

The Coastal Waters Consortium Presents:

Scientist Spotlight



Dr. Ed Overton

What is your educational background?

University of Alabama BS in Chemistry 1965, Ph.D. 1970

What inspired you to become a scientist?

I was inspired by a chemistry professor at Spring Hill College

Can you describe what you enjoy the most about conducting scientific research?

I enjoy the challenges of trying to solve unknown issues associated with our environment, and the rewards when discovering new findings and understanding about how our incredible environment works and responds to stressors from chemical pollutants. Also, I particularly enjoy working with and getting to know my scientific colleagues who work in different disciplines, and the perspective they provide for my own scientific interest.

What is your role as a scientist for CWC?
environmental chemist, chemistry of oil spills

Can you summarize your oil spill research and describe any surprising findings you have come across?

I have been involved in studying the fates and effects of petroleum hydrocarbons in the environment since 1978 oil spill at the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve West Hackberry facility, and working with the Emergency Response Division of NOAA providing them with chemistry support for their mission of responding to marine spills of oil and hazardous chemicals. Even though oil is composed of many thousands of individual chemicals, oil represents a reduced form of carbon, and when spilled, mother nature has natural mechanisms to transform these chemical compounds back into carbon dioxide. Thus, oil is a different kind of pollutant than the chlorocarbons which have very long environmental persistence. With funding from the GoMRI and CWC, we are seeing how the compounds spilled by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill are being weathered and removed from our coastal environment.

The Coastal Waters Consortium's mission is to assess the chemical evolution, biological degradation, and environmental stresses of petroleum and dispersant within Gulf of Mexico coastal and shelf ecosystems.

