

## Notice to Mariners

The Geochemical and Environmental Research Group (GERG) of Texas A&M University is seeking the co-operation of all mariners operating in the Gulf waters of Texas to help safeguard the Texas Automated Buoy System (TABS) against vandalism. The TABS buoys provide near real time ocean current and weather data necessary for the protection of the marine environment off the coast of Texas. Data from these buoys are, used by the Texas General Land Office (TGLO) for oil spill modeling, mitigation and response purposes, the US Coast Guard for search and rescue operations, the National Weather Service for marine weather forecasts and warnings, commercial as well as recreational fishermen, pleasure boaters and researchers from around the country. The buoys form an integral part of the Texas coastal observing system and the overall coastal observing system in the Gulf of Mexico.

Vandalism to these buoys is the principal cause for loss of data and results in the inability of the above groups to make use of the system at critical times when the environment, commercial livelihoods or human life could be at risk.

GERG requests the assistance of the marine community in helping to safeguard these buoys. There are a number of specific ways in which the marine community can be of service.

- Never tie up to a buoy. There are fragile instrumentation and antennas both above and below the surface of the water, which are easily damaged. The buoys are lightly moored so they can be dragged off location causing a hazard to navigation.
- Give the buoys a wide berth to avoid entanglement of nets or other equipment in the subsurface mooring system. Each buoy has a watch circle equal to approximately 1.5 times the water depth. Vessels towing nets, seismic or other equipment should stay at least 300 yards from the buoys. Other vessels at least 20 yards.
- Call 1-800-826-8589, or the US Coast Guard if you notice a buoy damaged or drifting, or if you inadvertently entangle the mooring with your equipment. This number is stenciled on the side of each buoy.
- Report any vandalism to the US Coast Guard. This includes vessels tied off to buoys or any observation of people causing vandalism.

GERG operates and maintains three types of TABS buoys on behalf of the state of Texas. The TABS I buoy pictured below is yellow in color and equipped with an internal radar reflector as well as an amber night flashing light. It is 24 inches in diameter and extends 7-8 feet above the water surface and about 8 feet below the surface. The buoy is visible on radar at ranges of 1-2 NMI depending on weather conditions. The TABS II buoy is 31 inches in diameter, yellow in color and extends approximately 12 feet above the water surface. It is equipped with an internal radar reflector, amber night flashing light, and a suite of meteorological sensors. The buoy extends several feet below the surface where it supports sensors to measure oceanographic conditions.

The TABS 2.25m buoy is a 2.25m diameter discus type buoy yellow in color with 3 solar panels, a radar reflector and an amber night flashing light. The solar tower supports meteorological sensors and communications equipment. The buoy extends several feet beneath the surface where there are oceanographic sensors mounted inside a bottom frame.

The buoys are visible on radar at ranges of 5-7 NMI depending on weather conditions. All buoy types extend below the surface to subsurface sensors and mooring systems fabricated from heavy chain and cable, which could damage boats or fishing equipment.

These buoys and the information they provide are a tremendous resource for the people of Texas. They help protect our environment and provide useful information to fishermen, boaters and the rest of the marine community. Please help protect our marine resources.



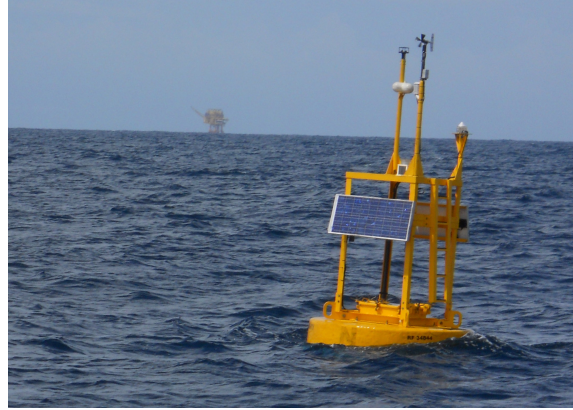
TABS I buoy from site W prior to recovery 15 NMI off location.



TABS I buoy from site W during recovery with fishing net wrapped around mooring



TABS II buoy with meteorological station on top



TABS 2.25m buoy at the Flower Garden Banks



TABS 2.25. being repaired after a ship tied up to it breaking a solar panel and wind sensor