

NOPP Excellence in Partnering Award Presented During OCEANS'12 Conference

Also during OCEANS'12 the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) presented the Excellence in Partnering Award to the project team of the FY 2008 NOPP-funded project *Exploration and Research of Northern Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Natural and Artificial Hard Bottom Habitats with Emphasis on Coral Communities: Reefs, Rigs, and Wrecks* (known as the *Lophelia II* study).

The project is led by Dr. Charles Fisher from Pennsylvania State University and Dr. James Brooks from TDI Brooks International, Inc. NOPP contributing agencies include the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

The project was nominated by BOEM for its exceptionally diverse partnerships which included scientists, graduate students, technicians, public

outreach professionals, and industry specialists from a very broad spectrum of ocean sciences ranging from Federal regulating agency scientists to academic scientists to industry partners.

The *Lophelia II* project recently completed their last research cruise in the Gulf of Mexico where they discovered *Lophelia* coral growing deeper than previously seen anywhere in the Gulf. This newly available information will inform future environmental review and decision-making for the protection of deepwater corals.

The Principal Investigators received an ocean-blue award from NOPP inscribed with the name of the project. (Photo: Gregory Boland, BOEM)



Project sponsors and awardees of the NOPP Excellence in Partnering Award, from left to right: Tim Arcano, NOAA; Walter Johnson, BOEM; Craig McLean, NOAA; Chuck Fisher, Penn State University (Awardee); Jim Brooks, TDI-Brooks, Inc. (Awardee); and Greg Boland, BOEM. (Photo: Marjorie Weisskohl, BOEM)

