.

Horticulture research at the center includes a project with sunflowers, zinnias and other species for use as cut flowers by florists. Work also is under way with mechanization in ornamental horticulture and to determine the influence of irrigation, fertilization and weed control practices on plant production. Studies also are under way with blueberries, blackberries, muscadines and other fruits, vegetables and ornamental plants.



Christine Coker



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Livestock research at the center's facilities focuses on the problems associated with beef cattle production in the heat and humidity of south Mississippi. Current projects include work with the effects of supplements on intake and digestibility of low-quality southern forages, feeding systems to minimize cost of gain for beef cattle in south Mississippi and the use of ultrasound for selection of replacement beef heifers.

In the seafood area, development of value-added items for Mississippi producers is under way, as well as work with new processes to improve the safety and quality of Mississippi seafood and testing of food products for Mississippi manufacturers. Current projects include work with fresh catfish fillets and oysters for extension of shelf life. Also, a new rapid chill depuration system has been developed for seafood and is currently being tested.

Entomology research at the center focuses on both urban and commercial insects. A Formosan Termite Field Test

Facility has been established at the McNeill Unit to study the highly destructive pest. There are currently Formosan termite infestations in 19 south Mississippi counties.

Economic research at the center focuses on seafood and horticultural production systems. In the seafood area, projects include an evaluation of recirculating saltwater shrimp production systems and a study of the economic impact of Mississippi's seafood industry. Economists at the center also are evaluating consumer preference for various horticultural products, including types of cut and potted plants.

A natural predator of mole crickets, the *Larra bicolor* wasp, was recently discovered for the first time on the Mississippi Gulf Coast by an entomologist at the center. The tiny insect is beneficial in controlling species of burrowing mole crickets that destroy turf grass. Work is under way to determine if the wasp can help protect the Coast's lawns and golf course greens.

For more about the work of the Coastal Research and Extension Center, visit www.msstate.edu/dept/crec/crec.html.



Christine Coker