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Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at FAU Undergoes Renovation and Enhancement

FORT PIERCE, FL (September 2, 2008)- Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University will undergo significant physical changes over the next two years with a \$44.6 million project that will include site work, remodeling, renovation and new construction. Plans include demolition of existing facilities that were severely damaged from the 2004 hurricanes or are in need of significant renovation to meet modern scientific needs or achieve higher energy efficiency. Most remodeled or newly constructed facilities will house additional laboratory, instructional and administrative space on the campus.

After the merger of FAU and Harbor Branch was made official on December 31, 2007, a plan was put in motion to begin renovation and construction. Governor Crist previously approved the appropriation of \$44.6 million to FAU in PECO funding for renovation and new space at HBOI. Now that 155 Harbor Branch research faculty and staff, administrators, and support staff have been welcomed to FAU as official employees, a university committee is undergoing the facility planning process.

An architect has been selected, and the project is on its way with the initial steps complete to begin renovation on the Johnson House, which is in need of repairs since Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne. The successful modernization of the water treatment plant is also underway. “We expect to have a final master plan on the shelf in eight months- one that has a ten-year horizon,” said University Architect Tom Donaudy. “But the plan will be realistic, include the proper infrastructure for future growth and give room for adjustments as new ideas may arise through this process.”

“While we are still in the very early stages of master planning, we are very excited about what these changes will do to enhance our ocean science research and academic programming,” said Harbor Branch Executive Director Dr. Shirley Pomponi. “It is very exciting to plan for renovation and construction of 21st-century labs and classrooms, and to anticipate new possibilities like a Marine Mammal Critical Care Center.” Harbor Branch has been responsible for the rescue of more than 200 marine

mammals since 1999, but having an on-site critical care center would greatly increase survival statistics.

New facilities would also include distance learning classrooms to broadcast and receive classes across FAU's distributed campuses and state-of-the-art research laboratories for faculty and students studying marine ecosystem health. Also slated are high-tech marine biotech and engineering laboratories for faculty and students to design, prototype and test innovative technologies for ocean exploration, ocean observation, coastal zone monitoring, and discovery and conservation of ocean resources.

Harbor Branch is an internationally recognized oceanographic institute that operates five research centers: aquaculture and stock enhancement, marine biomedical and biotechnology research, marine ecosystem health, ocean engineering and technology; and ocean exploration and deep sea research. "These physical developments will provide the infrastructure to increase the scope of our research and education capabilities at Harbor Branch, and begin a new chapter in our 37-year history of 'Ocean Science for a Better World,'" said Pomponi.

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PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Nearly 200 FAU faculty and staff from the Treasure Coast Campus and Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute will gather together on Thursday, September 4 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for the 2008-2009 Welcome Back Celebration and Picnic. This event, to be held at Harbor Branch with guests President Frank T. Brogan and Provost John Pritchett, will be the first joint faculty and staff gathering between the two campuses. A short program will be held from 11:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. in the Johnson Education Center Auditorium. Harbor Branch is located at 5600 N US1, Fort Pierce. For more information, contact Cara Perry at 772-873-3339 or ccarlton@fau.edu.