

MSI hosts its biennial open house

Visitors to Port Aransas in June will get a special treat: A visit to the biennial open house at The UT-Austin Marine Science Institute (MSI).

This year's open house, the first since the research vessel Longhorn left MSI, will feature tours aboard the MSI research vessel Katy as well as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's R/V Nueces and the Mustang, lent by Billy Gaskins for the occasion.

This year's open house is Saturday, June 14, a change from earlier practices of having the open house near holiday weekends.

MSI officials hope to be able to send the picture from an imaging flowcytobot to a screen where visitors can see it. The flowcytobot examines water as it flows between the jetties and past the institute's teaching pier, letting scientists know what's in the current. It was responsible earlier this year for alerting them to a toxin in bay waters - the first time such a toxin had been detected without someone first becoming ill from it or a fish kill being observed, researchers said.

Partners for this year with the MSI include the new Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), the Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas General Land Office and the Texas Department of Transportation.

If you miss the open house, don't despair. The MSI Visitors' Center is open to the public Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Admission is free.

The Visitors' Center features seven aquaria showing typical Texas coastal habitats and the organisms that live there. A gift shop is open during Visitor Center hours and features books, t-shirts, educational items and memorabilia.

Also, free educational movies about coastal ecology and marine life are shown Monday through Thursday at 3 p.m. The movie schedule is published in the South Jetty's Island Agenda.

To reach the Visitors' Center, take Cotter Avenue east almost to the beach. Turn left to the Visitors' Center entrance just before the street ends at the beach.

For more information, call the Visitors' Center, (361) 749-6729.



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