

Scientist Spotlight



Dr. R. Eugene Turner

What is your educational background?

Ph.D. University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia (Zoology)
1974
M. A. Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa (Zoology)
1969
B. A. Monmouth College, Monmouth, Illinois (Zoology)
1967

What inspired you to become a scientist?

It was a gradual process. Much of my pre-college years were spent outdoors;.. having canoed, camped and hiked throughout New England. At some point I realized that the human connections to the environment were no different than the human relationship to each other. You can respect them equally, but not well in isolation from each other. And they are so relentlessly varied, diverse, bland, colorful, and interesting. I'm still working on it, of course.

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

Being part of uncovering the driving forces behind the ecosystem behavior through time. Piecing together the environmental history of a place, and the role of humans in shaping the process of change.



What is your role as a scientist for CWC?

I am part of the administrative architecture of the project, and try to help with the partnerships amongst the scientists, and to minimize their paperwork. Unfortunately for me, that involves much time away from the hands-on science. My field science is involved with how the oil exposure affects marsh health, wetland erosion, and fisheries.

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

That oil exposure is going to last decades because of how slow it decomposes in the marsh and that marsh erosion was about 3 X in the first year of exposure than the background rate, and is now about 1.5 times higher (in review).

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.