

FINAL REPORT

# Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program: Ball, Port Aransas, and Port Isabel High Schools, 2010–2011

Tiffany L. Caudle



Bureau of Economic Geology  
Scott W. Tinker, Director  
John A. and Katherine G. Jackson School of Geosciences  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, Texas 78713-8924



June 2011

F I N A L R E P O R T

# Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program: Ball, Port Aransas, and Port Isabel High Schools, 2010–2011

Tiffany L. Caudle

Report to the Texas Coastal Coordination Council pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA09NOS4190165

Funding for the Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program is provided by the Texas Coastal Coordination Council, the Meadows Foundation, Conoco, the Exxon Foundation, and the Wray Family Trust

Bureau of Economic Geology  
**Scott W. Tinker, Director**  
John A. and Katherine G. Jackson School of Geosciences  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, Texas 78713-8924



Coastal  
Studies  
Group

June 2011

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION .....	2
Goals.....	2
Methods .....	3
Training .....	5
Data Management, Data Analysis, and Dissemination of Information.....	5
STUDENT, TEACHER, AND SCIENTIST INTERACTIONS DURING THE 2010–2011 ACADEMIC YEAR .....	6
Ball High School.....	7
Port Aransas High School .....	8
Port Isabel High School.....	9
Bay City Area Schools .....	11
Cunningham Middle School .....	11
EFFECTS ON SCIENCE CURRICULUM .....	12
EFFECTS ON SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, COASTAL MANAGEMENT, AND PUBLIC AWARENESS.....	12
SCIENTIFIC RESULTS OF 1997–2011 STUDIES .....	13
WEBSITE UPGRADES.....	21
CONCLUSIONS.....	22
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	22
REFERENCES CITED.....	24
APPENDIX A: PROFILE INFORMATION .....	25
APPENDIX B: GRAPHS OF VOLUME, SHORELINE, AND VEGETATION-LINE CHANGE.....	27
APPENDIX C: GRAPHS OF BEACH PROFILES .....	35

### Figures

1. Participating schools .....	2
2. Students using a sighting level to determine vertical offset between Emery rods and a metric tape to measure horizontal distance.....	4
3. Students using a sighting compass to measure dune orientation and measuring how far along the shoreline the float (an orange) drifted to determine longshore current .....	5
4. Location map of Ball High School monitoring sites .....	9
5. Location map of Port Aransas High School and Cunningham Middle School monitoring sites .....	10
6. Location map of Port Isabel High School monitoring sites .....	10

7. Location map of Matagorda Peninsula monitoring sites.....	11
8. Profile volume, shoreline, and vegetation-line changes at Galveston Island State Park, September 1994–April 2008 .....	14
9. Plot of pre- and post-Rita beach profiles measured at Galveston Island State Park.....	15
10. Beach profile plots from BEG02 in Galveston Island State Park comparing the post-Hurricane Ike profile with two prestorm profiles from early 2008 and the post-Tropical Storm Frances profile from September 1998.....	16
11. BEG02 datum reset post-storm profile plus data collected by Ball High School students .....	17
12. Changes at SPI02 on South Padre Island due to installation of sand fence and beach nourishment .....	18
13. Volume and shoreline changes at SPI08 on South Padre Island due to beach nourishment.....	19
13. Foredune expansion at MUI01 on Mustang Island.....	20



## INTRODUCTION

The Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program (THSCMP) engages people who live along the Texas coast in the study of their natural environment. High school students, teachers, and scientists work together to gain a better understanding of dune and beach dynamics there. Scientists from The University of Texas at Austin (UT) provide the tools and training needed for scientific investigation. Students and teachers learn how to measure the topography, map the vegetation line and shoreline, and observe weather and wave conditions. By participating in an actual research project, the students obtain an enhanced science education. Public awareness of coastal processes and the Texas Coastal Management Program is heightened through this program. The students' efforts also provide coastal communities with valuable data on their changing shoreline.

This report describes the program and our experiences during the 2010–2011 academic year. During this time, Ball High School on Galveston Island completed its thirteenth year in the program, and Port Aransas and Port Isabel High Schools completed their twelfth year (Fig. 1). Through collaboration with the Lower Colorado River Authority, the program expanded to three schools in the Bay City, Texas, region. Tidehaven Middle School and Van Vleck High School completed their seventh year in the program, and Palacios High School completed its fifth year. Cunningham Middle School in the Corpus Christi Independent School District participated in its first field trip in late spring of 2009. The 2010–2011 academic year marked its third year in the program. All of the schools anticipate continuing with the program during the 2011–2012 academic year, and preparations are being made to expand to an eighth school. Discussions of data collected by the students are included in this report. A manual with detailed field procedures, field forms, classroom exercises, and teaching materials was prepared during the first year of the project at Ball High School in 1997–1998. The manual was updated with the addition of the Bay City region schools in 2005. The program is also enhanced by a continuously updated website (<http://coastal.beg.utexas.edu/thscmp/>).

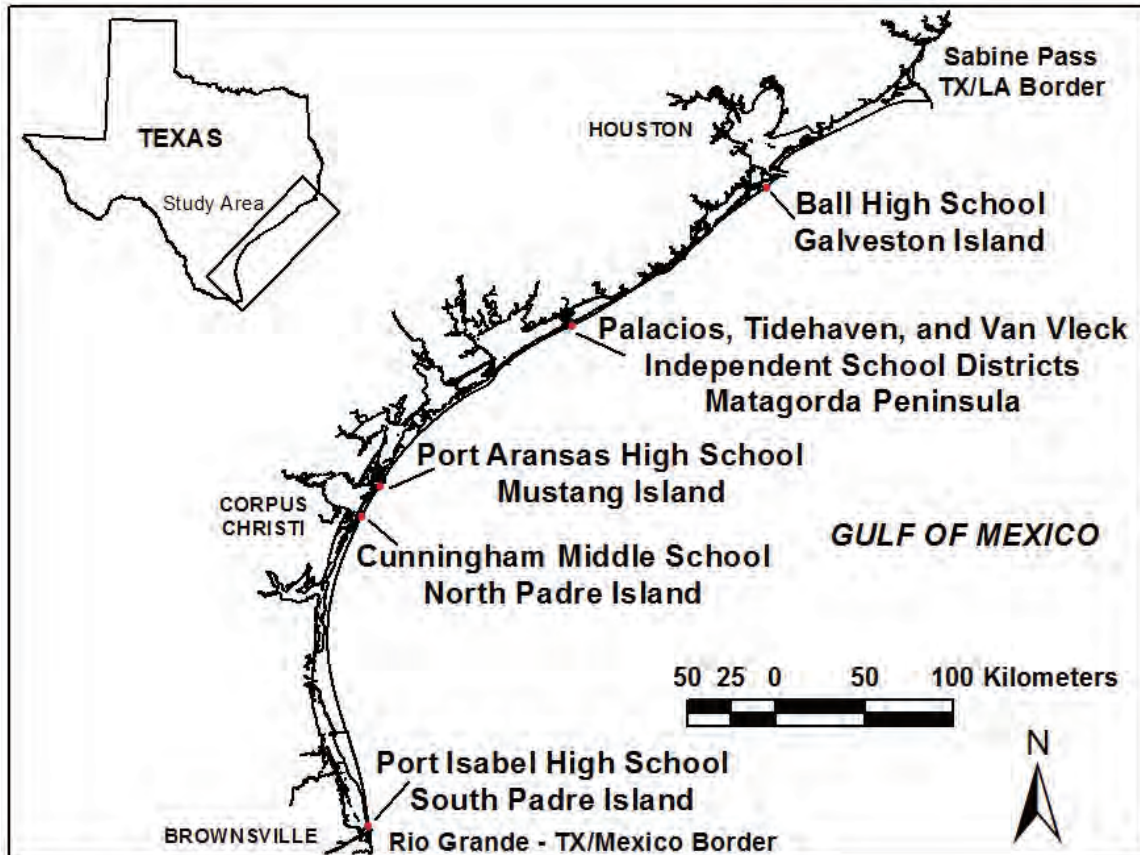


Figure 1. Participating schools.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Goals

The coastal monitoring program has three major goals:

- (1) *Provide high school students with an inquiry-based learning experience.*  
 Students make several field trips to their study sites during the school year. Working in teams, they conduct topographic surveys (beach profiles) of the foredune and beach, map the vegetation line and shoreline, collect sediment samples, and observe weather and wave conditions. Back in the classroom, students analyze their data and look for relationships among the observed phenomena. UT scientists provide background information and guide inquiries about the data, but students are encouraged to form and test their own hypotheses. Through their collaboration with working scientists on an actual research project, the students gain an enhanced science education.
- (2) *Increase public awareness and understanding of coastal processes and hazards.* We expect that participating students will discuss the program with their parents, classmates, and neighbors, further expanding the reach of the program. We also expect the program to attract media attention, as it has in

the past. The program was featured in the Winter 2006 and Winter 2009 issues of *On the Coast*, a coastal-issues newsletter from the Texas General Land Office. A paper featuring the program and data collected by the high school students was published in the fall 2004 issue of *Shore & Beach* (Vol. 72, No. 4), the journal of the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association. A website (<http://coastal.beg.utexas.edu/thscmp/>) containing the latest information is central to the community outreach part of the project. If coastal residents wish to view the effects of a storm that strikes the upper coast, they are able to do so by accessing the THSCMP website to view maps, graphs, and photographs collected by Ball High School. Curiosity may drive this inquiry at first, but eventually awareness and appreciation of coastal processes and how future storms could affect a community will increase.

(3) *Achieve a better understanding of the relationship between coastal processes, beach morphology, and shoreline change and make data and findings available for solving coastal management problems.* The Bureau of Economic Geology (Bureau) at UT has conducted a 30-year research program to monitor shorelines and investigate coastal processes. An important part of this program is the repeated mapping of the shoreline and measurement of beach profiles. Over time, these data are used to determine the rate of shoreline change. A problem we face is the limited temporal resolution in our shoreline data. The beach is a dynamic environment where significant changes in shape and sand volume can occur over periods of days or even hours. Tides, storms, and seasonal wind patterns cause large, periodic or quasi-periodic changes in the shape of the beach. If coastal data are not collected often enough, periodic variations in beach morphology could be misinterpreted as secular changes. The THSCMP helps address this problem by providing scientific data at key locations along the Texas coast. These data are integrated into the ongoing coastal research program at the Bureau and are made available to other researchers and coastal managers.

## Methods

The central element in the high school monitoring program is at least three class field trips during the academic year, weather permitting. During each trip, students visit several locations and apply scientific procedures to measuring beach morphology and making observations on beach, weather, and wave conditions. These procedures were developed during the program's pilot year (1997–1998) and are presented in detail in a manual and on the website, which also includes field forms. Following is a general discussion of the field measurements.

(1) *Beach profile.* Students use a pair of Emery rods, a metric tape, and a hand level to accurately survey a shore-normal beach profile from behind the foredunes to the waterline (Fig. 2). The students begin the profile at a

presurveyed datum stake so that they can compare each new profile with earlier profiles. Consistently oriented photographs are taken with a digital camera. The beach profiles provide detailed data on the volume of sand and the shape of the beach.



Figure 2. Students using (A) a sighting level to determine vertical offset between Emery rods and (B) a metric tape to measure horizontal distance.

- (2) *Shoreline and vegetation-line mapping.* Using a differential Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver, students walk along the vegetation line and shoreline mapping these features for display on Geographic Information System software. The GPS mapping provides measurements of the rate of change.
- (3) *Sediment sampling.* Students occasionally take sediment samples along the beach profile at the foredune crest, berm top, and beach face. They then sieve the samples, weigh the grain-size fractions, and inspect the grains using a microscope. These samples show the dependence of sand characteristics on the various processes acting on the beach.
- (4) *Beach processes* (Fig. 3). Students measure wind speed and direction, estimate the width of the surf zone, and observe breaker type. They note wave direction, height, and period and estimate longshore current speed and direction using a float, stop watch, and tape measure. They also take readings of shoreline and foredune orientation. From these measurements, students can infer relationships between physical processes and beach changes in time and space. Students also learn to obtain weather and oceanographic data from resources on the Internet.



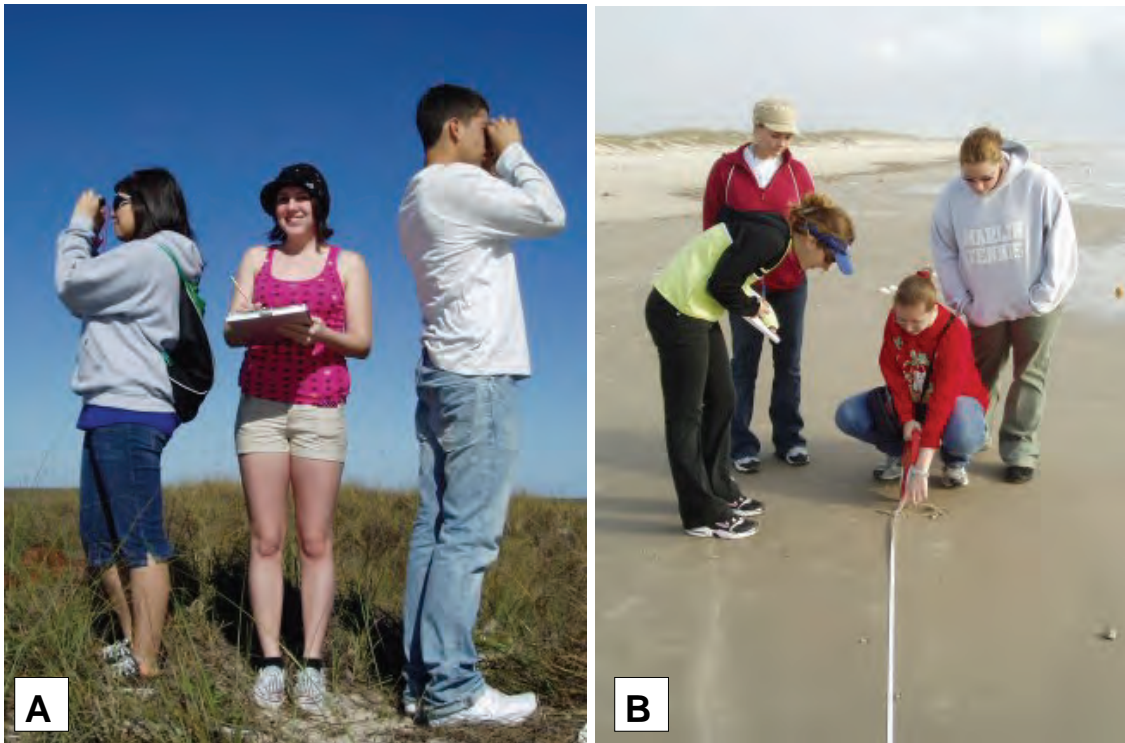


Figure 3. Students (A) using a sighting compass to measure dune orientation and (B) measuring how far along the shoreline the float (an orange) drifted to determine longshore current.

### Training

Bureau scientists provide teachers with all the training, information, field forms, and equipment needed to conduct field and lab measurements. During the school year, Bureau scientists accompany students on at least one field trip and make at least two classroom visits, which may be included with the field trips. The classroom visits provide students with more insight into conducting scientific research. The scientists discuss with the students general and theoretical issues regarding scientific research, as well as specific techniques and issues related to coastal research. The visits also provide scientists with an opportunity to ensure quality of the data.

### Data Management, Data Analysis, and Dissemination of Information

The web is central to the dissemination of data collected for this program. A website (<http://coastal.beg.utexas.edu/thscmp/>), which resides on a UT server, was implemented toward the end of the 1998–1999 academic year. The website provides all the information needed to begin a beach-monitoring program, as well as curriculum materials for high school teachers. Each school in the program has an area on the website for posting its data and observations, including photos taken by an electronic camera. Bureau scientists manage the data in an electronic database and make them available to the public. Bureau scientists

also evaluate the data in light of coastal management problems. Students and the public can now interactively plot beach profiles and retrieve data through the website.

## STUDENT, TEACHER, AND SCIENTIST INTERACTIONS DURING THE 2010–2011 ACADEMIC YEAR

Bureau scientist Ms. Tiffany Caudle worked with teachers Ms. Sara Black of Ball High School, Mr. William Slingerland of Port Aransas High School, and Dr. Michelle Zacher of Port Isabel High School. Ms. Black chose her Advanced Placement Environmental Science classes to participate in the program. Mr. Slingerland chose his Aquatic Sciences classes to participate in the program. Port Isabel High School biology teacher, Dr. Zacher, used 9<sup>th</sup> graders from her Biology classes.

The Bureau is working together with the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) at Matagorda Bay Nature Park. This collaboration has allowed the Bureau to expand the THSCMP to three schools in the Bay City, Texas, region. Expansion of the program has not only increased the number of schools, but now includes younger students, who are making the same field measurements as the high school students, but who are visiting only one profile site per field trip. Ms. Caudle worked with teachers Mr. Warren Morris of Palacios High School, Mr. Robert Hutto from Tidehaven Middle School, and Ms. Meredith Keelan of Van Vleck High School during the first field trip of the 2010–2011 academic year. Representatives from LCRA worked with teachers during other field trips.

After a workshop held at TAMUCC, the Innovation Academy for Engineering, Environmental and Marine Science at Cunningham Middle School (Corpus Christi Independent School District) expressed interest in joining the program. Ms. Caudle worked with Ms. Hillary Kramer, Mr. Johnnie Darnell, and Mr. Manuel Castillo to include Cunningham Middle School in the program. Approximately 50 students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade actively participated during the 2010–2011 academic year.

Bureau scientists visited each school at least once, letting the visits coincide with field trips. During and after field trips and during lectures, the scientists discussed careers in science and university life with students. These visits served not only to enhance scientific instruction, but they also gave students insight into science as a career.

During field trips, students were divided into two or three teams, according to the size of the class. One team measured the profile while the other team collected data on weather and waves and conducted a GPS survey of the shoreline and vegetation line. Team members had specific tasks, and students took turns performing them. After each team completed its tasks at the first

location, the teams switched roles so that everyone had an opportunity to conduct all measurements.

Dividing students into two four- to seven-member teams works well. One team conducts the beach profile, and the other measures processes and the shoreline. Extra tasks can be assigned to the team that finishes first. It is important to assign each student a job to keep him or her focused and interested, although time for a little fun is also allowed. People normally think of the beach as a place of recreation, and participation in this project should not change that. In fact, it is hoped that program participants will enjoy going to the beach even more because of their newly acquired knowledge and observation skills.

The method of breaking students into teams and collecting data works well for Advanced Placement students at Ball, Port Aransas, and Port Isabel High Schools. Adding middle-school students to the program has changed our approach to working with students, but only slightly. For example, Bay City regional schools, which collect data on Matagorda Peninsula, collect data from only one monitoring site. Because of the distance from the schools to the beach (~45 minutes to 1 hour each way), time will not allow data collection from multiple sites. At Tidehaven Middle School, the Spanish Science Club usually conducts its field trips on Saturday mornings because the group from Tidehaven is a club and it is harder for the members to receive permission to leave school during regular hours. Instead of breaking into groups to collect the data, we attempt to keep the students active by constantly rotating them through the different positions. The last student to conduct a measurement teaches the next student.

The day of the field trip, students meet in the teacher's classroom to organize equipment and gather additional materials that they may need for the day (coolers with ice and water, lunches, etc.). Throughout the day, data and samples are collected from one to three locations, with sufficient time allotted for lunch and breaks. On some trips there is time for additional scientific inquiry. Port Isabel students visit the Laguna Madre Nature Trail on South Padre Island or use a seine net in Laguna Madre. Ball High School students observe the wetlands at Galveston Island State Park, as well as use different types of nets (seine, cast nets, etc.) to observe shrimp, crabs, and small fish that live in the waters at the edge of the wetlands. Port Aransas High School students visit the University of Texas Fisheries and Mariculture Laboratory or the Marine Science Institute. All trips allow ample time for careful data collection, while ensuring that the students are back at school about 1 hour before the end of the day. During this hour, equipment is stored and data are filed or transferred to the computer. Following are details on activities at each school.

#### Ball High School

Hurricane Ike struck the Texas coast near Galveston Island at the beginning of the 2008–2009 academic year. Because of the catastrophic impact

that Galveston Island received from the hurricane, Ball High School was closed for several weeks. In early October 2008, after inspection of the island by Bureau and Texas A&M University Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) scientists, it was determined that the monitoring site at Galveston Island State Park (BEG02) was unsafe for students to visit until debris was removed and the park was reopened. Profile BEG08 on Follets Island was inaccessible to buses because the Blue Water Highway (FM 3005) had been severely damaged during the storm surge. Although the highway is now reopened, Ball High students have not resumed monitoring this location. The original datum point for BEG08 was unrecoverable following Hurricane Ike. A new datum point was set on the landward side of the Blue Water Highway, which would require students to cross the highway on foot while conducting the profile. Students from Ball High School did not participate in the program during the 2008–2009 academic year, although data were collected at these sites by Bureau and TAMUCC scientists. Ball High School rejoined the program for the 2009–2010 academic year with a new teacher and a new monitoring site.

Ms. Sara Black's AP Environmental Science classes at Ball High School participated in field trips on September 22, 2010; January 21, 2011; and May 18, 2011. They conducted surveys at two locations in Galveston Island State Park—BEG02 and GLO06 (Fig. 4)—profiles that the Bureau has been measuring since the 1980's. Ms. Caudle accompanied the class and provided further training and background information to the students. In addition to the Ball High School Sophomore, Junior, and Senior students, eight Crenshaw Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from Bolivar Peninsula joined the September and January field trips, but a scheduling conflict kept them from participating in the May field trip. The teachers have requested that Crenshaw Middle School continue to participate in future years. They have also requested that a monitoring site be established on Bolivar Peninsula within walking distance of the school. The students may be able to collect data at their site once a month throughout the academic year.

#### Port Aransas High School

Port Aransas students participated in field trips on September 30, 2010, and May 11, 2011. The September field trip proved challenging owing to rattlesnake sightings in the dunes. The teacher and Ms. Caudle did not feel comfortable with the students crossing thick, knee- to waist-high vegetation after a rattlesnake had been sighted at the first location. Profiles were nonetheless conducted from the vegetation line or dune crest to the waterline to give the students experience collecting topographic profiles. These data are not included in the analysis. A winter field trip was scheduled for January 24, 2011, which was cancelled owing to bad weather, and was rescheduled for February 10, 2011. The second field-trip date was also cancelled owing to student ineligibility. Only two students would have been available to participate. Mr. Slingerland's class collected data at three profile locations on Mustang Island: MUI01 near Horace



Caldwell Pier, MUI02 in Mustang Island State Park, and MUI03 (Fig. 5). Port Aransas High School has been measuring these profiles since 1999. Ms. Caudle accompanied the class and provided further training and background information to the students.

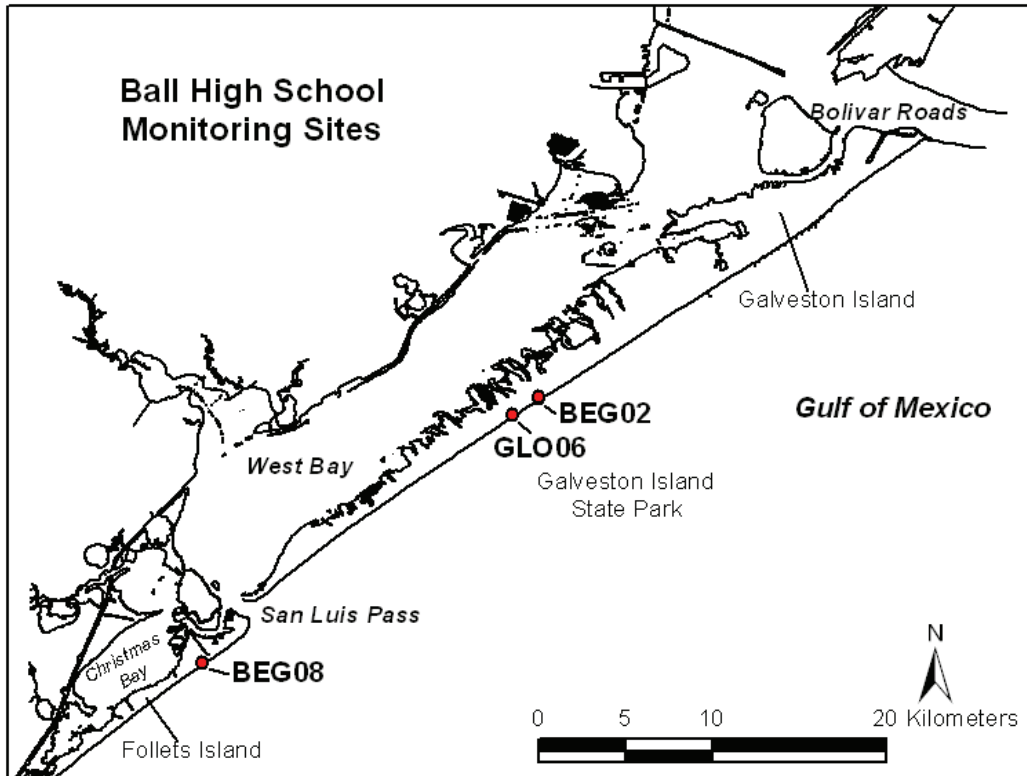


Figure 4. Location map of Ball High School monitoring sites.

#### Port Isabel High School

Port Isabel students participated in field trips on September 28, 2010; January 20, 2011; and May 13, 2011. Students from Dr. Zacher's Biology classes collected data at three profile locations on South Padre Island: SPI01 in Isla Blanca Park, SPI02 at Beach Access #13, and the newest site, SPI08, at the Tiki Condominiums (E. Whitesands Street) (Fig. 6). Port Isabel High School has been measuring SPI01 and SPI02 since 1999, and SPI08 since 2007. Ms. Caudle was able to accompany the class on every field trip to provide further training and background information to the students.

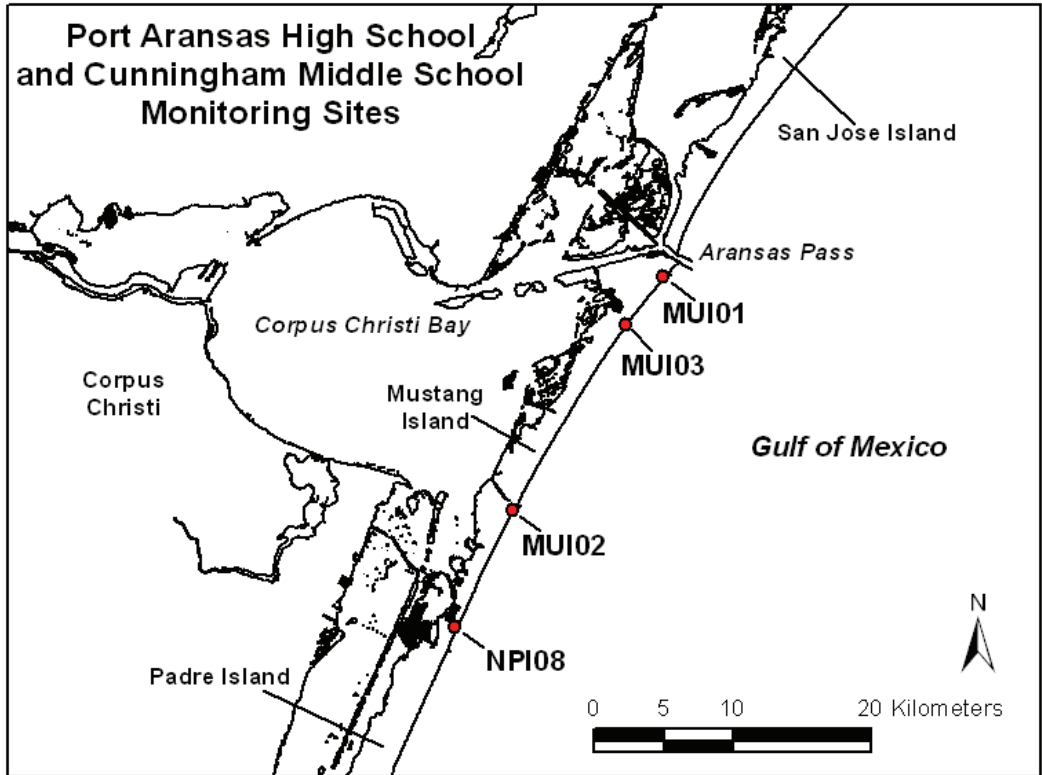


Figure 5. Location map of Port Aransas High School (MUI01, MUI02, MUI03) and Cunningham Middle School (NPI08) monitoring sites.

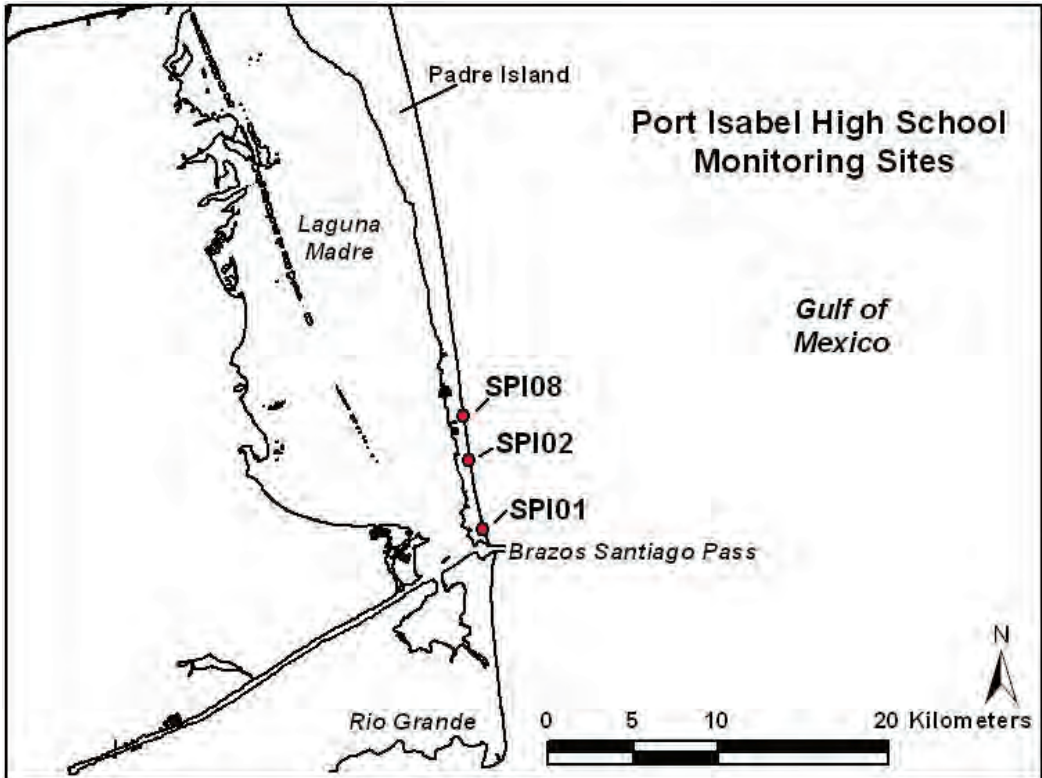


Figure 6. Location map of Port Isabel High School monitoring sites.

## Bay City Area Schools

Van Vleck High School biology students participated in field trips on September 24, 2010; February 11, 2011; and May 20, 2011. Ms. Keelen's class collected data at MAT01 (Fig. 7). Physics students from Palacios High School participated in field trips on September 23, 2010; February 17, 2011; and May 10, 2011. Mr. Morris' students collected data at MAT02 (Fig. 7). The Spanish Science Club at Tidehaven Middle School participated in field trips on September 25, 2010; February 26, 2011; and June 3, 2011. The students from Tidehaven collected data at MAT03 (Fig. 7).

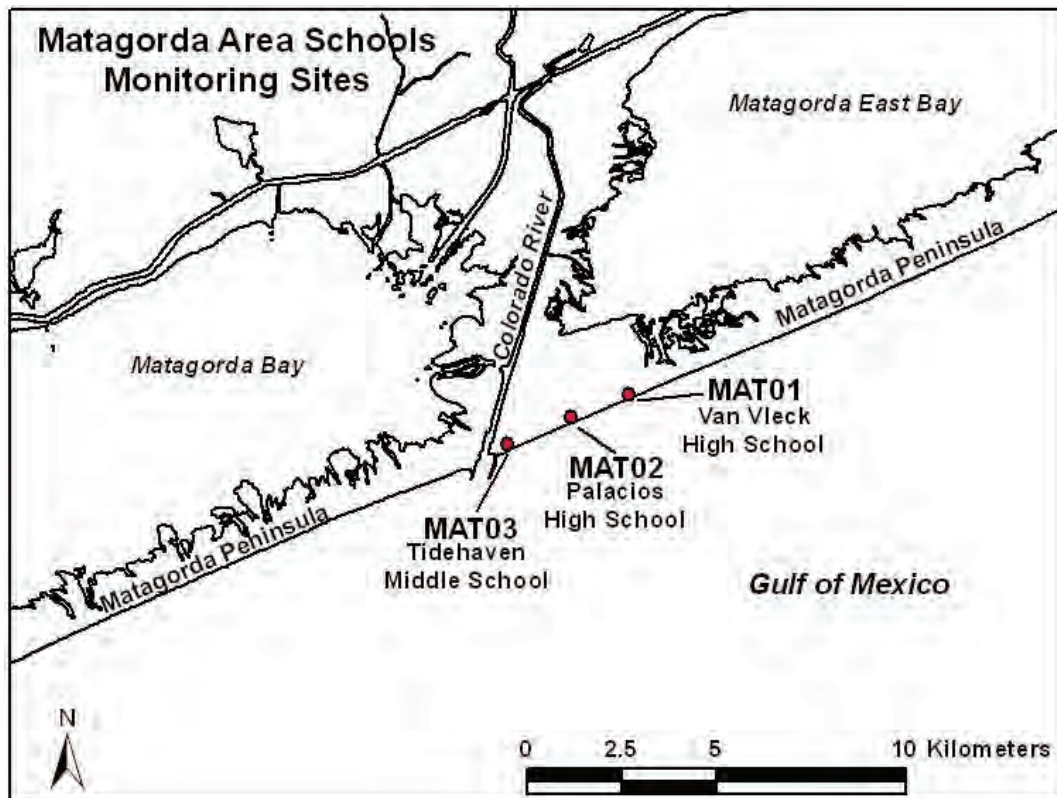


Figure 7. Location map of Matagorda Peninsula monitoring sites.

## Cunningham Middle School

The Innovation Academy at Cunningham Middle School asked to join the program after participating in a workshop at TAMUCC in November 2008. The teachers at Cunningham Middle School expressed a desire to include all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (~75 students) in the field trips. An initial field trip was held on April 14, 2009, in which only the class ambassadors participated so that they could learn measurement techniques. During the 2009–2010 academic year, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class was divided into 3 groups of approximately 25 students each. A different group participates in each of the three field trips in order to accommodate the entire class. The students are further split into two groups during the field trip. One group works on the topographic profile while the second

makes wind, waves, and current observations. The groups then switch in order for every student to have experience collecting all of the data. The Bureau collaborates with graduate students and staff at TAMUCC to conduct field trips with Cunningham Middle School, owing to the large number of students that participate in the program. Cunningham students participated in field trips on October 1, 2010, and February 11, 2011, collecting data at NPI08 on North Padre Island (Fig. 5). A third field trip was scheduled for May 6, 2011, but was cancelled by Cunningham Middle School staff owing to a scheduling conflict. Ms. Caudle and Cunningham teachers tried to reschedule, but the calendar was unfortunately too full, owing to end-of-school-year activities.

## EFFECTS ON SCIENCE CURRICULUM

The THSCMP addresses several requirements of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for science, and the program was relevant in these 2010–2011 Texas high school courses: (1) Environmental Systems, (2) Aquatic Sciences, and (3) Geology, Meteorology, and Oceanography. The program also addresses several National Science Education Standards: (1) unifying concepts and processes in science, (2) science as inquiry, (3) physical science, (4) Earth and space science, (5) science and technology, and (6) science in personal and social perspectives.

TEKS and Standards related to applying scientific methods in field and laboratory investigations in these courses are well covered in the coastal monitoring program. Specific requirements, such as (1) collecting data and making measurements with precision, (2) analyzing data using mathematical methods, (3) evaluating data and identifying trends, and (4) planning and implementing investigative procedures, are an excellent fit with the program. TEKS and Standards, which require students to use critical thinking and scientific problem solving to make informed decisions, are also well served. Teachers and scientists can use the program to illustrate to students the role science could, should, or does play in developing public policy. A case study of a local erosion problem could be used to illustrate.

## EFFECTS ON SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, COASTAL MANAGEMENT, AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

During the 2010–2011 academic year, Ball High School students measured a profile location in Galveston Island State Park (BEG02, Fig. 4). Ball High School students had measured this same location in previous years, and the Bureau had conducted quarterly surveys at these locations from 1983 through 1985 after Hurricane Alicia. Since 1985, however, the beaches had been surveyed on an irregular schedule, about once a year, and only when specific projects were funded to do so or when Bureau personnel were in the area conducting other work. The THSCMP helps ensure that time series at these



key locations are continued. The Galveston Island State Park profile has increased in importance because it serves as a control site for comparing profiles measured in front of geotextile tube projects along Pirates Beach to the northeast. Results of a study utilizing data collected by Ball High School students were published in *Shore & Beach*, the journal of the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association. The data have increased scientific understanding of recovery of beaches and dunes following storms (Hurricane Alicia, Tropical Storm Frances, Hurricane Claudette, Hurricane Rita, Hurricane Ike) that have impacted the area.

Palacios, Port Aransas, Port Isabel, and Van Vleck High Schools and Tidehaven Middle School continued the beach-profile time series at their established locations, and Cunningham Middle School established baseline data at its monitoring location. Profile and process data that the students collected have been incorporated into the beach-profile database at the Bureau, and scientists are using these data to investigate beach-erosion patterns. These data can be viewed at the THSCMP website at <http://coastal.beg.utexas.edu/thscmp/>.

To support coastal management issues, data collected by the students are clearly useful in explaining beach cycles and defining short-term versus long-term trends. Defining these trends is important in decision making regarding coastal development and beach nourishment. The program has also increased public awareness through the students. Given the number of inquiries from people wishing to enter their school or group in THSCMP, the program seems to be reaching the public. Television reports, presentations at conferences, and newspaper articles have helped. The website will continue to be instrumental in extending the reach of the program and increasing public awareness of coastal processes.

## SCIENTIFIC RESULTS OF 1997–2011 STUDIES

The first goal of the Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program is to provide high school students with an inquiry-based learning experience, which is achieved by involving students in a real-world research project. The student-collected beach data can be and have been used by researchers at the Bureau to help respond to several beach-related issues. Data are also available to coastal managers and the public online at <http://coastal.beg.utexas.edu/thscmp/>.

Profile data are entered into the public-domain software package, *Beach Morphology and Analysis Package* (BMAP). BMAP Version 2, developed by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, is commonly used by coastal engineers and scientists for beach-profile analysis. Beach-volume calculations were made using BMAP, and shoreline and vegetation-line positions were determined from notes made by students and scientists while in the field collecting data. The shoreline is designated by the wet/dry line or a berm crest. Volume, shoreline, and

vegetation-line plots for each monitoring site are found in Appendix B, and profile plots are in Appendix C.

Students from Ball High School have been collecting data for the coastal monitoring program since 1997. During this timeframe, Tropical Storm Frances (September 1998) played a major role in reshaping the beaches in Galveston County. Data collected by Ball High School students on Galveston Island have been used by scientists at the Bureau to track beach and dune recovery stages following Tropical Storm Frances. The storm caused significant damage to beaches along the southeast coast of Texas that was comparable to damage caused by category-3 Hurricane Alicia in 1983 (Hepner and Gibeaut, 2004). Several other severe storms have impacted the study area. Allison (June 2001), Fay (September 2002), Hurricane Claudette (July 2003), and Hurricane Rita (September 2005) have each caused varying amounts of damage to beaches and dunes along the Texas coast (Fig. 8). Ball High School students provided important prestorm beach topography data from their two key locations during the 2005–2006 and 2007–2008 academic years.

Hurricane Rita made landfall at Sabine Pass on the Texas–Louisiana border at 7:30 UTC on September 24, 2005. Rita was a category 3 hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of about 105 knots. Overall, Rita did not cause the kind of episodic beach or dune erosion on Galveston or Follets Islands that Frances had in 1998. Figure 9 is a plot of pre- and post-storm beach profiles measured at Galveston Island State Park. The prestorm profile was measured by Ball High School science students, and the post-storm profile was measured by scientists from the Bureau. Rita flattened the profile and caused a small amount of overwash deposition, but positions of the vegetation line and shoreline were not greatly affected (Fig. 8) (Gibeaut, 2005).

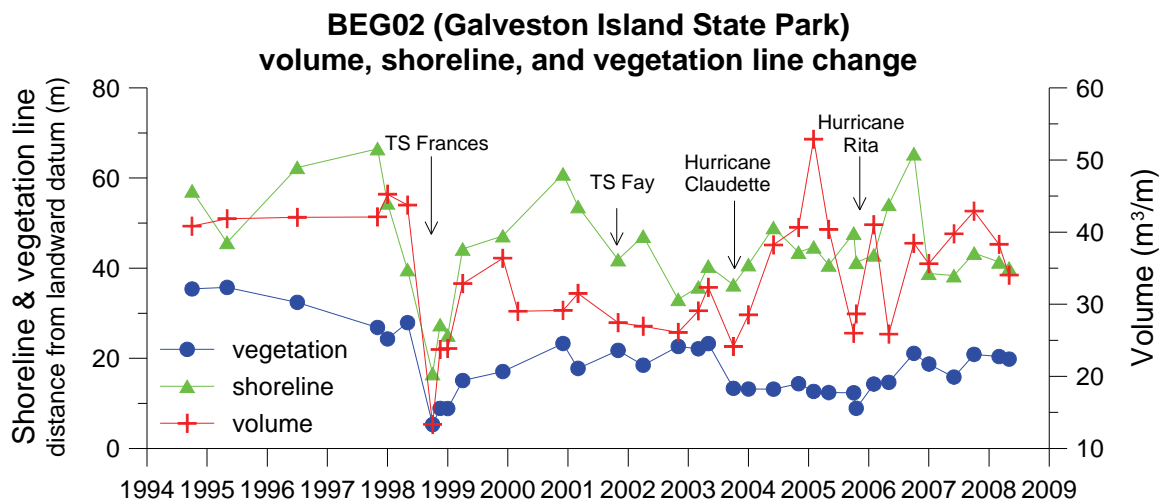


Figure 8. Profile volume, shoreline, and vegetation-line changes at Galveston Island State Park, September 1994–April 2008.

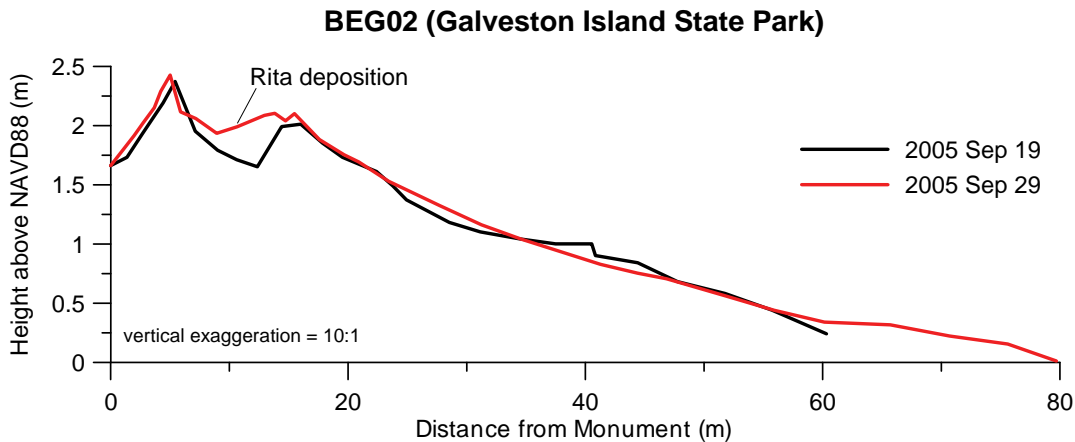


Figure 9. Plot of pre- and post-Rita beach profiles measured at Galveston Island State Park.

The 2008–2009 academic year was severely affected by the landfall of Hurricane Ike on Galveston Island September 13, 2008. Palacios, Port Aransas, Tidehaven, and Van Vleck school field trips were postponed because of school closings in preparation for the hurricane. Owing to the sheer size of the storm, impacts from this hurricane were seen along the entire Texas coast, despite Ike’s being only a category 2 storm at the time of landfall. Dune erosion was also documented at Matagorda Peninsula and Mustang Island (see Appendix C).

Galveston Island experienced significant beach and dune erosion, as well as extensive damage to property and infrastructure because of Hurricane Ike. Ball High School students were unable to participate in the program during the 2008–2009 academic year owing to safety concerns about accessing their monitoring sites. Bureau and TAMUCC scientists visited Galveston Island in early October to conduct ground surveys—beach profiles, photography, and observations of beach and dune conditions—of the area impacted by the hurricane. Profile location BEG02 in Galveston Island State Park was visited during this reconnaissance trip, and it was found that the datum marker at BEG02 had been destroyed by the storm. GPS techniques were used to navigate to the horizontal location of the datum marker, which post-storm was on the open beach. The marker had been the corner of a concrete picnic pavilion landward of the foredunes. BEG02 was reset approximately 60 m landward of the old datum marker along the same azimuth line. The new marker (a buried metal pipe) is landward of a washover feature. A topographic profile was conducted at this time. GLO06, at the southwest corner of Galveston Island State Park was also lost as a result of Hurricane Ike. GLO06 was reset approximately 60 m landward of the old datum marker along the same azimuth line. The new marker is landward of the foredunes and adjacent to a wetland feature.

Ball High School students from the 2007–2008 academic year provided extremely valuable prestorm profile data on February 8, 2008, and April 23, 2008. These data have been used to determine how much the beach and dunes have changed after Hurricane Ike. Figure 10 is a profile plot at BEG02 comparing

Ball High prestorm profiles (February and April 2008) with the post-Hurricane Ike profile measured on October 7, 2008. The post-Tropical Storm Frances profile from September 16, 1998, is also plotted for comparison. The dune system at Galveston Island State Park was completely destroyed, and the shoreline (wet-dry line) moved 53 m landward between April 23, 2008, and October 7, 2008 (Fig. 10). The vegetation line moved 56 m landward. The old datum point was 1.14 m above the current surface of the beach.

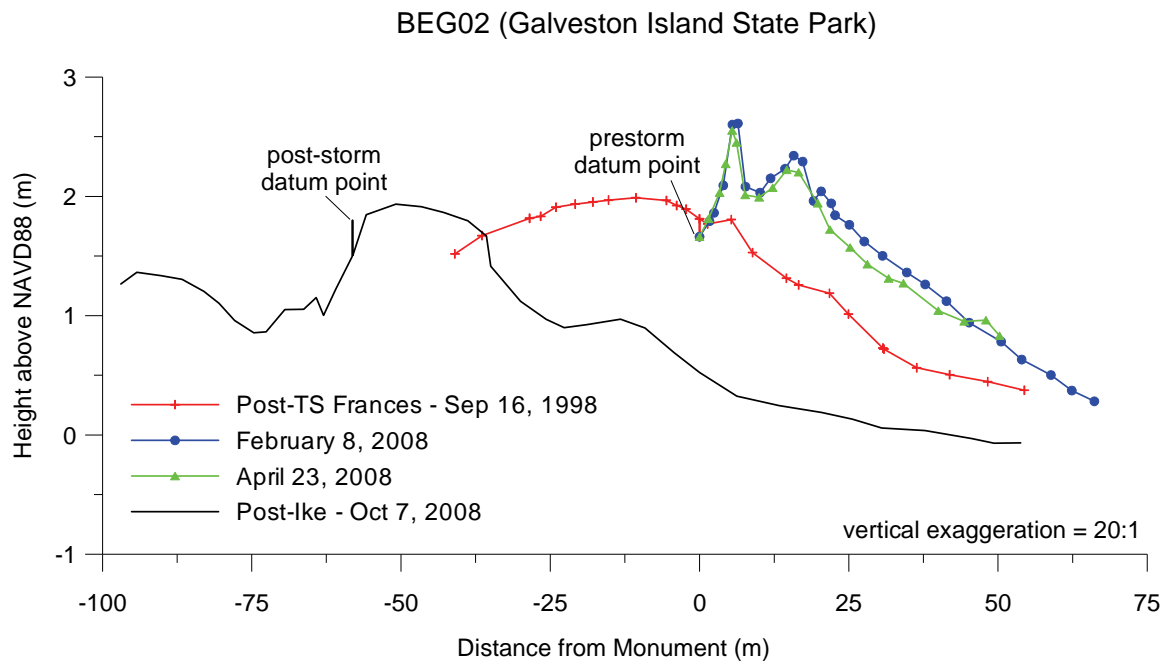


Figure 10. Beach profile plots from BEG02 in Galveston Island State Park comparing the post-Hurricane Ike profile with two prestorm profiles from early 2008 and the post-Tropical Storm Frances profile from September 1998. The old datum point is 0.

Ball High School students resumed monitoring beaches as part of the THSCMP at the start of the 2009 academic year. Students measured beach profiles at two sites within Galveston Island State Park. At both BEG02 (Fig. 10) and GLO06, beaches and dunes have continued to recover post-Hurricane Ike. Between September 2009 and January 2010, the foredunes at BEG02 had begun to grow. Whether the growth of the foredune is due to natural recovery processes or human intervention is unclear.



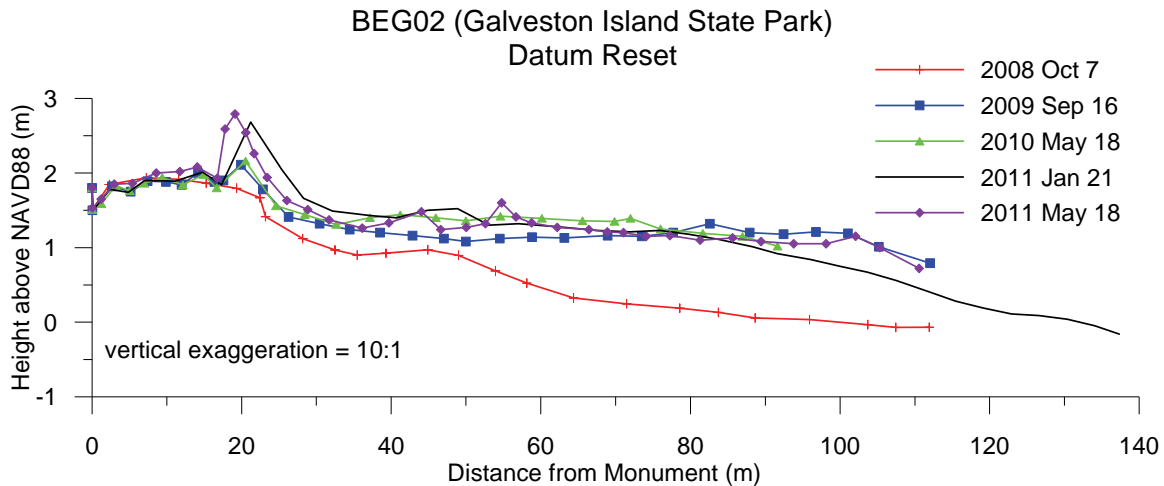


Figure 11. BEG02 datum reset post-storm profile plus data collected by Ball High School students. Students are monitoring recovery of the beaches and dunes at this site.

Port Aransas and Port Isabel High Schools have been collecting beach-profile data and coastal-process observations since 1999. Although neither Mustang Island nor South Padre Island have experienced the type of dramatic shoreline change due to major storms that Galveston Island has, the information gained from the students' work has been beneficial to Bureau researchers' understanding of the dynamics of the Texas coast.

Brazos Santiago Pass, the southern border of South Padre Island, is dredged biannually. The pass serves as the southern Gulf of Mexico access to the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the Port of Brownsville. Dredged material is placed on beaches of South Padre Island, and the three sites monitored by Port Isabel High School students are within the nourishment areas. The SPI02 monitoring site has also been used by students and scientists to monitor the growth of dunes. When SPI02 was established in August 2000, there were no dunes between the seawall and the waterline at this location. Since that time, sand fences have been installed, and vegetation has been planted. Profile data have been quantifying the effects of these actions (Fig. 12). The storm surge due to Hurricane Ike deposited sand in the dune area at SPI02 and covered the vegetation, essentially flattening the profile. Port Isabel students will be monitoring new dunes that form at this location. Hurricane Dolly made landfall on South Padre Island near Port Mansfield on July 23, 2008. Impacts to beaches and dunes in the Port Isabel students' study area were not measured because of the arrival of Hurricane Ike before their first field trip.

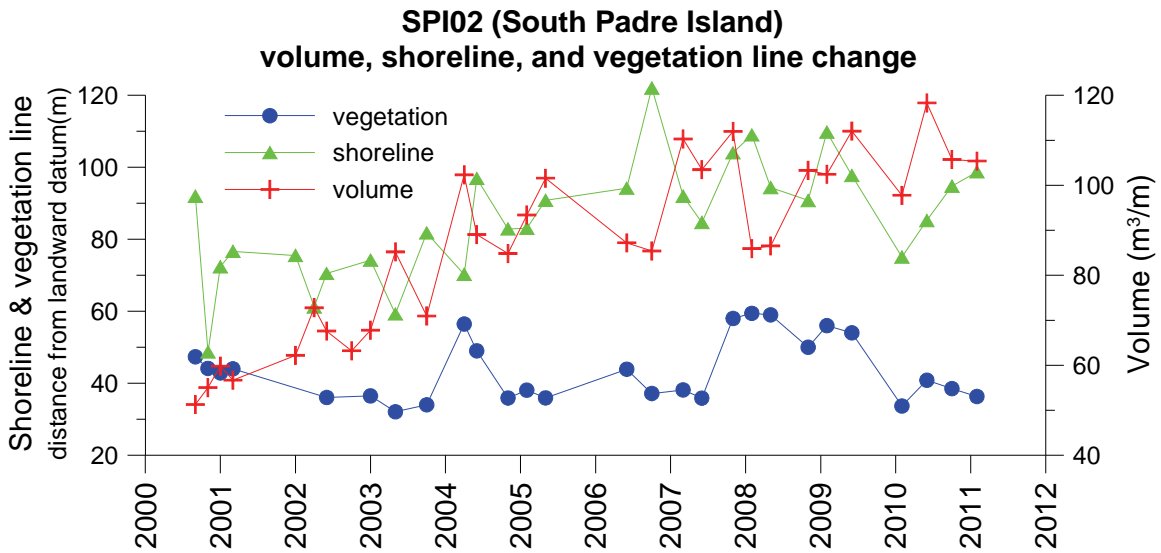


Figure 12. Changes at SPI02 on South Padre Island due to installation of sand fence and beach nourishment.

Starting in the 2007–2008 academic year, students at Port Isabel High School began gathering data at an additional monitoring site at a chronically eroding location in front of the Tiki Condominiums near the north end of the city, SPI08 (Fig. 6). This site has a narrow beach backed by a seawall (see Appendix B for profile plots) that periodically receives nourishment sand from road maintenance north of the City of South Padre Island. During the May 14, 2010, field trip, Port Isabel students and UT scientists observed that sand fencing had been installed and vegetation planted adjacent to the seawall. When the students returned to the site on September 28, 2010, the sand fence had been completely removed and there was no trace of vegetation in front of the seawall. The narrow beach at this site appears to be unable to support dune formation. A larger beach nourishment project using sand dredged from Brazos Santiago Pass was completed on South Padre Island in early 2011. The width of the beach and volume of sand significantly increased at the SPI08 location, although there are still no dunes or vegetation in front of the seawall (Fig. 13). As of the May 13, 2011, field trip a 0.5-m scarp had formed at the shoreline. Port Isabel students will continue to monitor changes at this site to determine whether the nourished beach will reach equilibrium.

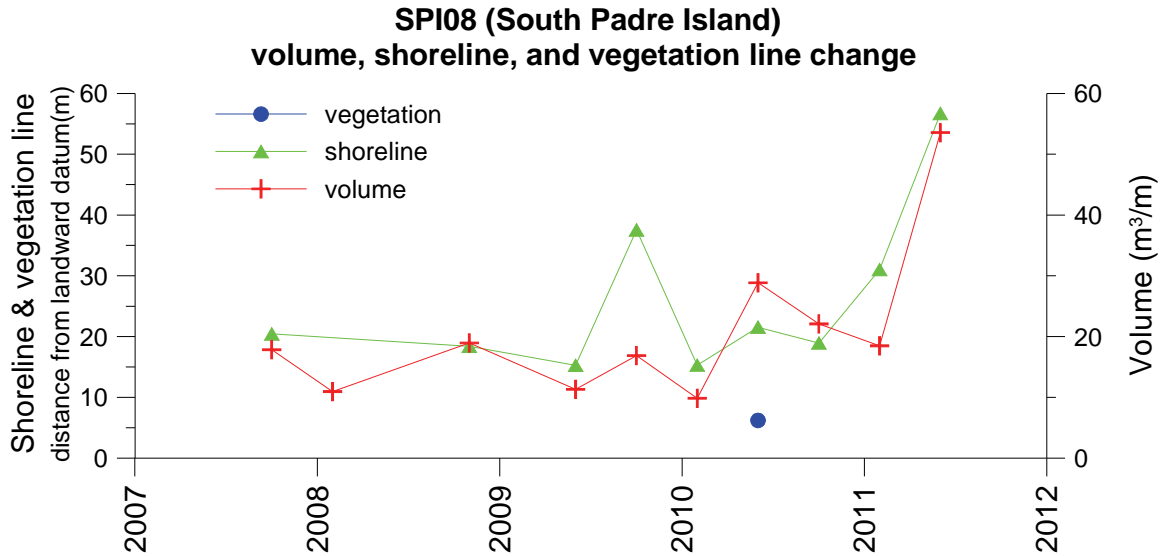


Figure 13. Volume and shoreline changes at SPI08 on South Padre Island due to beach nourishment.

The beach-monitoring activities of Port Aransas High School students have also provided beneficial information regarding the beach and dune system on Mustang Island. The dune system on Mustang is healthy, with tall (greater than 3 m), wide foredunes along most of the island. The only breaks in the foredune system are at beach access points and washover features. On Mustang Island, beaches are regularly scraped to remove seaweed from the forebeach. The sand and seaweed removed from the berm and forebeach are regularly placed at the seaward base of the foredunes. Since the beginning of the coastal monitoring program, Port Aransas students have been monitoring the growth of the foredune system at their profiling sites. Figure 14 is an example of the expansion of the foredune at MUI01 near Horace Caldwell Pier in Port Aransas. Note that the width of the dune has increased between 2001 and 2011, although the shoreline has remained in a relatively stable position.

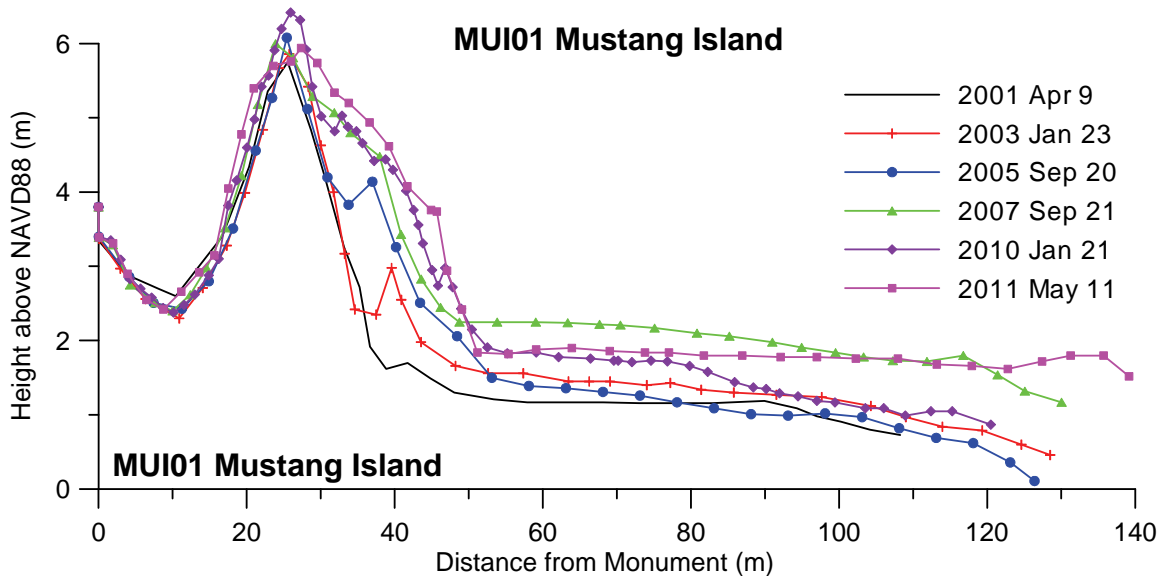


Figure 14. Foredune expansion at MUI01 on Mustang Island.

Palacios, Van Vleck, and Tidehaven students have continued their beach measurements at Matagorda Bay Nature Park. The park has two special circumstances that make this monitoring especially informative and important. Monitoring sites have been established on the up-drift side of the jetty at the mouth of the Colorado River and at sites that allow us to compare (1) a beach/dune system where vehicular traffic on the beach will be strictly prohibited (MAT03) with (2) an adjacent area where vehicular traffic will continue to be permitted (MAT01 and MAT02). Impacts of coastal structures (jetties) are critical to coastal management, and impacts of vehicles on Texas' beaches are not well documented. Vehicular traffic was permitted on the pedestrian beach at the Nature Park until 2007. There is now a call to reopen this section of beach to vehicular traffic because of a perceived lack of use by pedestrian-only beachgoers. Data collected between 2005 and 2007 will serve as baseline data for the study on vehicular impact on beaches if the beach remains closed to vehicles. Because it is still too early in the study to compare the beaches, in the interest of scientific study, we hope that the beach remains a pedestrian beach. Also during the 2009–2010 academic year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began constructing a new north jetty at the mouth of the Colorado River. Student data collected at MAT03 over the next several years will be used to determine whether the design change of the jetty has an impact on Matagorda Peninsula.

Cunningham Middle School students have already witnessed a remarkable change in their profile location only after 2 years of monitoring. When the program began in 2009, a new profile marker was established along the profile azimuth directly behind the foredune so as to shorten the profile for the middle school students. Owing to the sparse vegetation on the foredune, sand is constantly being rearranged by the prevailing winds. Sand has been moved from the top of the foredune down the back slope of the dune so that now the landward toe of the dune has buried the new datum pipe. In addition, the

continuous line of vegetation is gradually moving landward. This new North Padre Island site has added a highly dynamic foredune location to the THSCMP system that will be interesting to monitor and to compare with the well-vegetated foredunes to the north on Mustang Island.

Future measurements by all schools involved in THSCMP will show not only change through time at each location, but also spatial variation along the Texas coast. Through time, data collected from Galveston Island, Matagorda Peninsula, Mustang Island, North Padre Island, and South Padre Island will help scientists better understand the relationship between coastal processes, beach morphology, and shoreline change at these locations.

## WEBSITE UPGRADES

The program's website (<http://coastal.beg.utexas.edu/thscmp/index.html>) was redesigned and evolved during the 2006–2007 academic year. The color scheme was changed to make it more appealing, and several exercises were developed as part of a National Science Foundation grant that utilize data collected by participants in the program, which were added to the new site. Field guides for Mustang and Galveston Islands were added in 2007. The photo gallery is periodically updated as well to include all photos since the program began. Data collected by the students is also posted on this site.

An exciting upgrade to the website during the 2008–2009 academic year was an interactive virtual barrier island. The Bureau, along with TAMUCC, has developed a 3-D virtual model of the Gulf of Mexico and Texas coastal environments for use in the classroom and for the general public to explore how relative sea-level change, caused by climate change and other things, may impact the coastal zone. The virtual barrier island can be downloaded from the website to run on users' computers. A lesson plan titled *Sea-Level Changes and the Texas Coastal Environment* has also been created for use in the classroom. This lesson encourages students to consider the impacts of increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and how they may affect climate change, sea level, and, eventually, coastal environments. A PowerPoint presentation offers teachers the opportunity to introduce the lesson in their classrooms, and a 10-minute video explains how to navigate and manipulate the data within the model.

The 3-D model was presented to teachers and educators at two conferences during the 2009–2010 academic year. The first was a short course at the Conference for the Advancement of Science Teaching (CAST), which is the annual meeting for the Science Teachers Association of Texas (STAT), in Galveston on November 5, 2009. The second presentation was during an Educator Workshop at the International Conference on Sea-Level Rise in the Gulf of Mexico in Corpus Christi in early March 2010. Both presentations were met with enthusiastic response from educators who attended the programs.



The 3-D model has also been presented to the students participating in the THSCMP during the 2010—2011 academic year. In addition, the model will be part of a summer teacher workshop in late June, “Groundwater to the Gulf,” at Matagorda Bay Nature Park.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program provides high school students with a real-world learning experience outside the everyday classroom. The program not only provides hands-on education, but it also complies with many TEKS requirements. The 2010–2011 academic year was productive, with Ball, Palacios, Port Aransas, Port Isabel, and Van Vleck High Schools and Cunningham and Tidehaven Middle Schools collecting data on several field trips. Another exciting addition to the program has been the debut of the virtual barrier island.

In the 14 years since the inception of the Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program, work by students at Ball, Port Aransas, Port Isabel, Palacios, and Van Vleck High Schools and Cunningham and Tidehaven Middle Schools has been beneficial to Bureau researchers and coastal managers in several Bureau research projects. Availability of data through the program’s website allows access to coastal managers and the public. Scientists, students, and the public will continue to gain a better understanding of coastal processes and shoreline change along the Texas coast through this successful student research program.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We consider the fourteenth year of the Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program a success and offer the following recommendations for continuance and expansion of the program.

1. Emphasize to students that they are working on a real research project and are collecting scientifically valid data that will eventually appear in a scientific publication. This is a major point that makes this program different from most other field trips or laboratory exercises. Asking students to conduct experiments that have real consequences seems to make a difference to them, and it probably improves the quality of the data.
2. Clearly tell students about the specific scientific problems being addressed, but also emphasize that what they are gaining in experience is not just how to measure beaches but how to conduct scientific field research in general. Students are also learning a different way of viewing their surroundings.
3. Survey a reasonable number of beaches, which, in most cases, means two or three. The program goals of scientific research and science education could

be at odds with one another. From a purely scientific point of view, it would be desirable to acquire as many data as possible. That approach, however, would not allow time for discussions on the beach that are not directly related to the measurements. Taking up too much time taking measurements would also hinder development of observation skills and keep students from enjoying their work.

4. The number of official field trips depends on the class, but a maximum of four trips is reasonable. Some trips may have to be cancelled because of bad weather or other unusual circumstances, and cancelled trips can be difficult to reschedule. Therefore, some freedom must be allowed in the program regarding number of trips and sites measured. Even if just one good data set is collected during the year, it will be useful scientifically. Some students might be encouraged to make additional trips on weekends or after school. Interested students should be encouraged to use the program in a science fair project.
5. A website adds an important dimension to the project, especially when multiple schools are participating. A website at which students can exchange observations with those of other schools in Texas increases the educational value of the program by allowing students to observe differences in processes along the coast. A website also illustrates to students how the Internet can be used to conduct research. Furthermore, the Internet is crucial in increasing public awareness of coastal processes, so providing immediate feedback to students through the Internet is important. Students want to see their data and photographs on the web, and feedback increases their interest in the project.
6. Encourage teachers to incorporate the data into the curricula for their other classes. One of the goals of the program is to increase public awareness and understanding of coastal processes and hazards. Disseminating data gathered by their peers may increase the interest of students not directly involved in the coastal monitoring program. Data collected and knowledge gained from analysis of the data are applicable to all Environmental Science, Geology, Aquatic Sciences, and Oceanography curricula.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Gibeaut, J. C., 2005. Field Surveys following Hurricane Rita: Preliminary Observations. The University of Texas at Austin, Bureau of Economic Geology. Open-File Report for Texas General Land Office. 22 pages.
- Hepner, T. L., and Gibeaut, J. C., 2004. Tracking post-storm beach recovery using data collected by Texas high school students. *Shore and Beach*. Volume 72, Number 4. Pages 5 to 9.

## APPENDIX A: PROFILE INFORMATION

All profile coordinates are in NAD83. Heights above the GRS80 Ellipsoid were converted to North American Vertical Datum 88 (NAVD88) using the Geoid99 Ellipsoid Model.

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Latitude (deg min)</b>	<b>Longitude (deg min)</b>	<b>Easting (m)</b>	<b>Northing (m)</b>	<b>HAE (m)</b>	<b>NAVD88 (m)</b>	<b>Azimuth (M)</b>
<b>BEG02</b>	29 11.64	94 57.09	310255.20	3231059.16	-24.75	1.66	139
<b>BEG02R<sup>1</sup></b>	29 11.67	94 57.11	310228.82	3231110.58	-24.61	1.80	139
<b>BEG08<sup>2</sup></b>	29 3.22	95 8.90	290838.52	3215830.51	-24.21	2.09	145
<b>GLO06</b>	29 11.12	94 58.05	308696.85	3230117.35	-24.32	2.08	138
<b>MAT01</b>	28 36.67	95 56.55	212269.73	3168453.74	-22.77	3.69	148
<b>MAT02</b>	28 36.31	95 57.47	210751.39	3167825.80	-23.25	3.22	148
<b>MAT03</b>	28 35.91	95 58.48	309090.26	3167112.23	-21.81	4.68	148
<b>MUI01</b>	27 49.53	97 03.40	691396.24	3079393.46	-22.29	3.79	123
<b>MUI02</b>	27 40.42	97 10.19	680502.58	3062387.97	-24.22	1.61	120
<b>MUI03</b>	27 47.66	97 05.08	688697.42	3075882.39	-22.24	3.79	125
<b>NPI08</b>	27 35.86	97 12.78	676359.73	3053901.89	-23.32	2.35	110
<b>NPI08R<sup>3</sup></b>	27 35.85	97 12.77	676381.84	3053893.52	-22.70	2.97	110
<b>SPI01</b>	26 4.57	97 9.46	684274.71	2885422.83	-18.48	2.75	70
<b>SPI02</b>	26 6.79	97 9.93	683438.99	2889509.24	-18.11	3.19	78
<b>SPI08</b>	26 8.17	97 10.10	683116.29	2892056.38	-18.32	3.01	75

<sup>1</sup>BEG02 reset in October 2008 after Hurricane Ike.

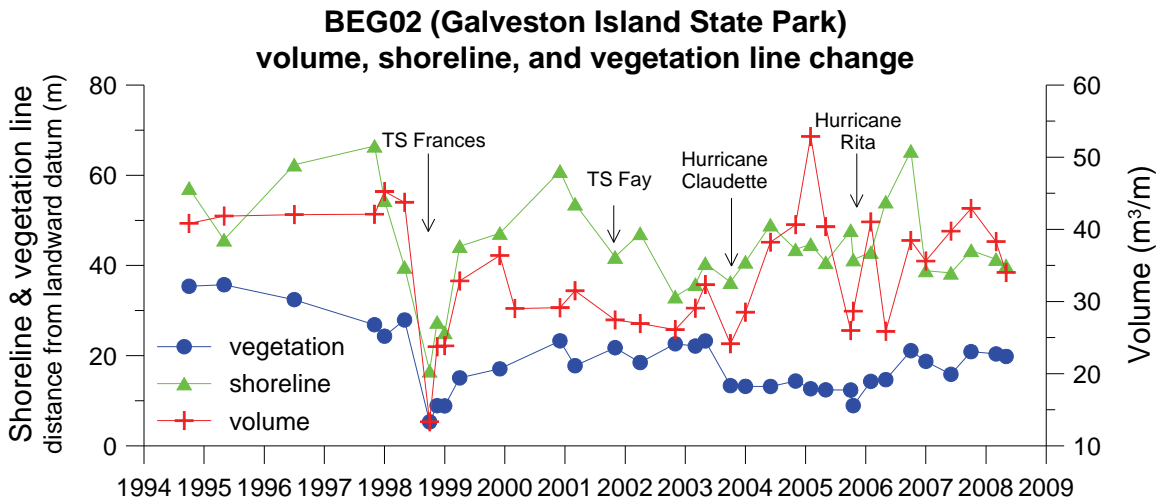
<sup>2</sup>BEG08 will not be monitored by Ball High School students post-Hurricane Ike. The original datum was lost in the storm. The reset mark is landward of the Bluewater Highway and therefore too dangerous for students to monitor.

<sup>3</sup>NPI08 reset closer to foredune in April 2009 in order for easier access by Cunningham Middle School students. New datum marker was buried by landward toe of dune between March and May 2010. Students have used the original marker since the May 2010 survey.

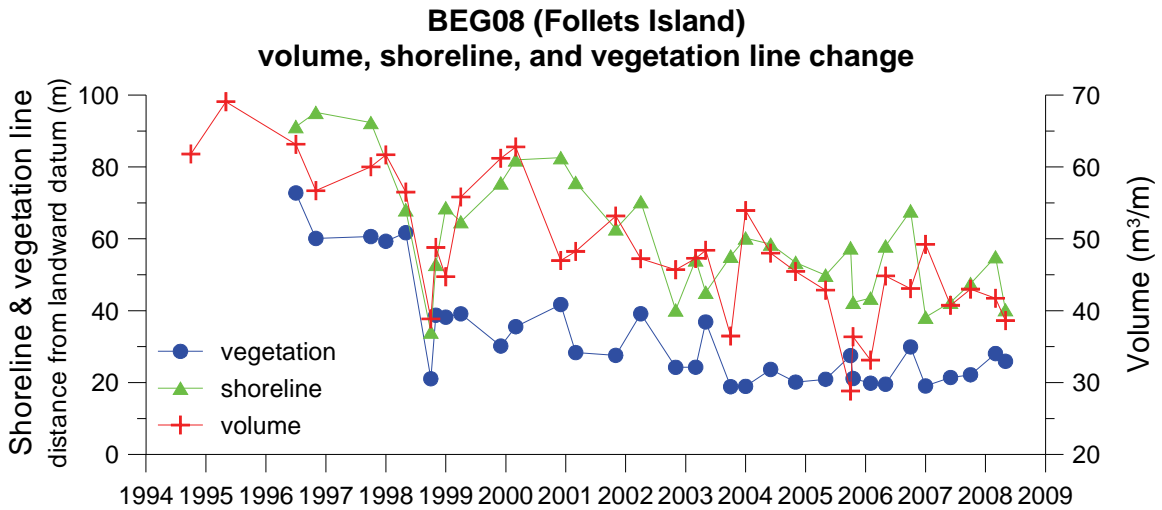


APPENDIX B: GRAPHS OF VOLUME, SHORELINE, AND VEGETATION-LINE  
CHANGE

BEG02 volumes were calculated from datum to 0.75 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -0.75 m were extrapolated.

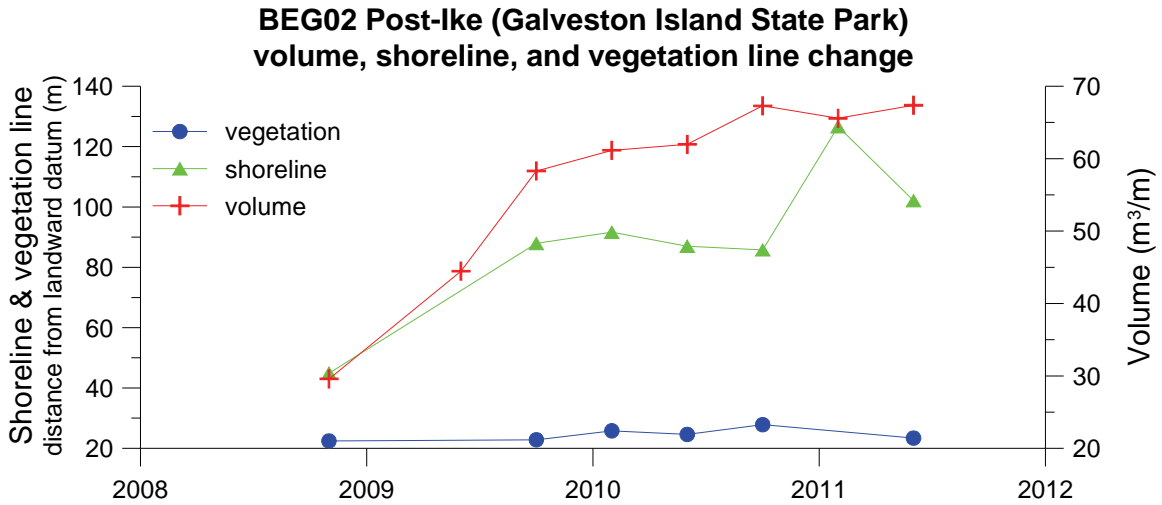


BEG08 volumes were calculated from datum to 1 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -1 m were extrapolated.

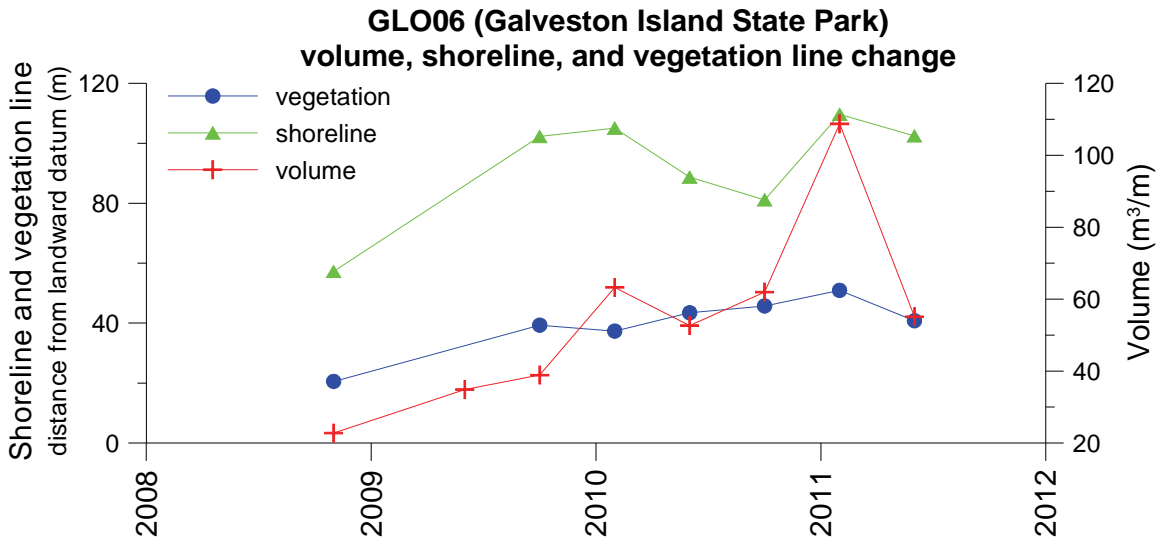


BEG02 and BEG08 have data from 1994 through the spring of 2008. Ball High School did not participate in the program because of Hurricane Ike's impact on Galveston Island.

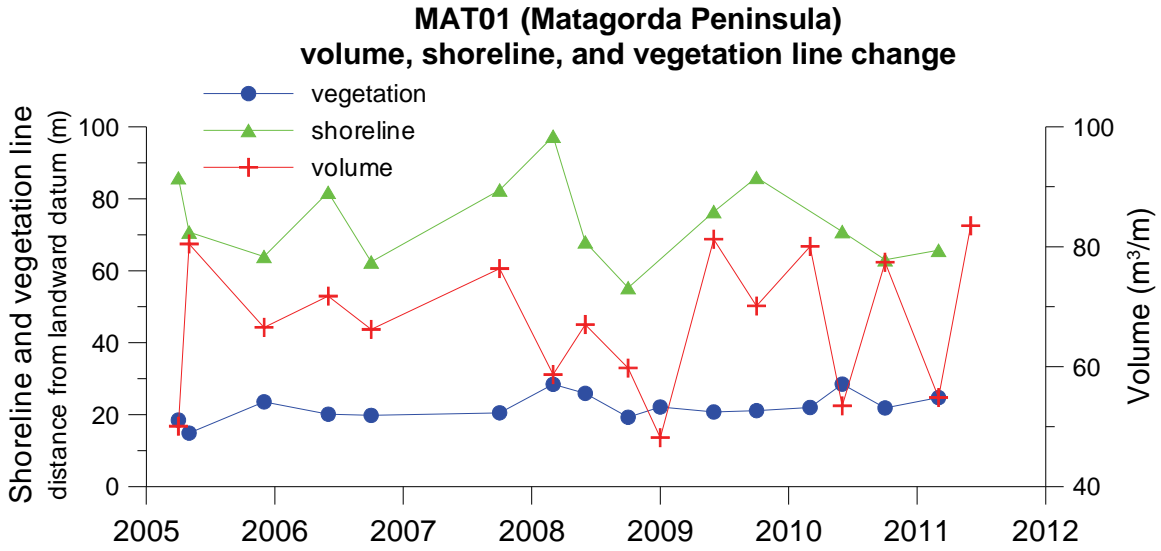
BEG02R volumes were calculated from datum to 1 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -1 m were extrapolated.



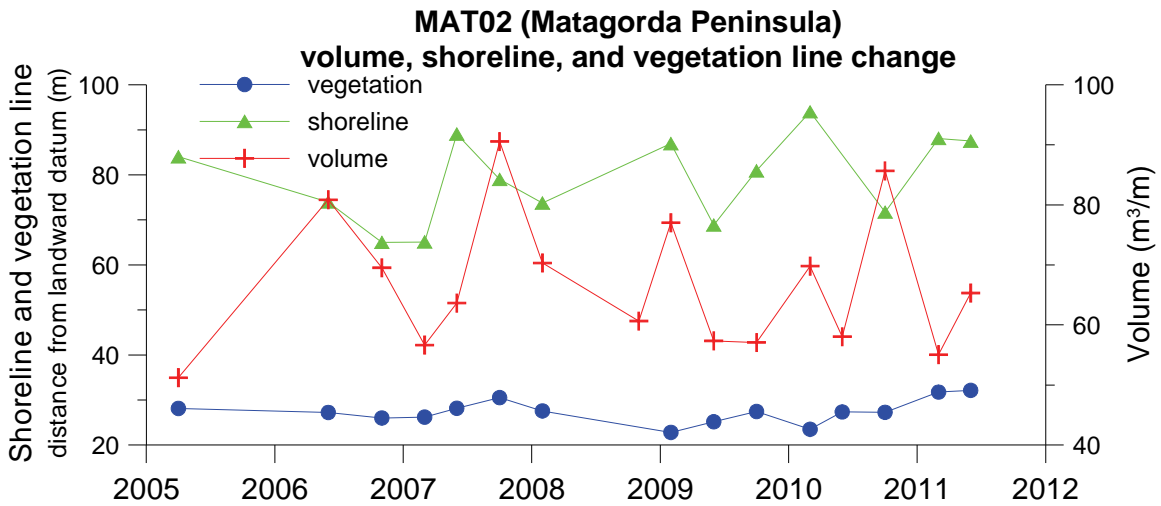
GLO06 volumes were calculated from datum to 1 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -1 m were extrapolated.



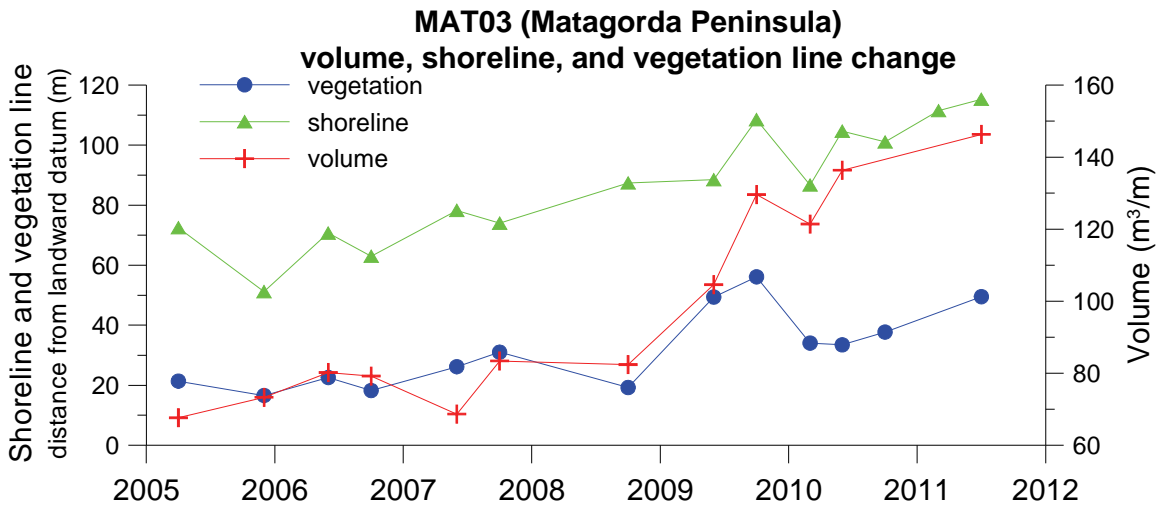
MAT01 volumes were calculated from datum to 2.5 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -2.5 m were extrapolated.



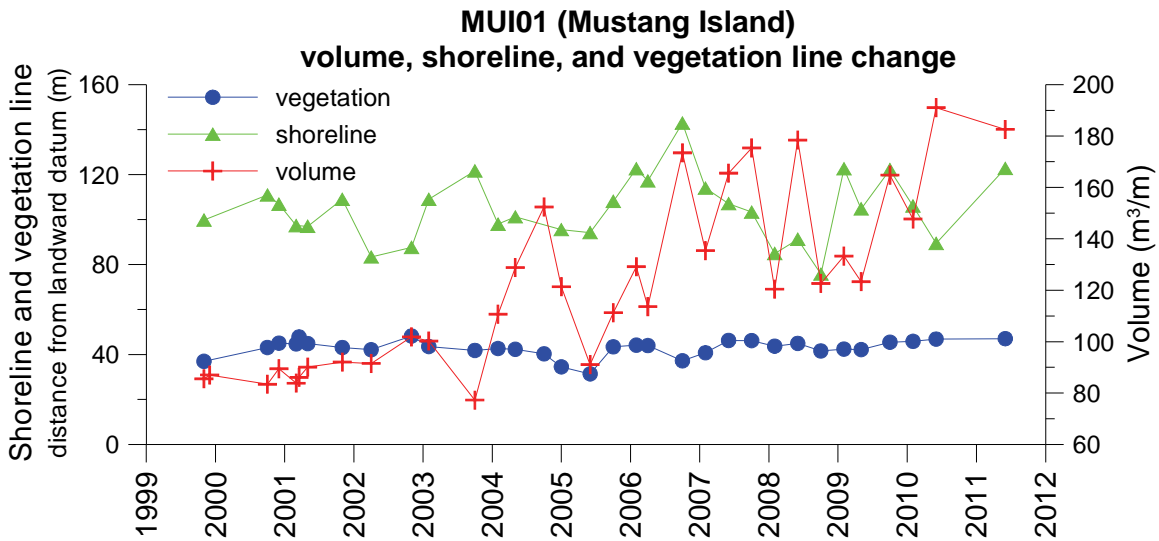
MAT02 volumes were calculated from datum to 2 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -2 m were extrapolated.



MAT03 volumes were calculated from datum to 3.75 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -3.75 m were extrapolated.

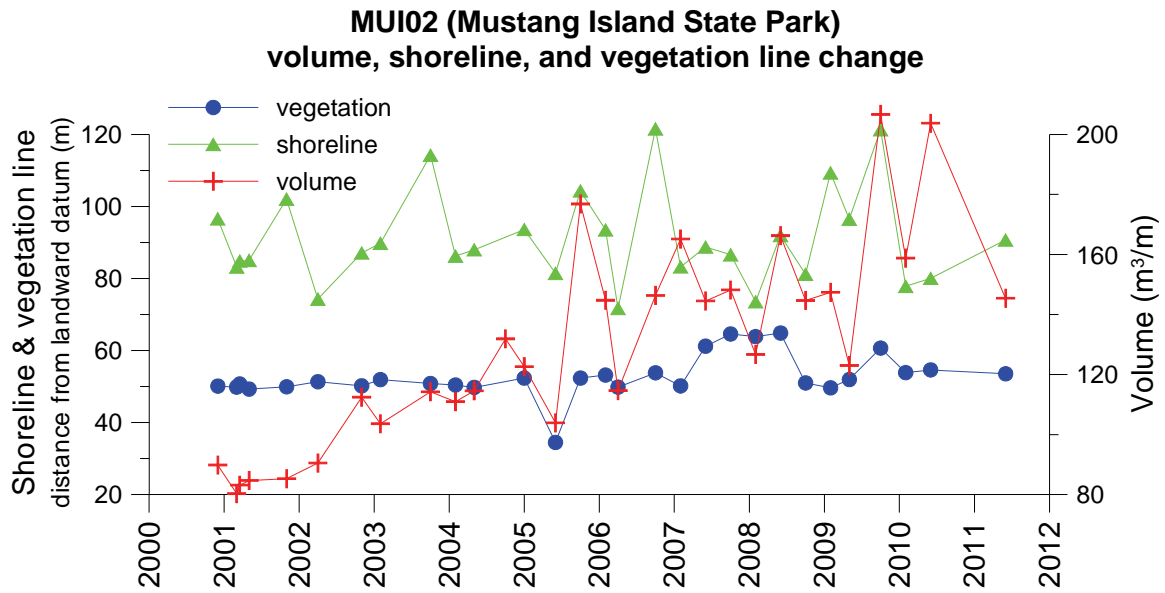


MUI01 volumes were calculated from datum to 2.5 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -2.5 m were extrapolated.

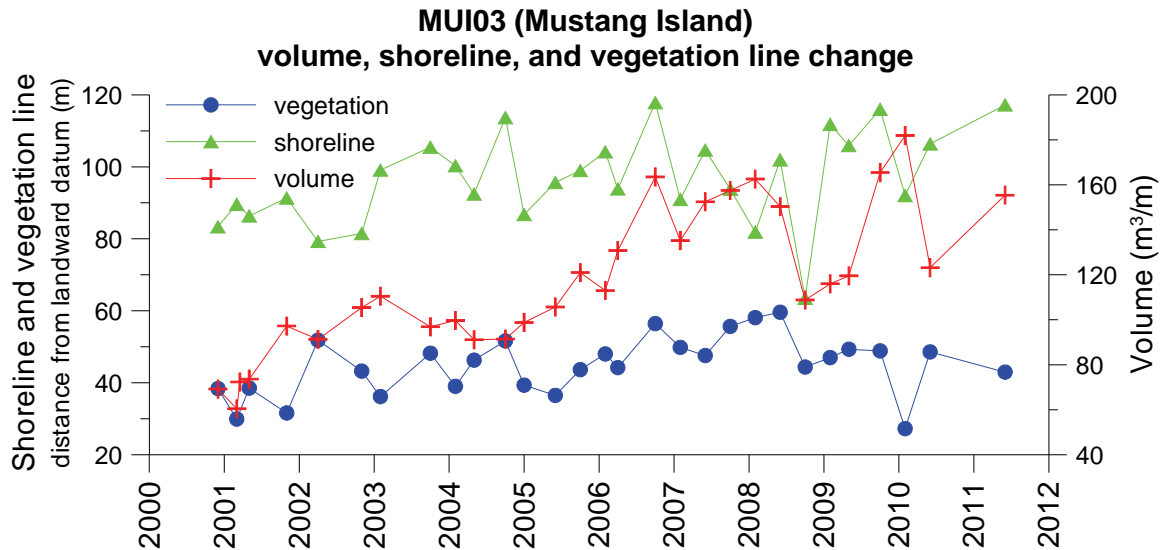




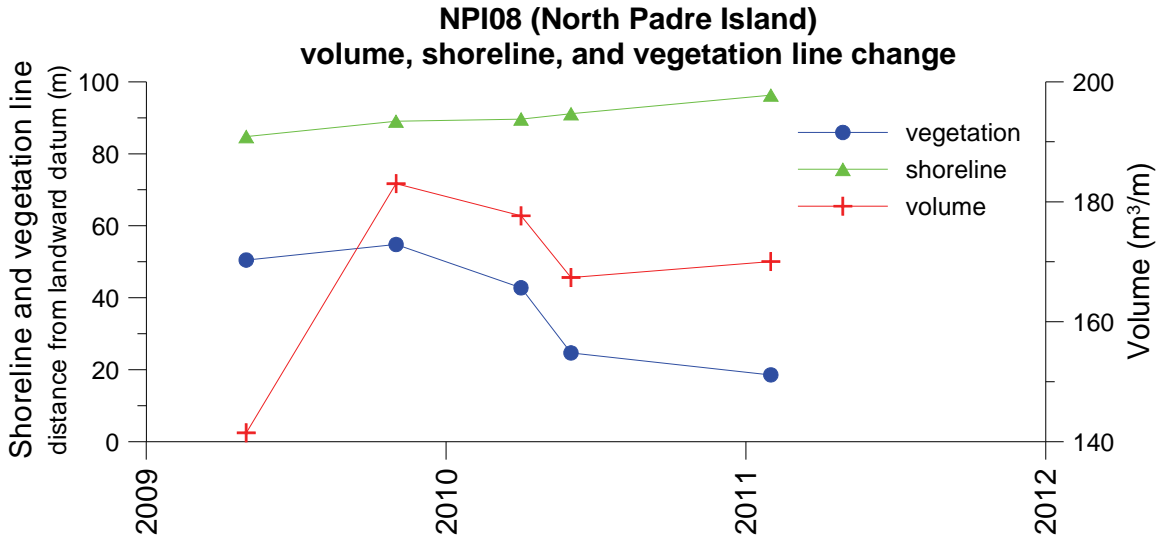
MUI02 volumes were calculated from datum to 0.5 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -0.5 m were extrapolated.



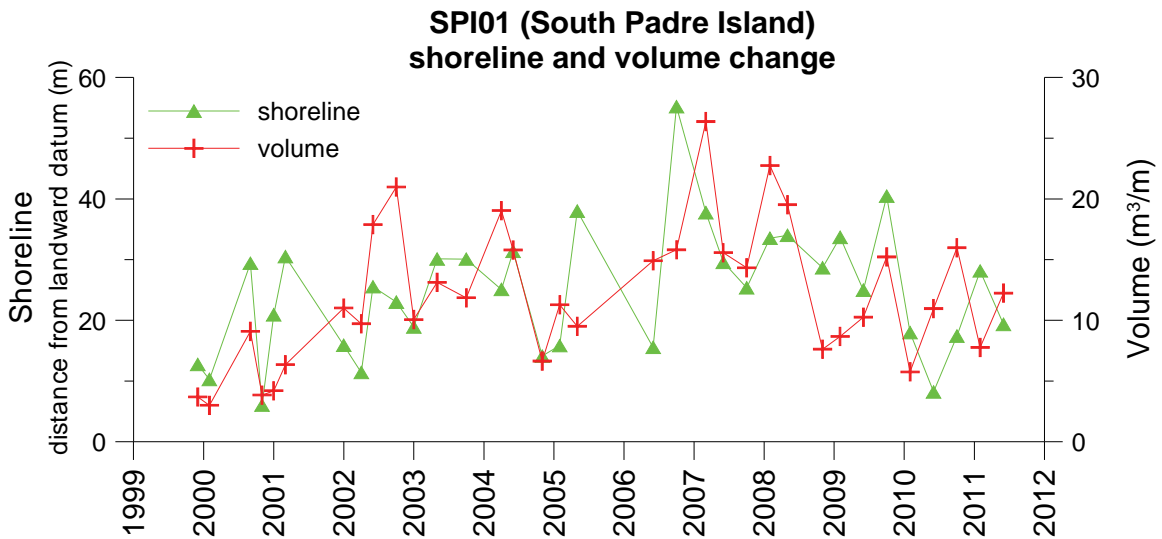
MUI03 volumes were calculated from datum to 2.5 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -2.5 m were extrapolated.



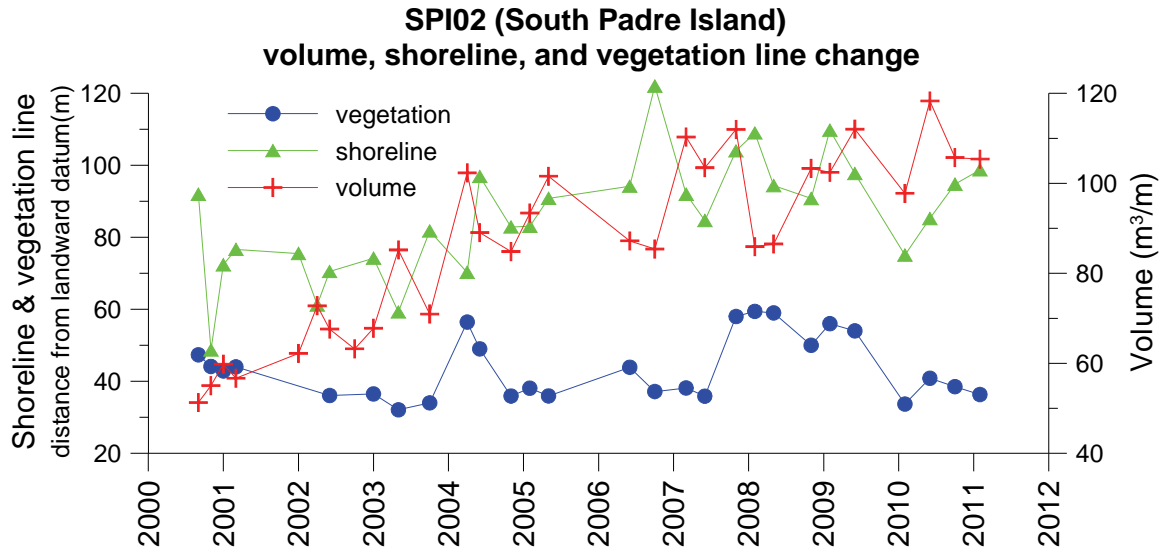
NPI08 volumes were calculated from datum to 1.25 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -1.25 m were extrapolated.



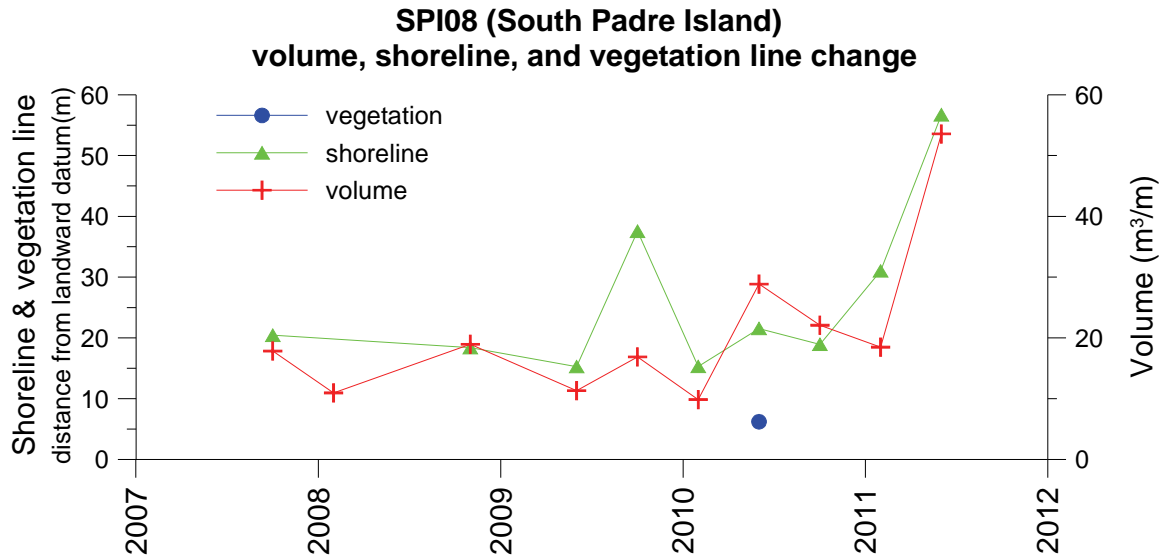
SPI01 volumes were calculated from datum to 2 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -2 m were extrapolated.



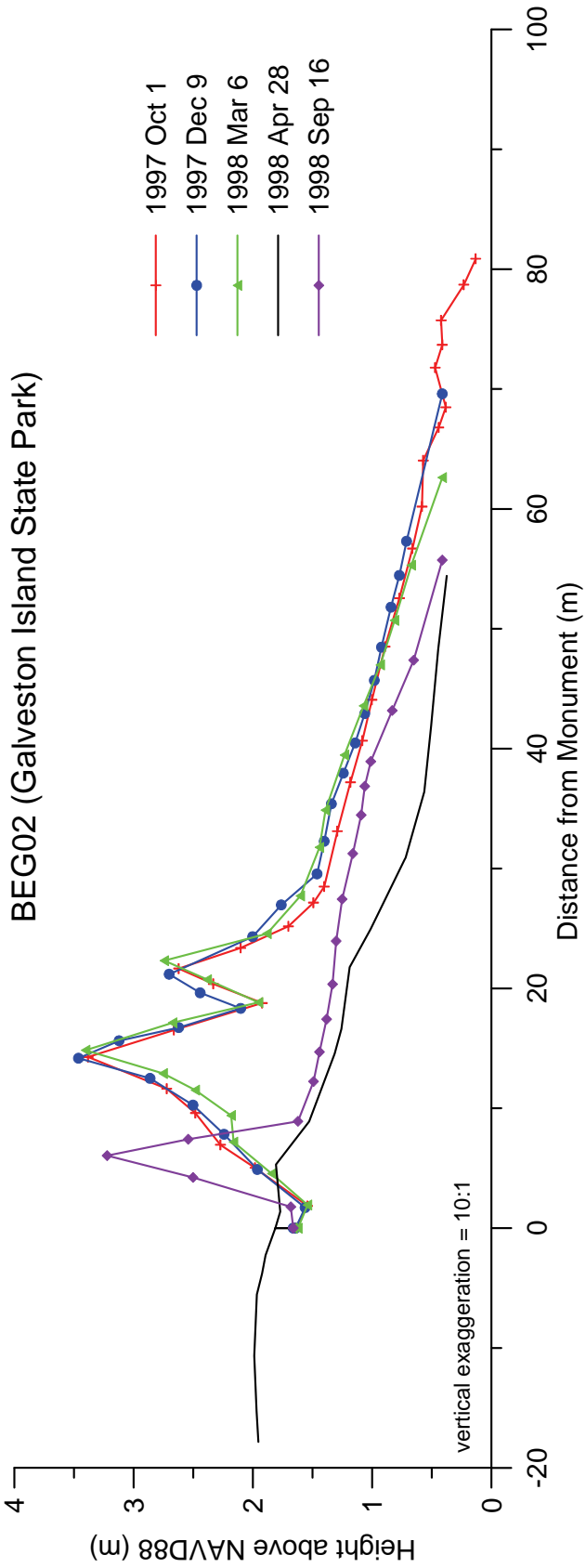
SPI02 volumes were calculated from datum to 2.25 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -2.25 m were extrapolated.



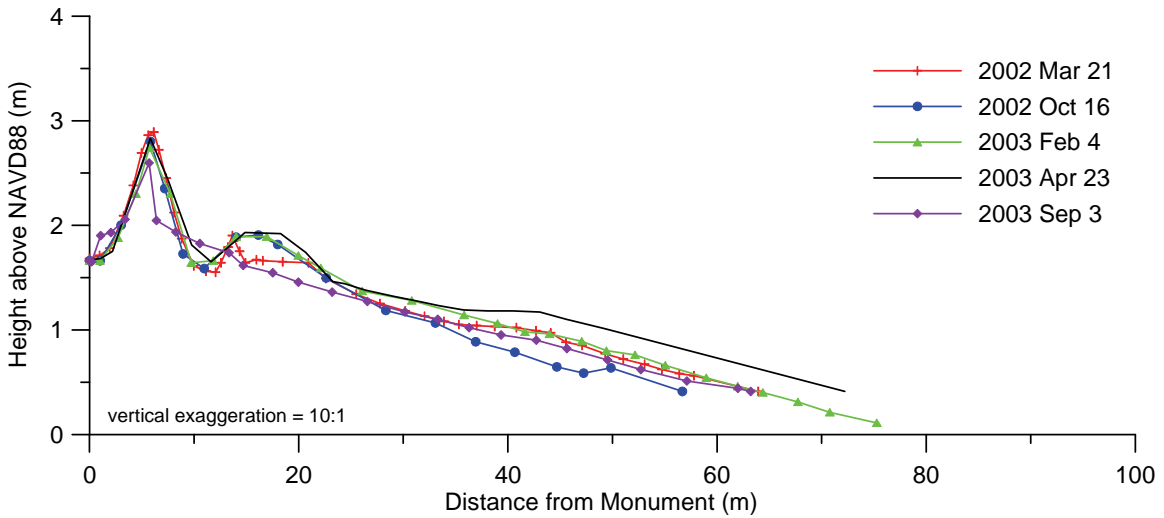
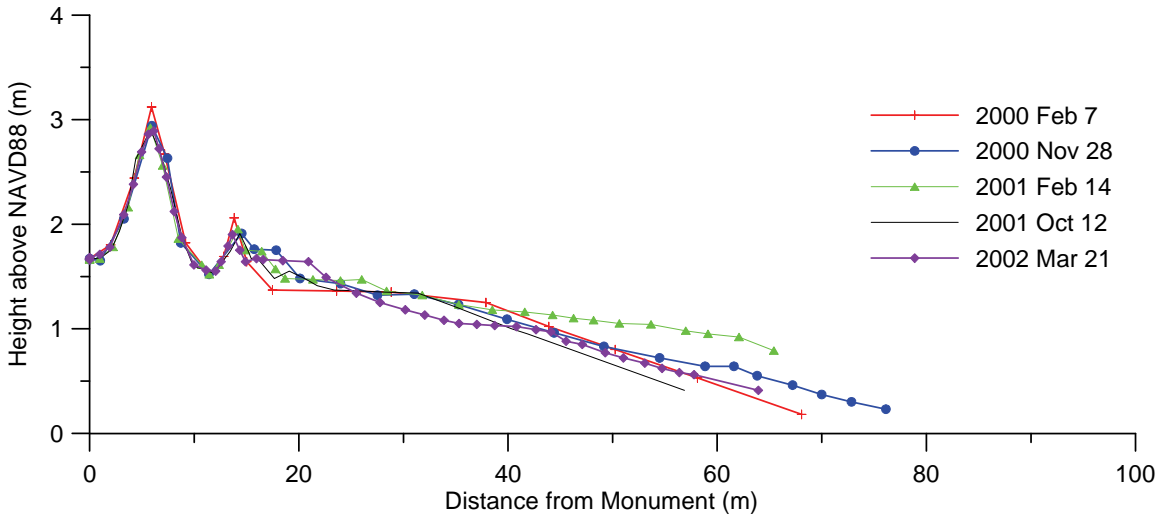
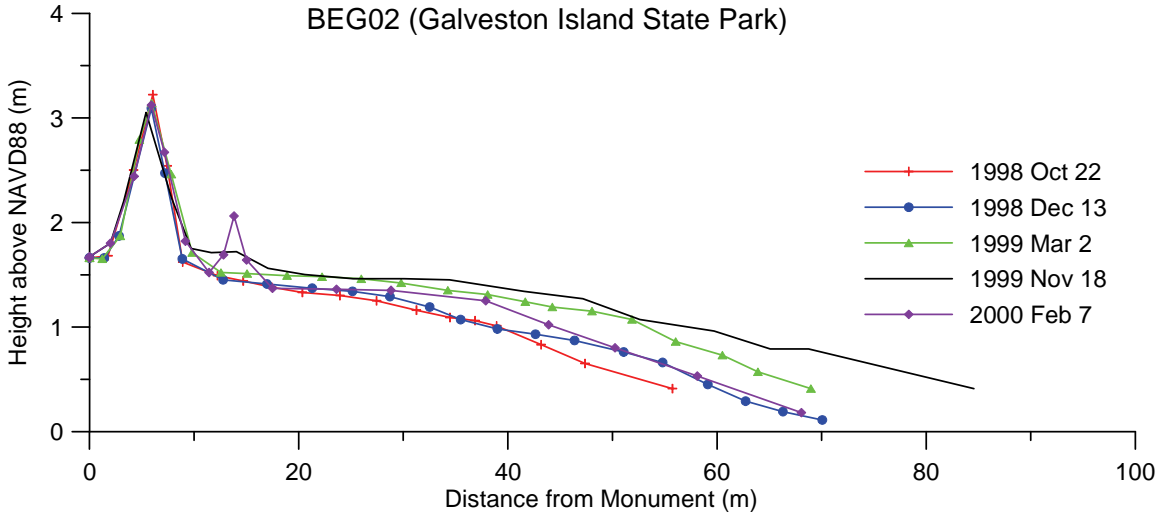
SPI08 volumes were calculated from datum to 2.5 m below datum. Profiles that did not extend to -2.5 m were extrapolated.

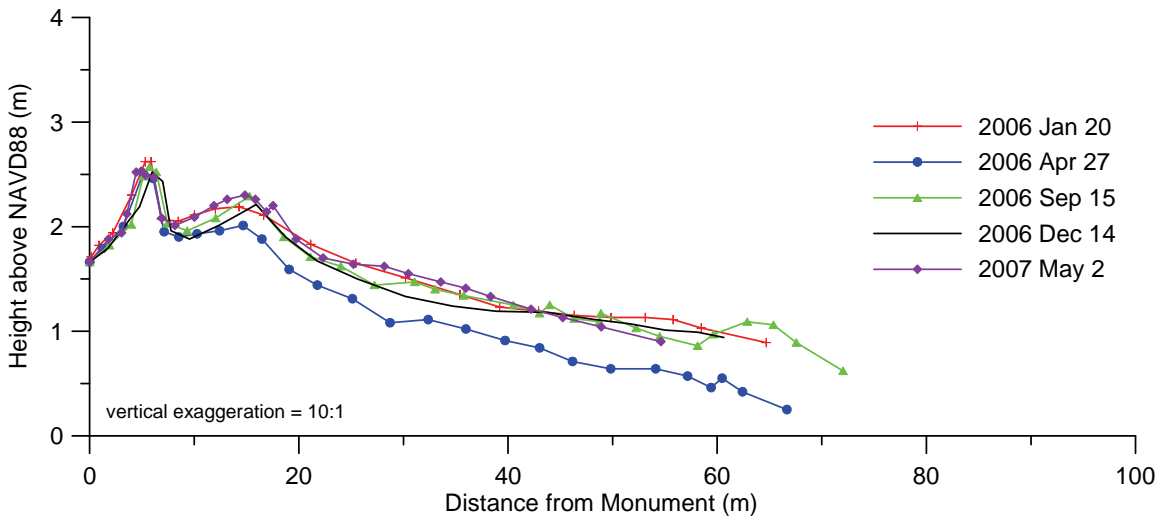
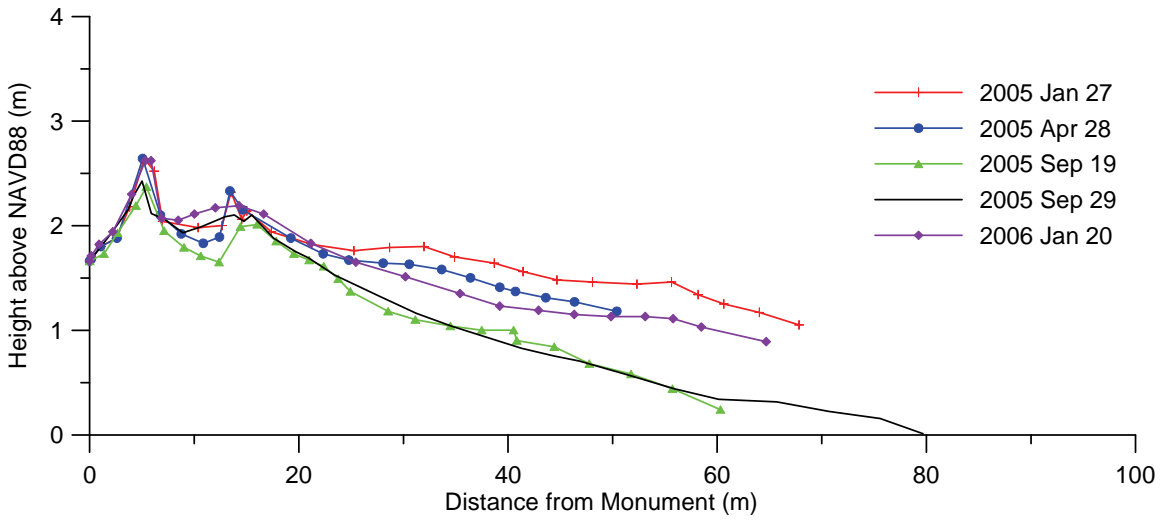
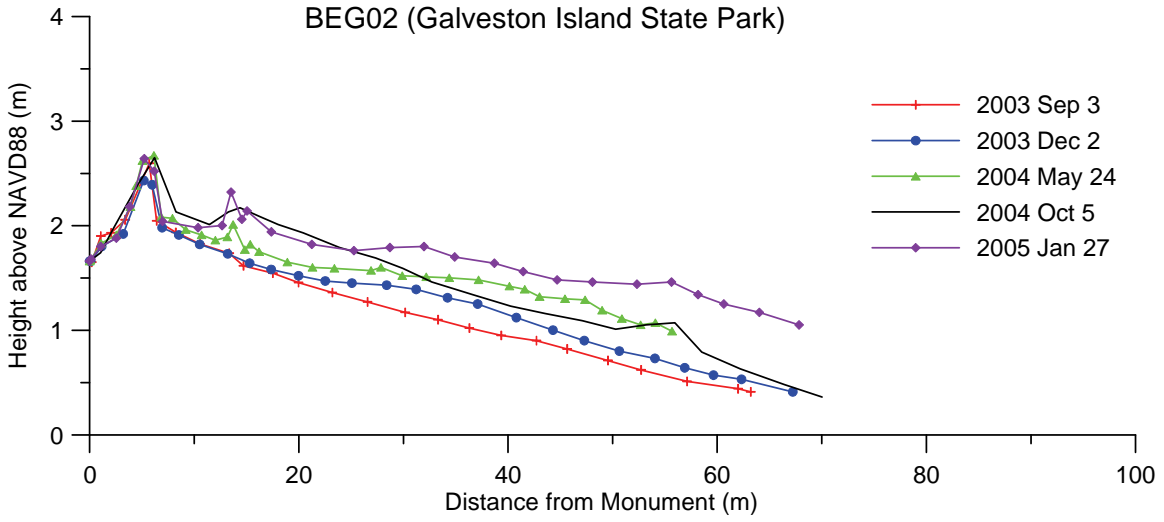


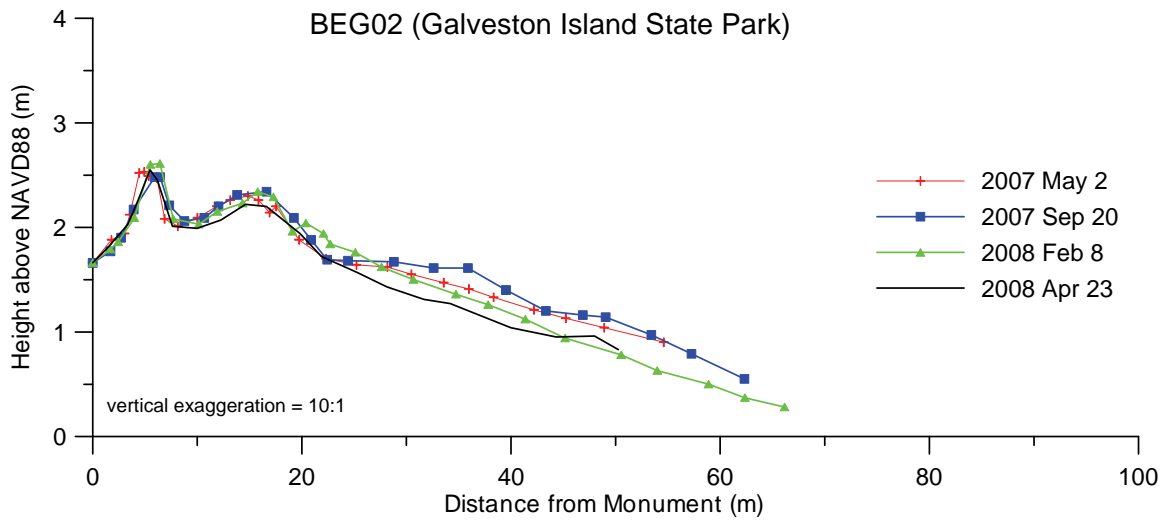
## APPENDIX C: GRAPHS OF BEACH PROFILES

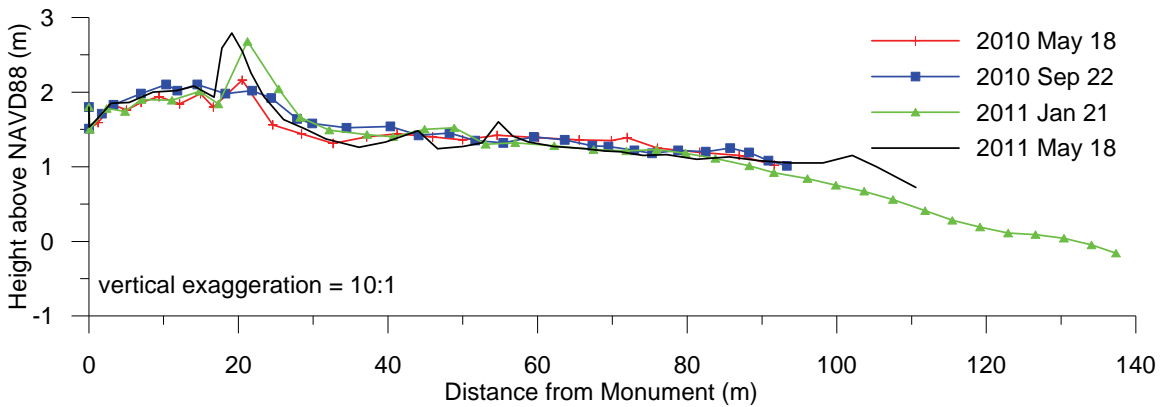
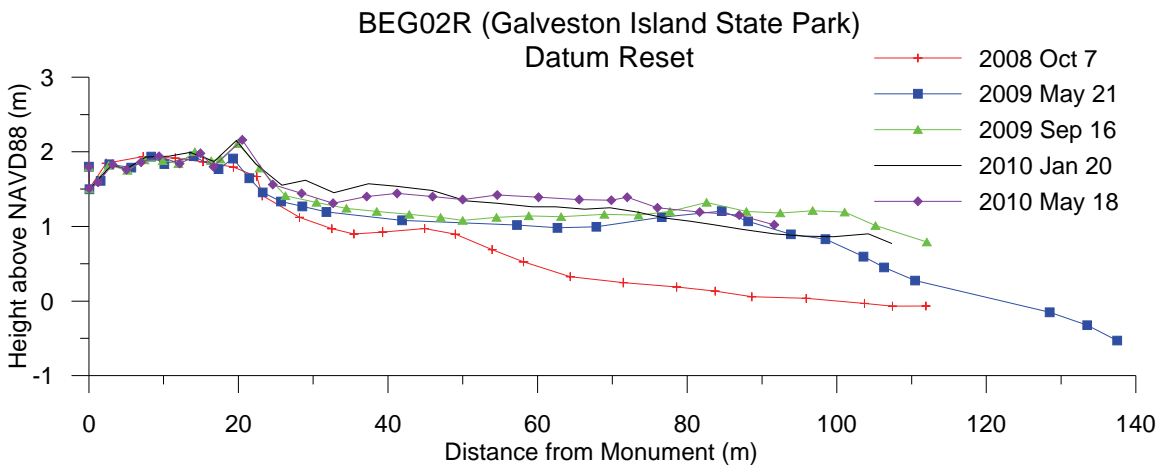
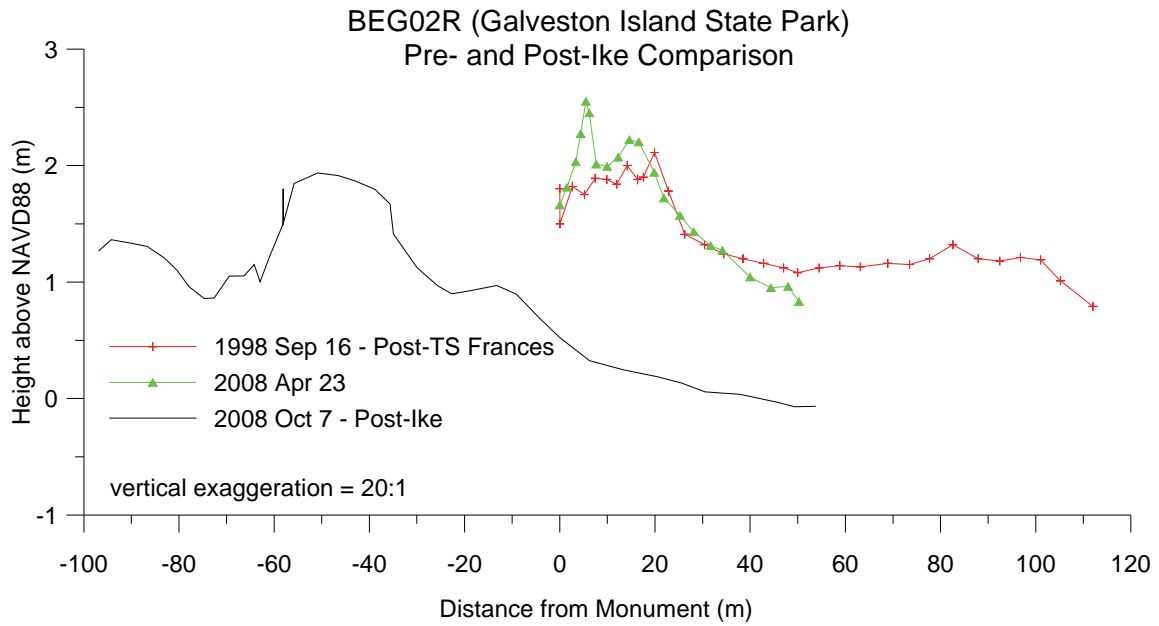


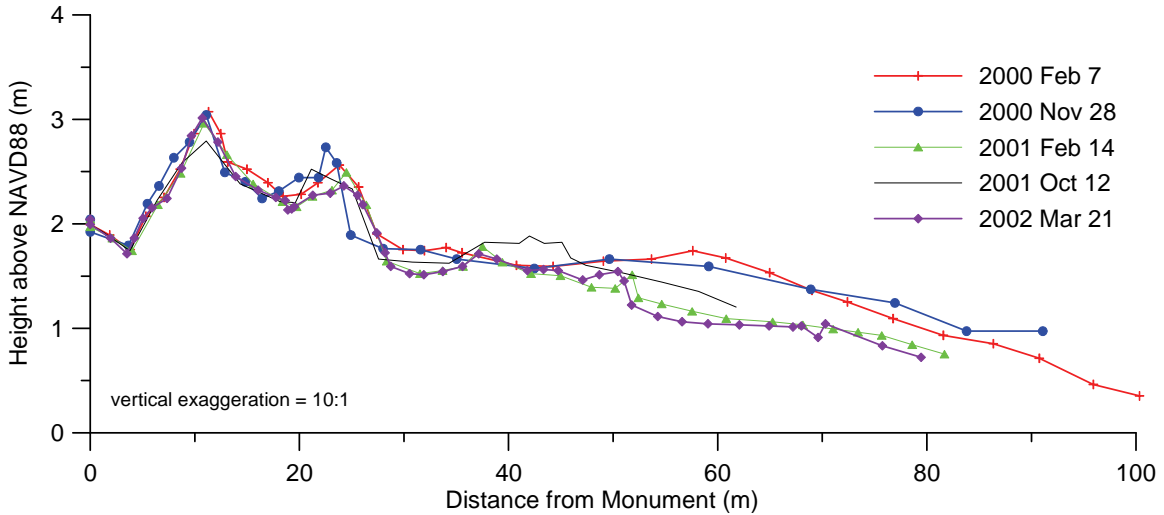
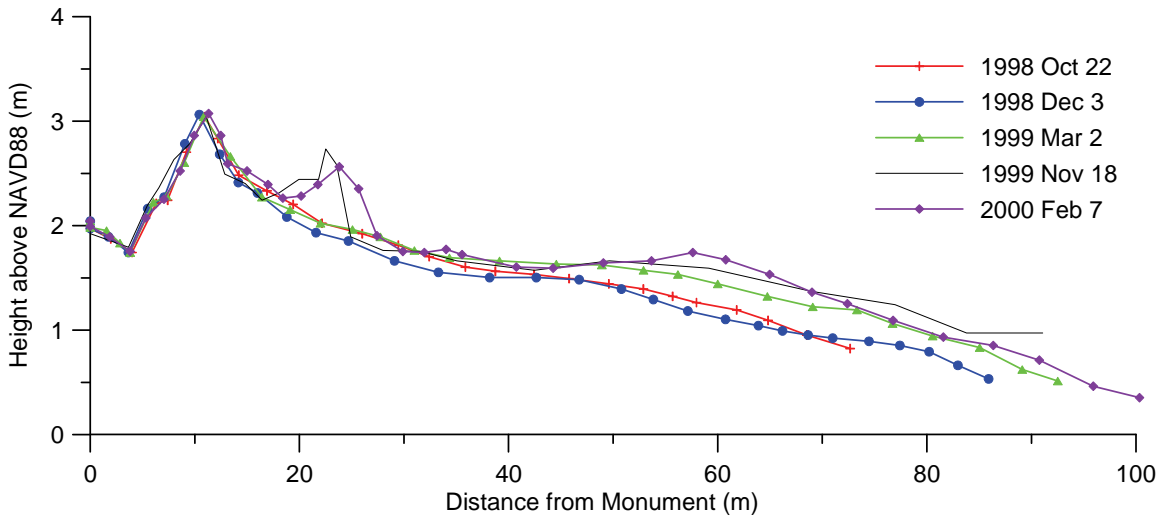
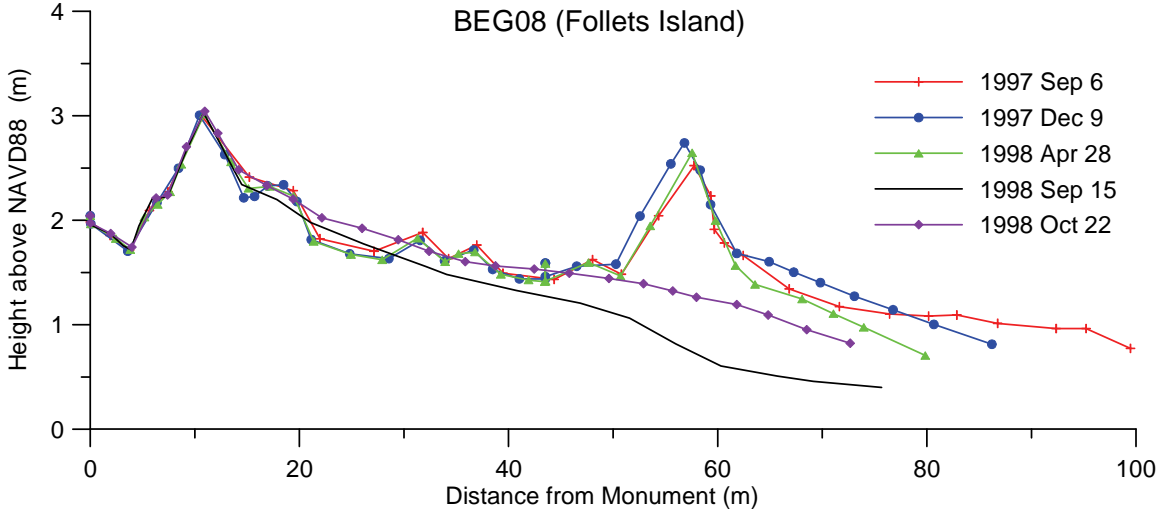


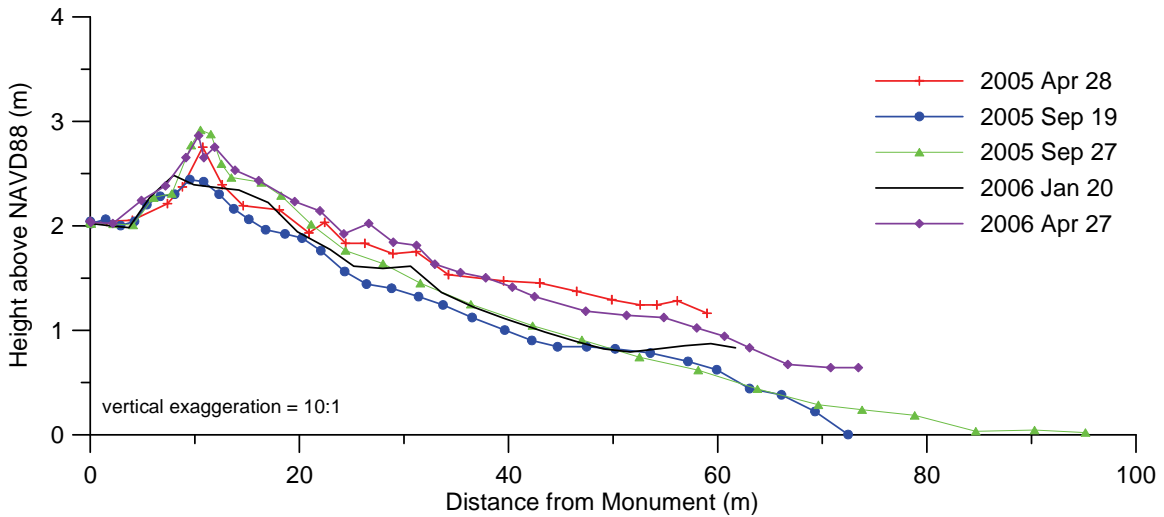
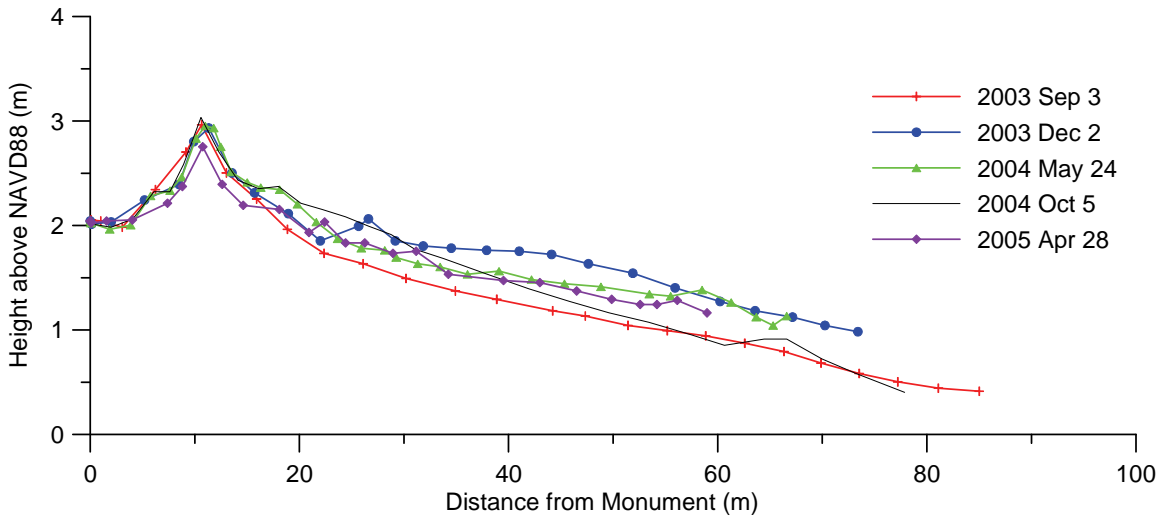
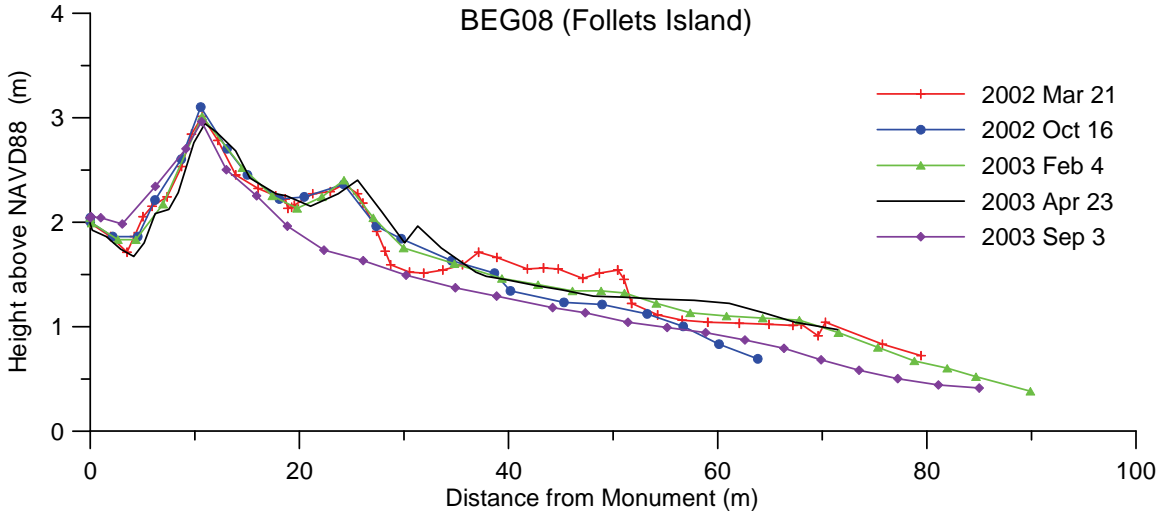




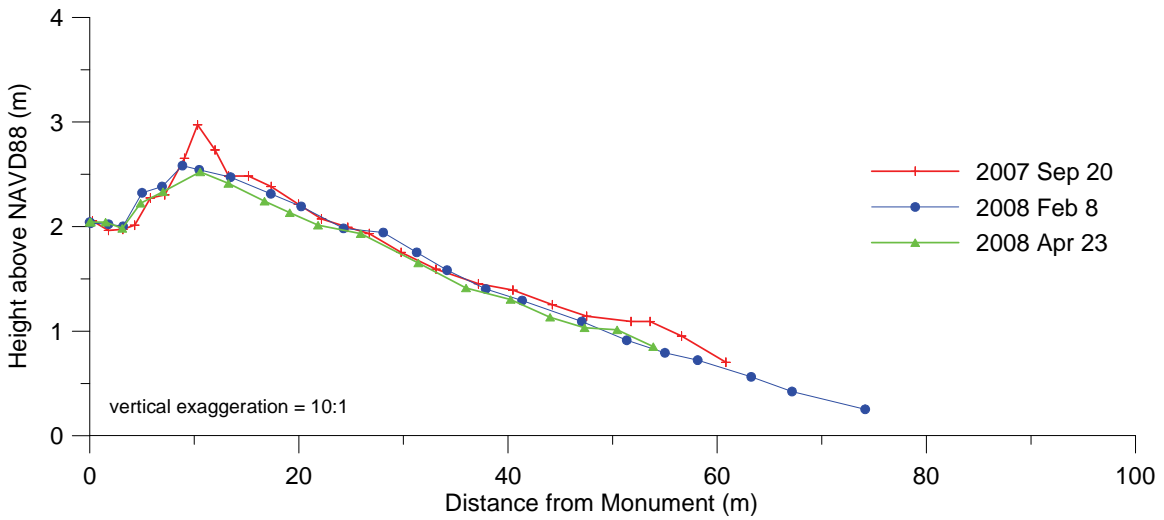
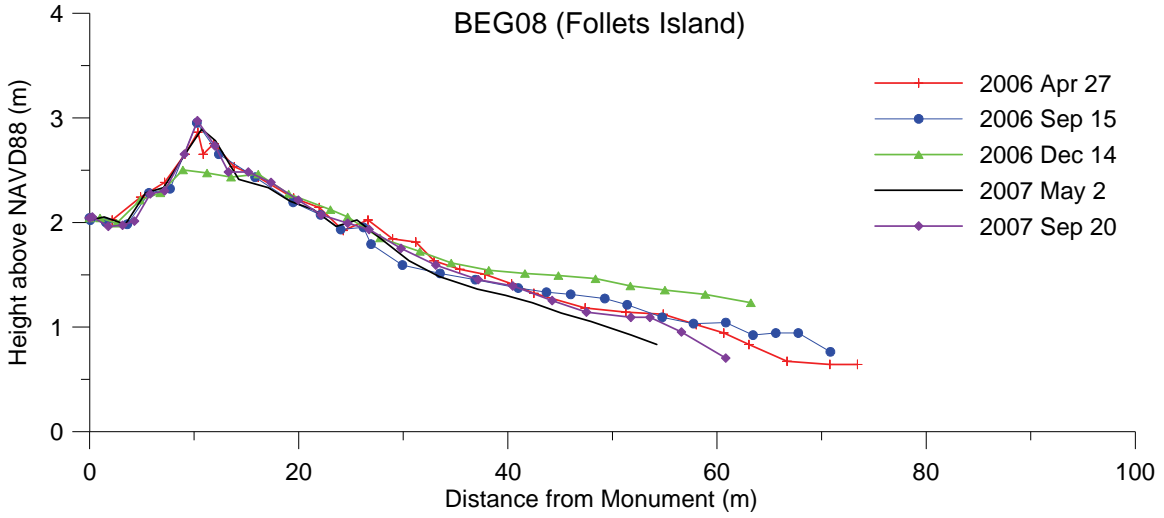




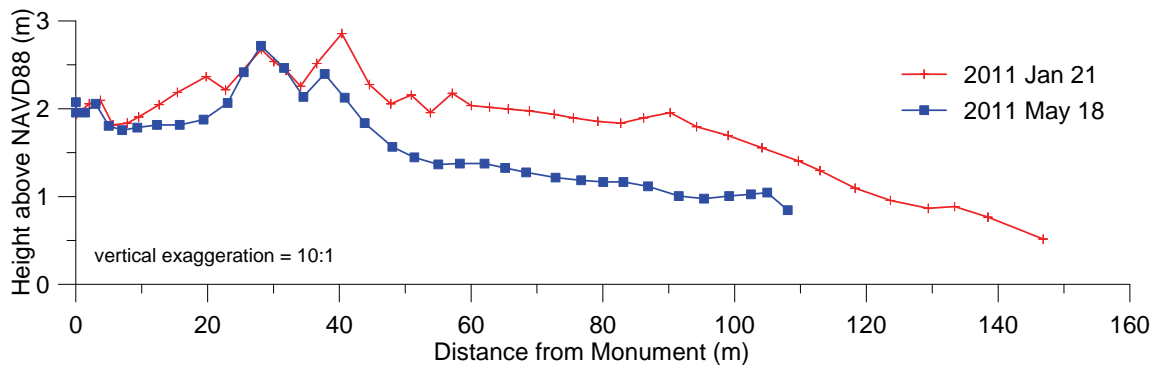
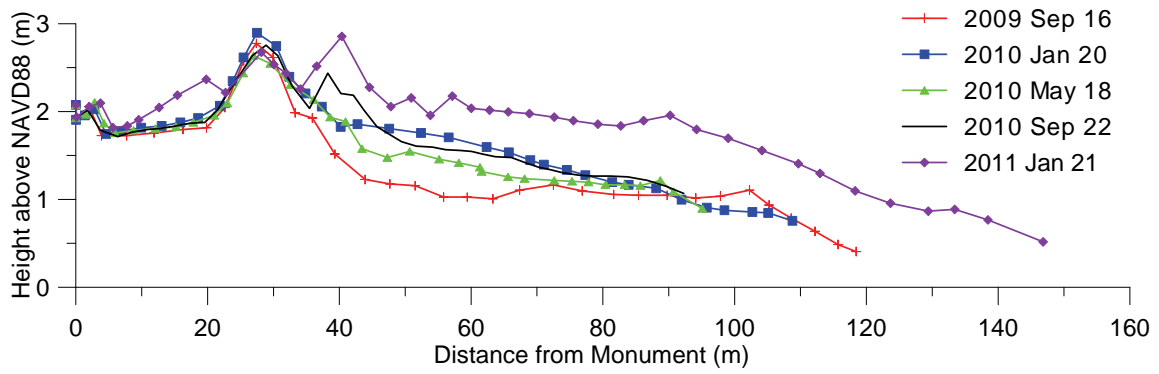
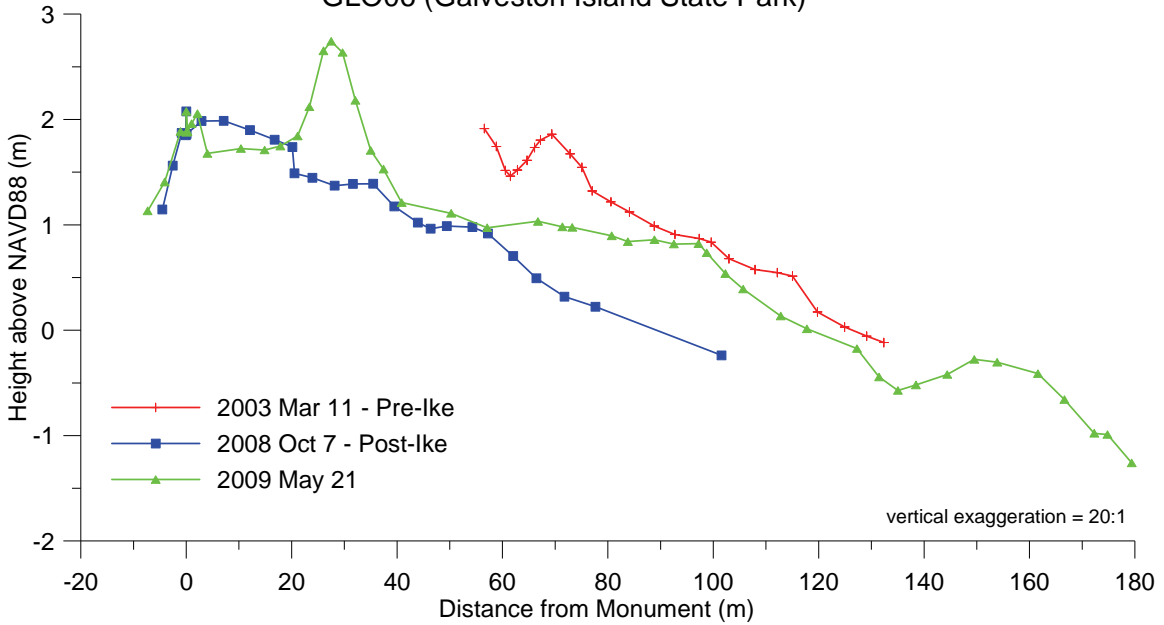




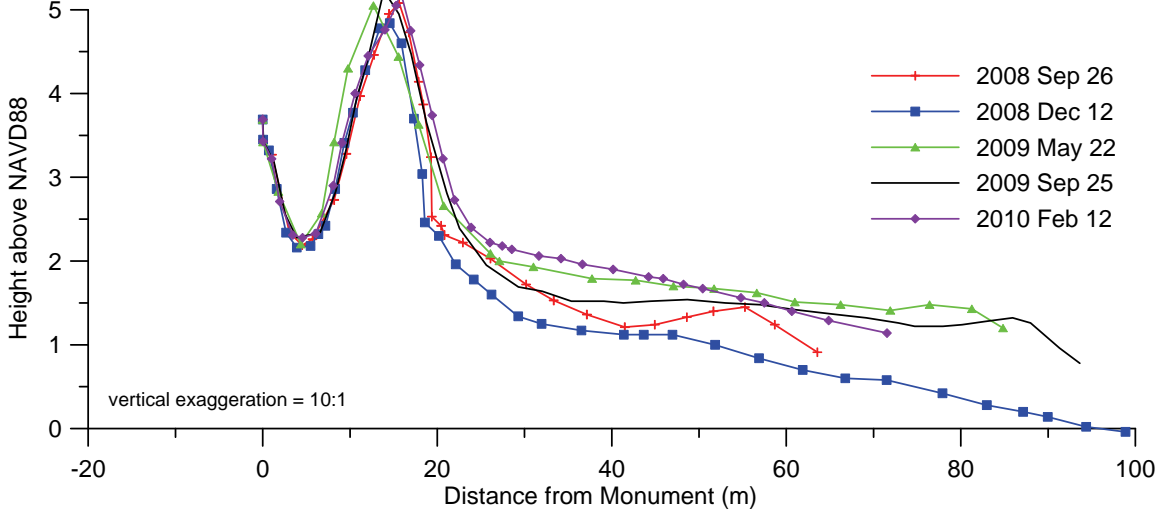
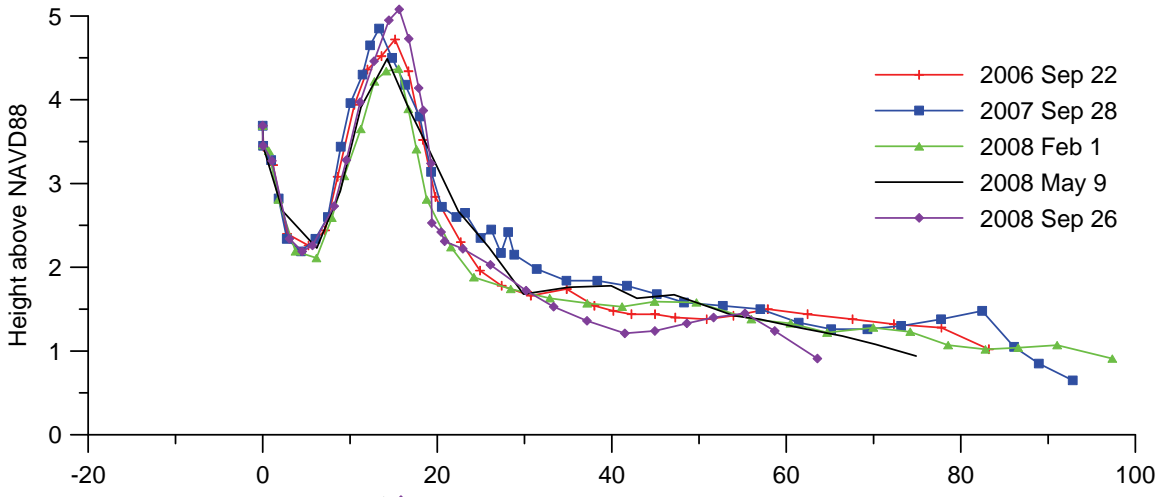
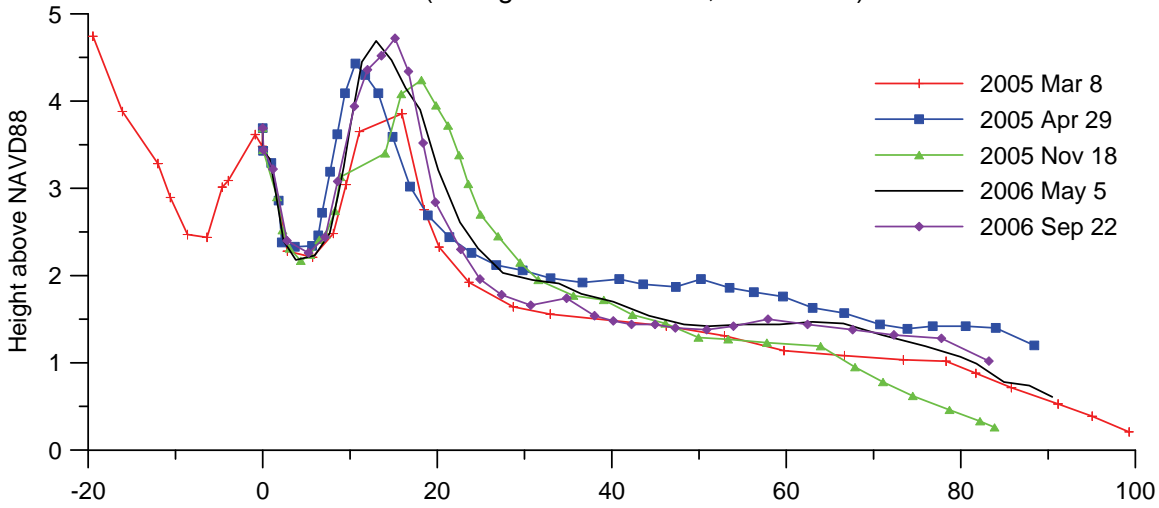


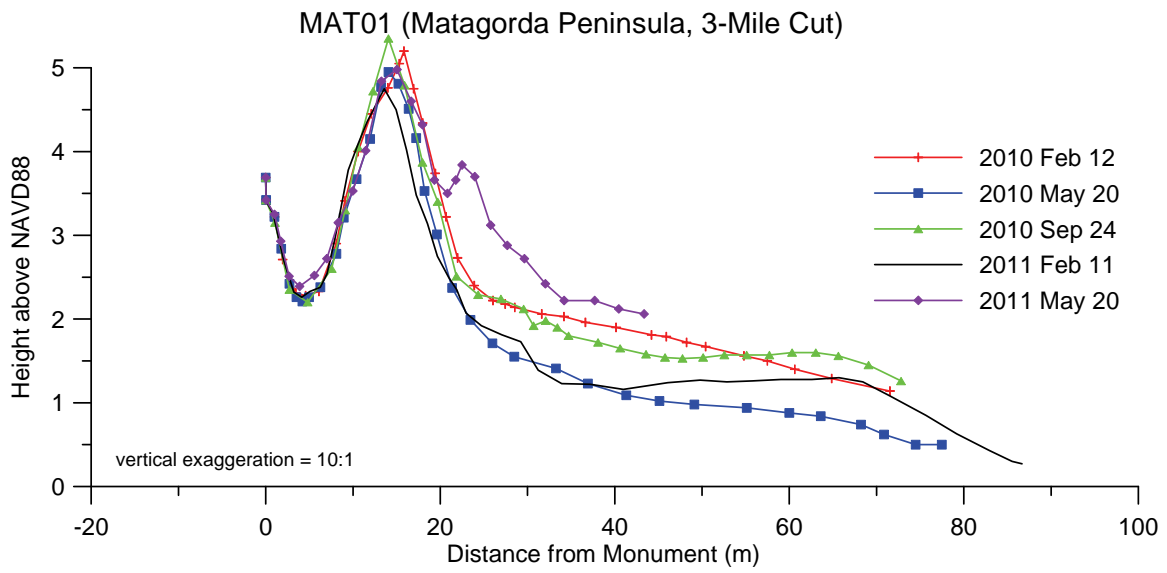


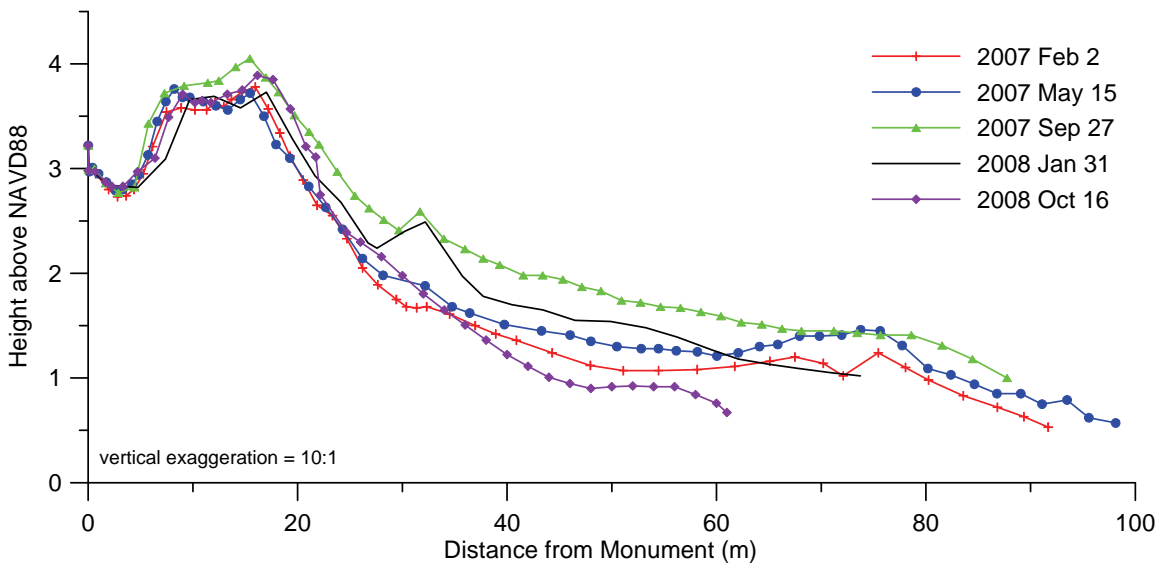
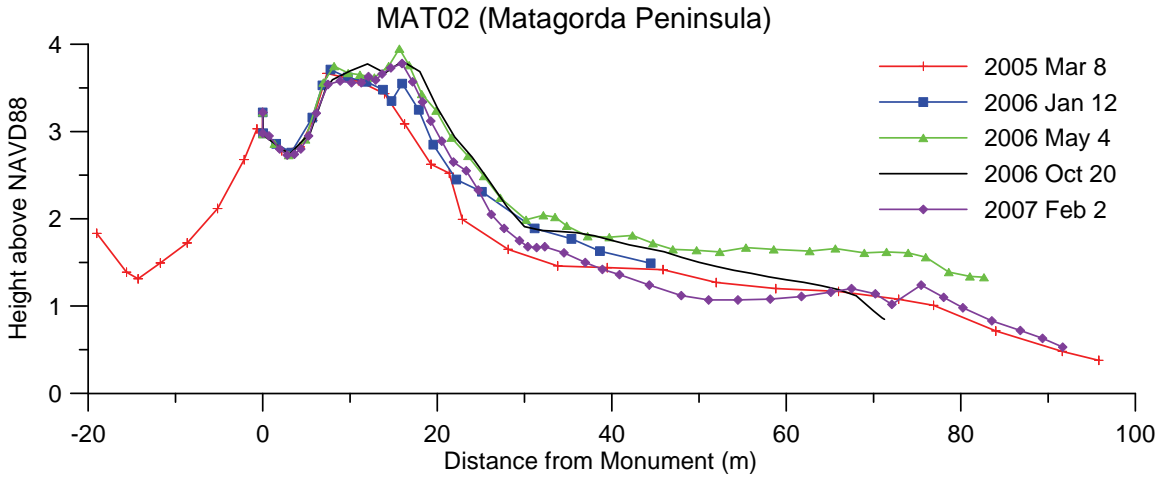
### GLO06 (Galveston Island State Park)



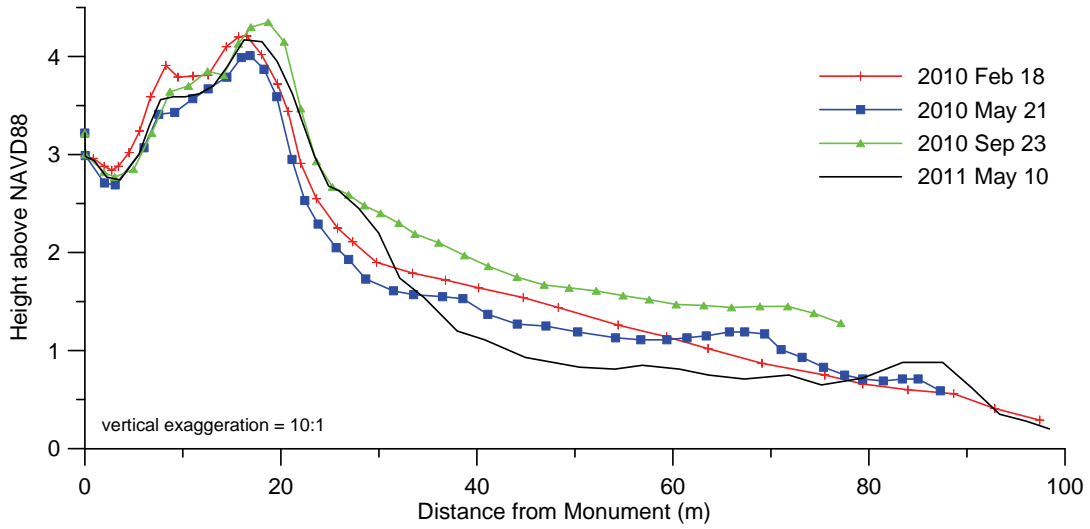
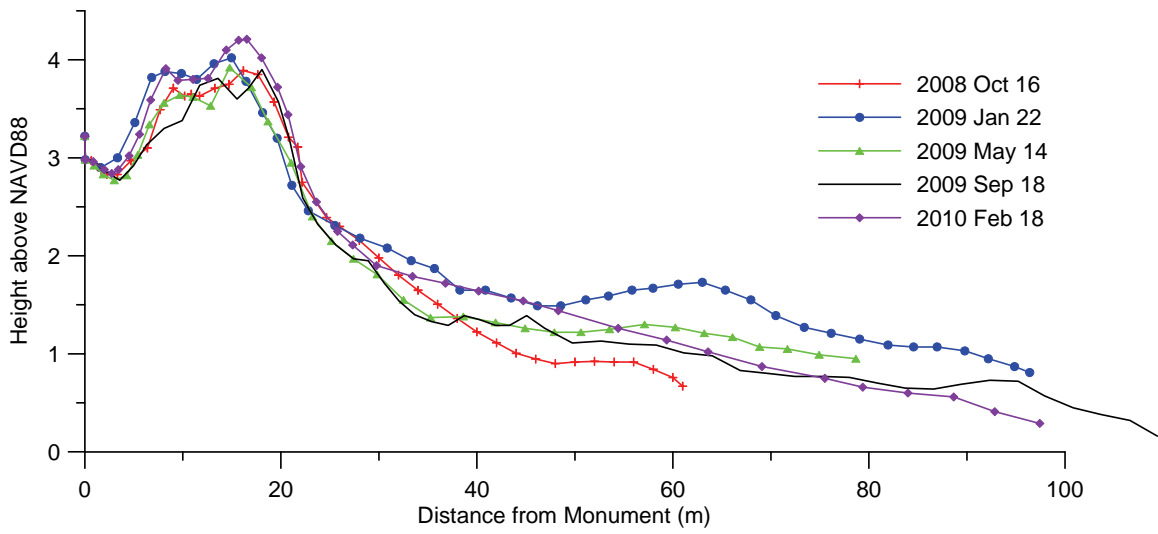
### MAT01 (Matagorda Peninsula, 3-Mile Cut)

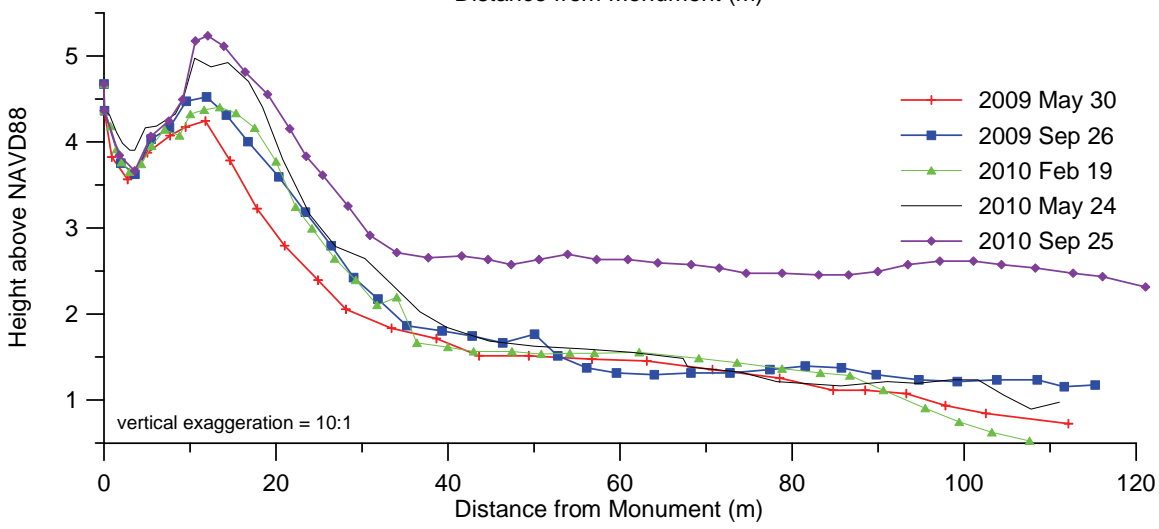
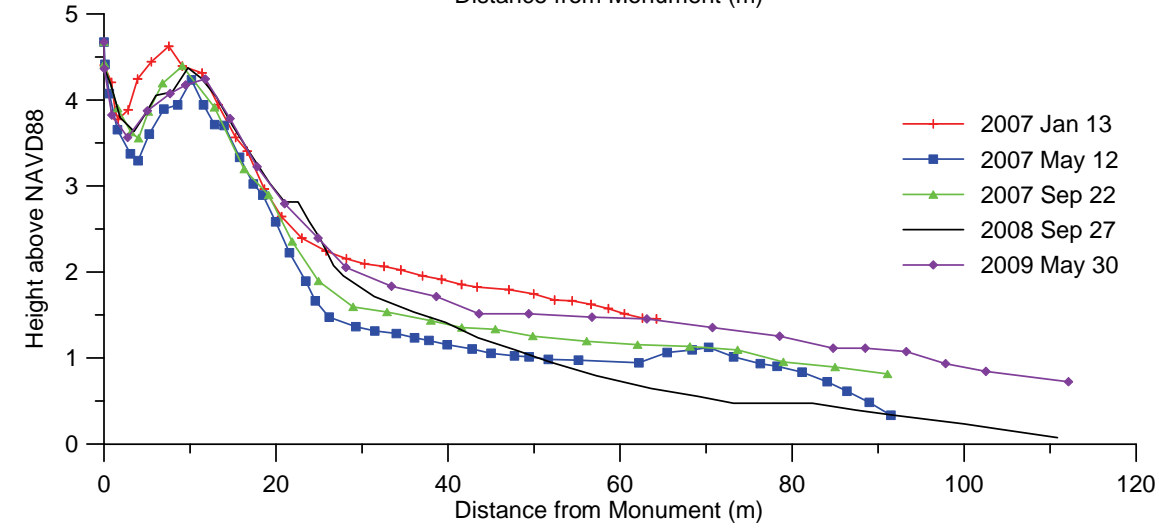
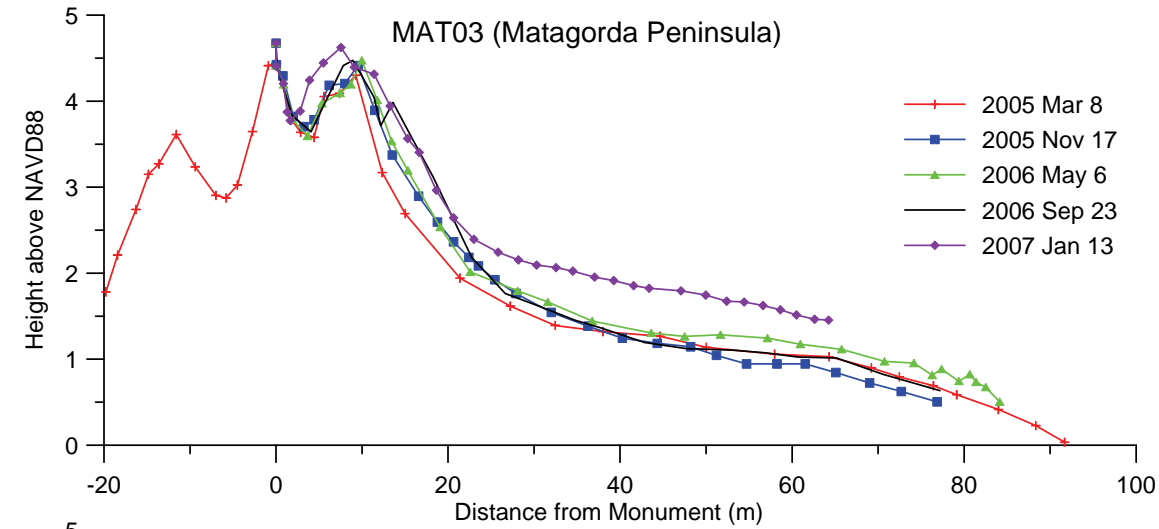




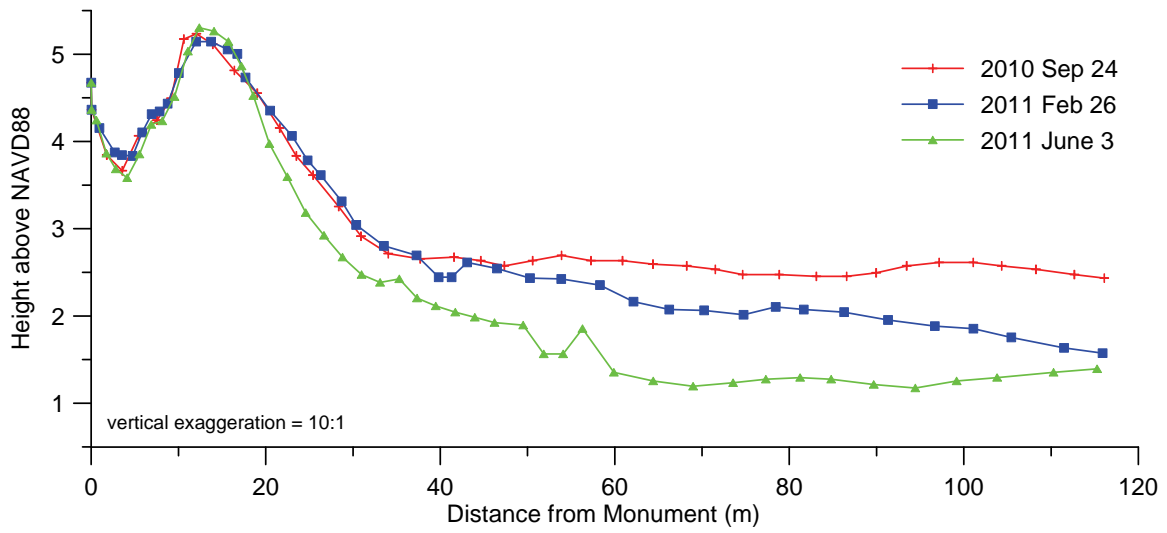


### MAT02 (Matagorda Peninsula)



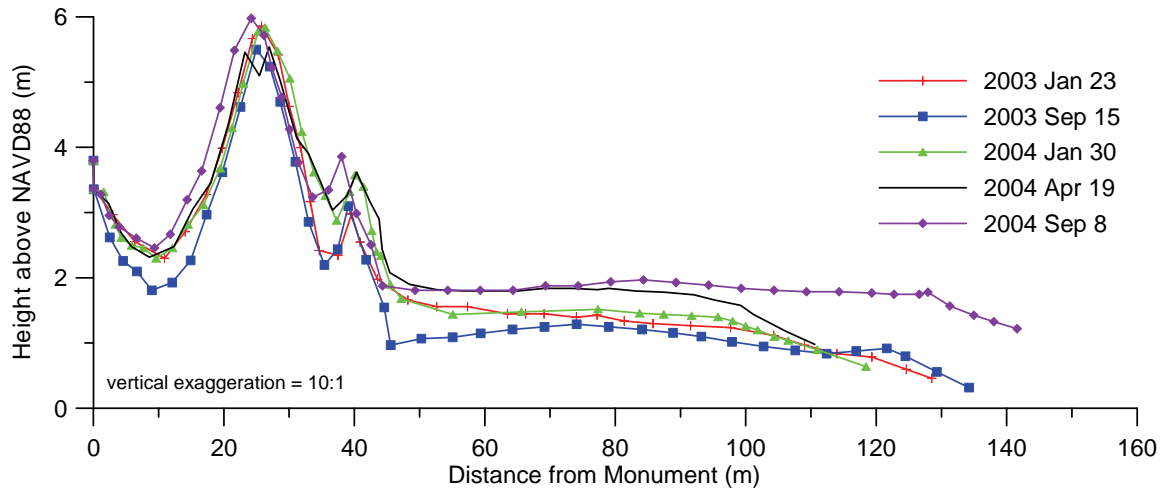
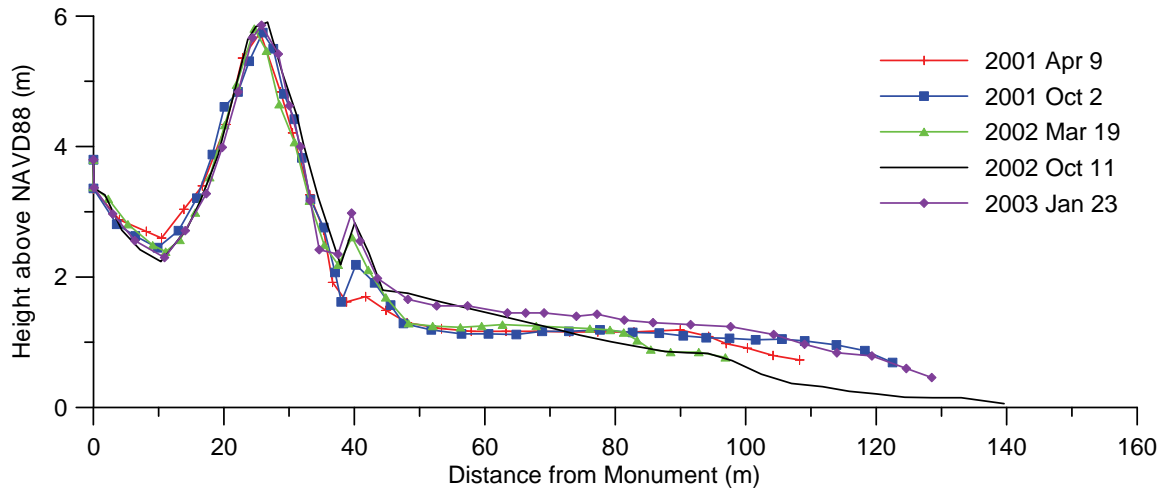
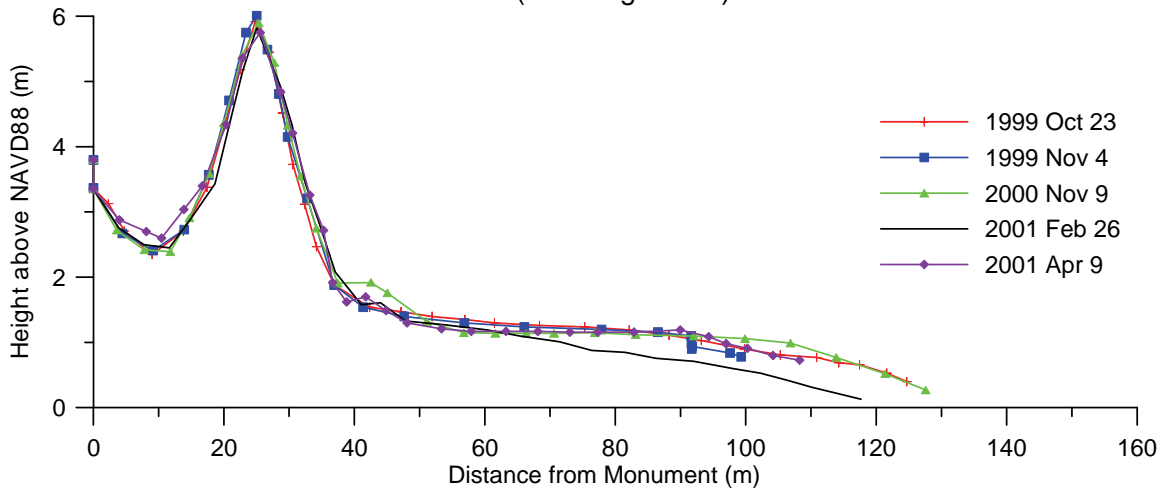


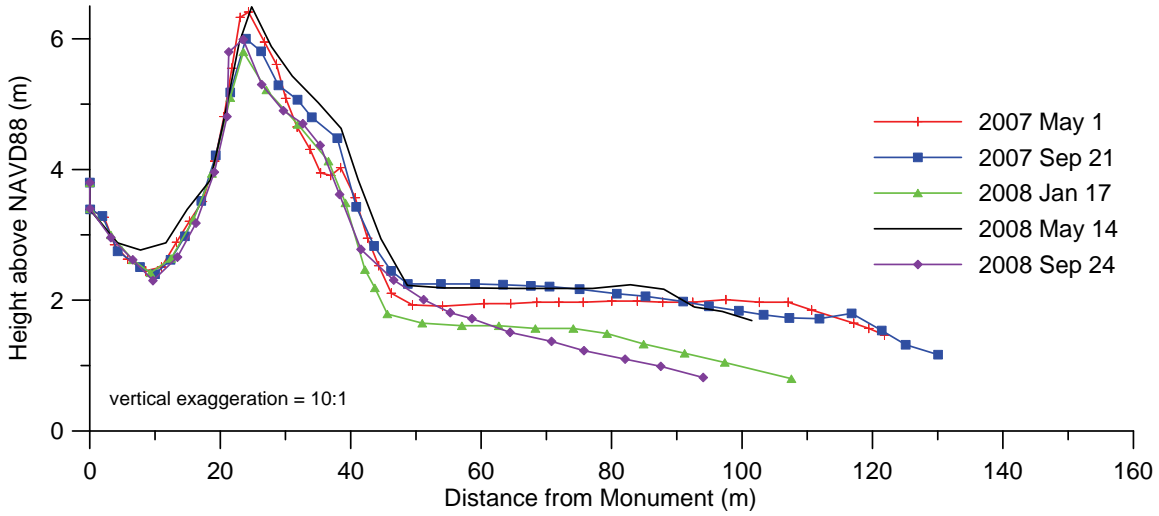
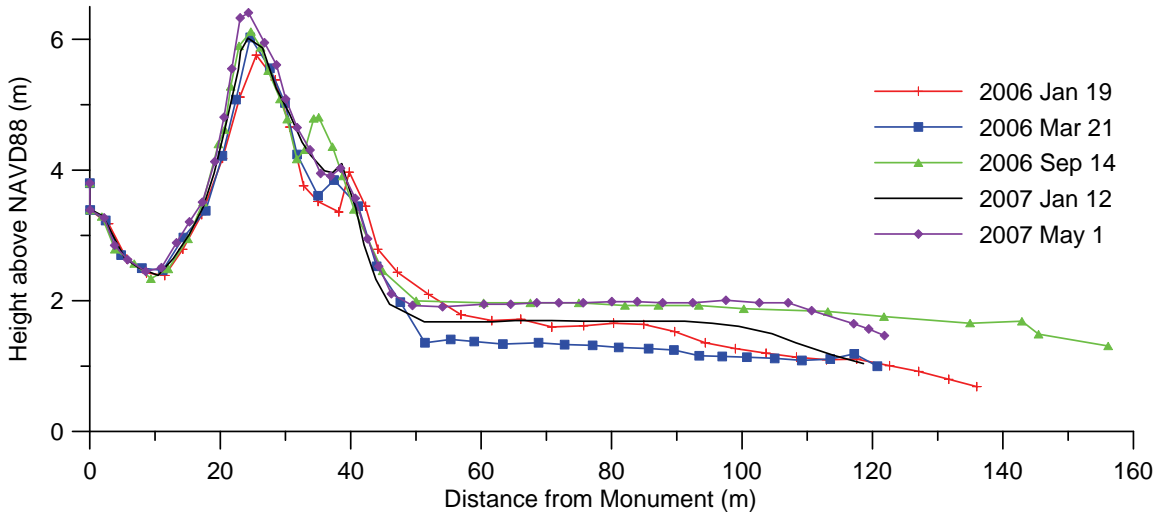
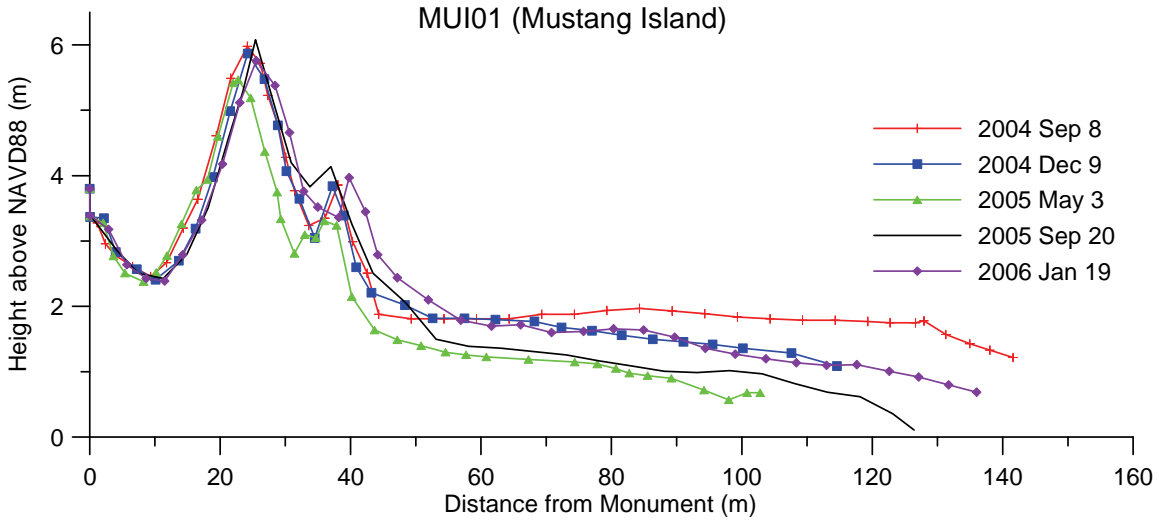
### MAT03 (Matagorda Peninsula)

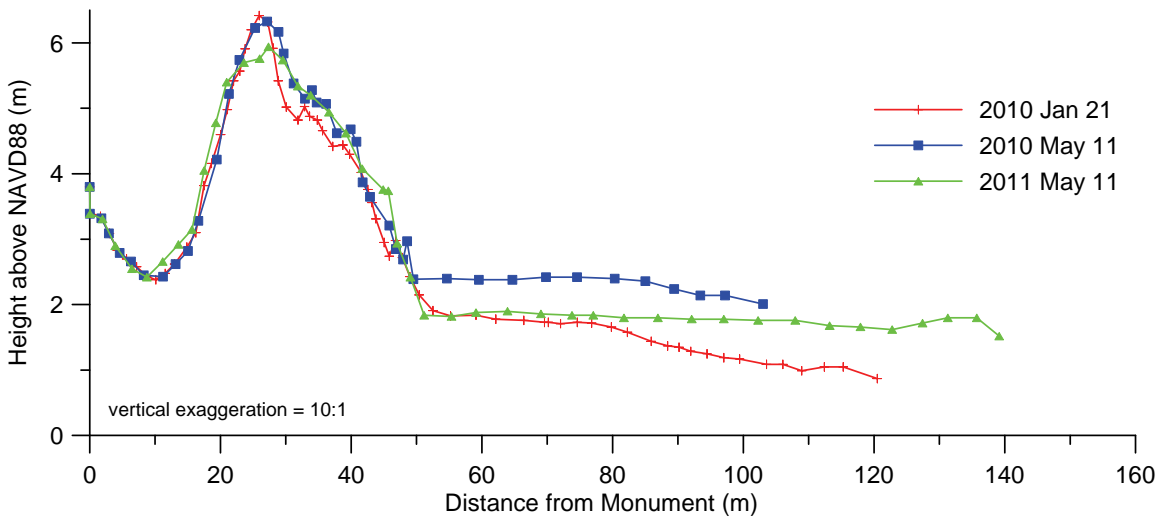
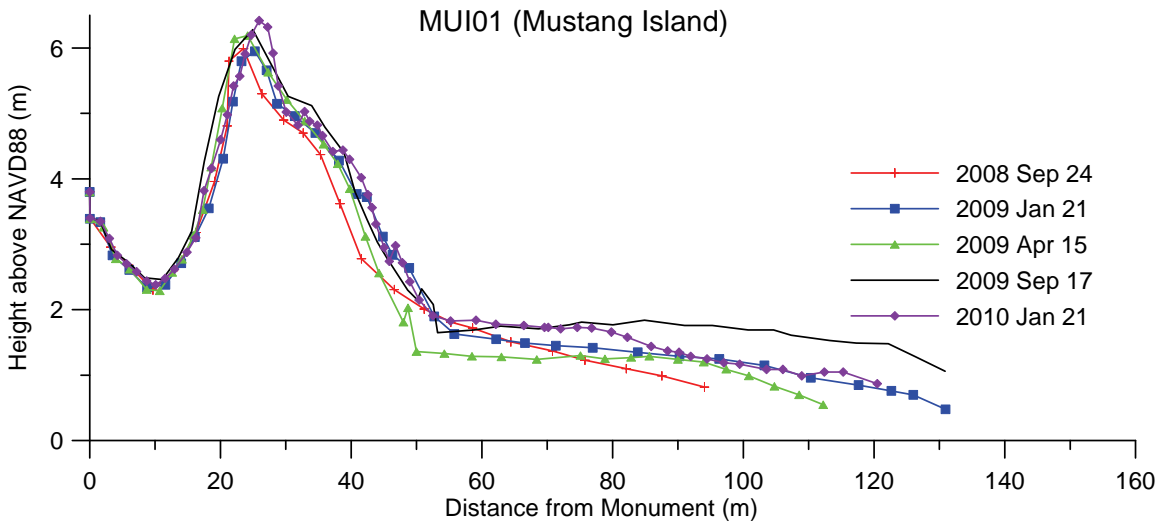




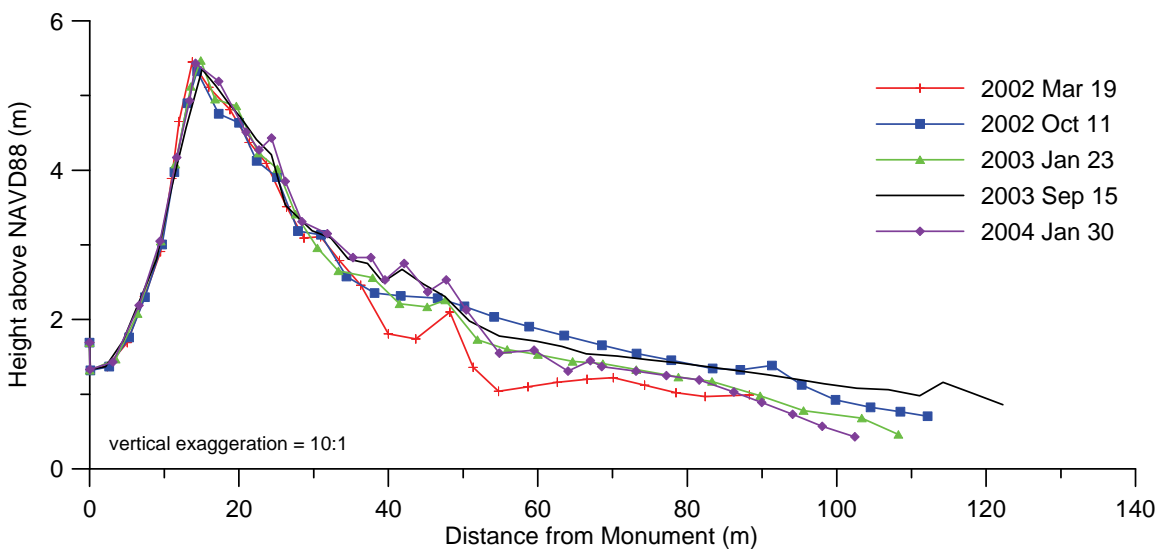
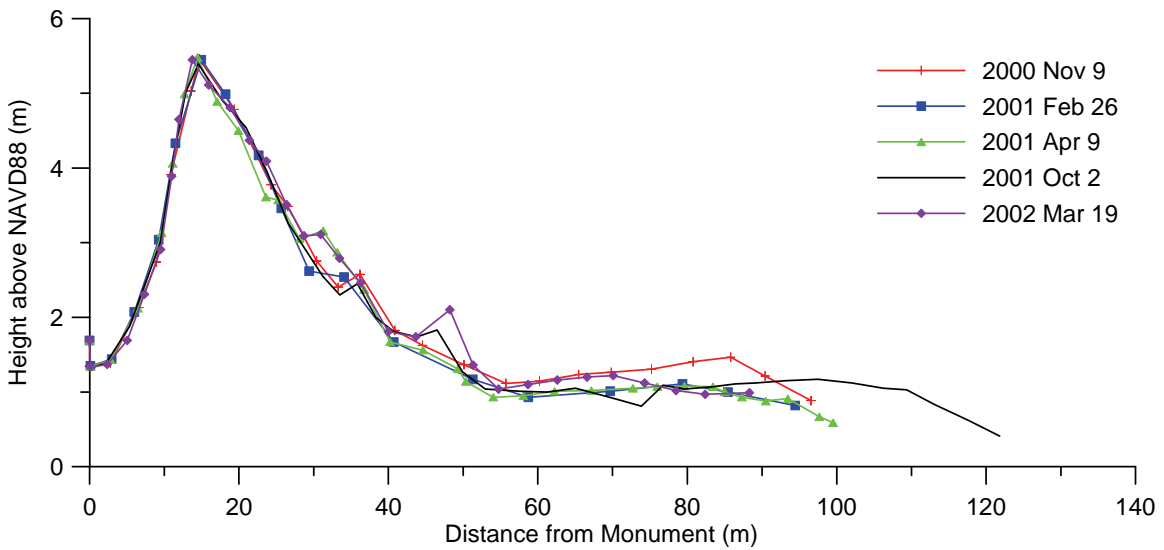
### MUI01 (Mustang Island)



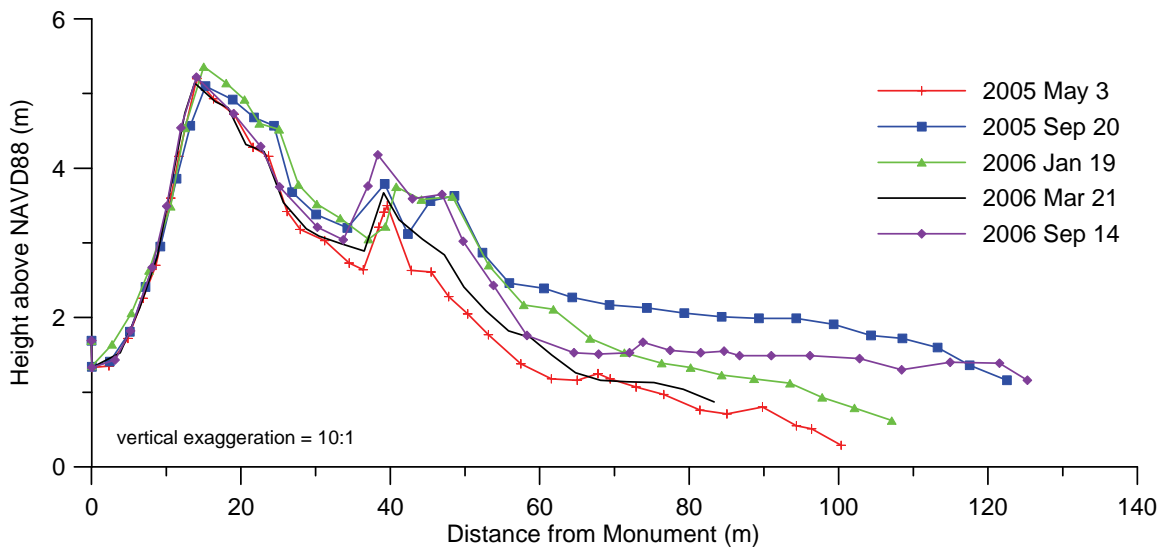
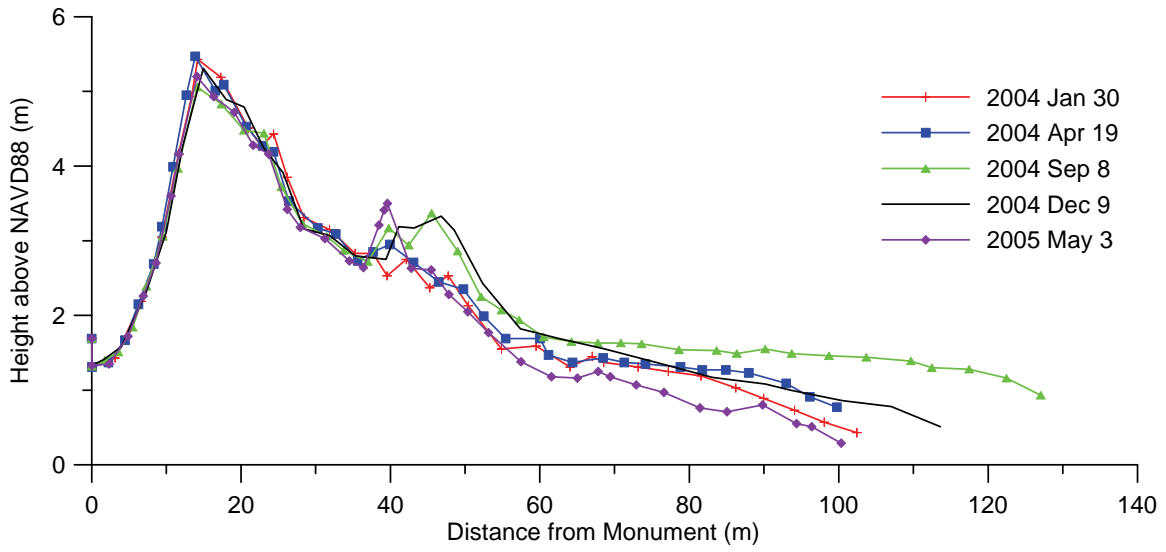




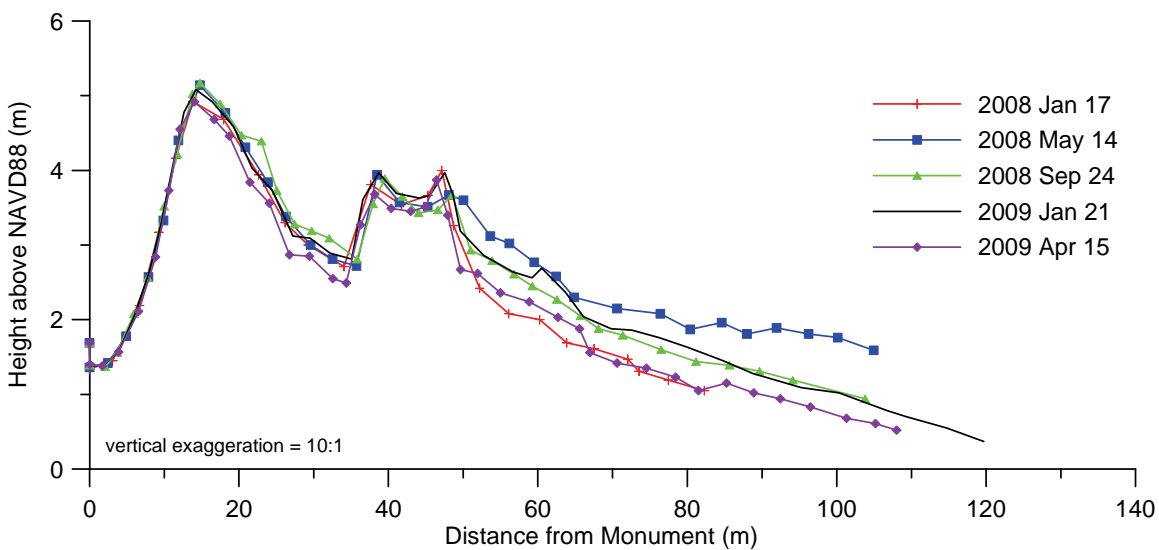
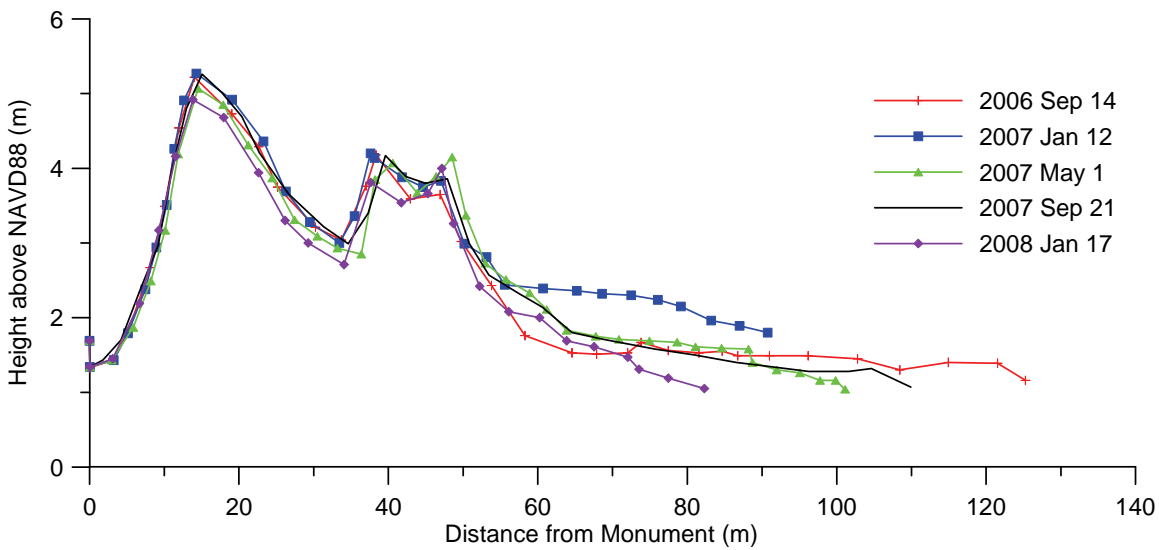
### MUI02 (Mustang Island State Park)



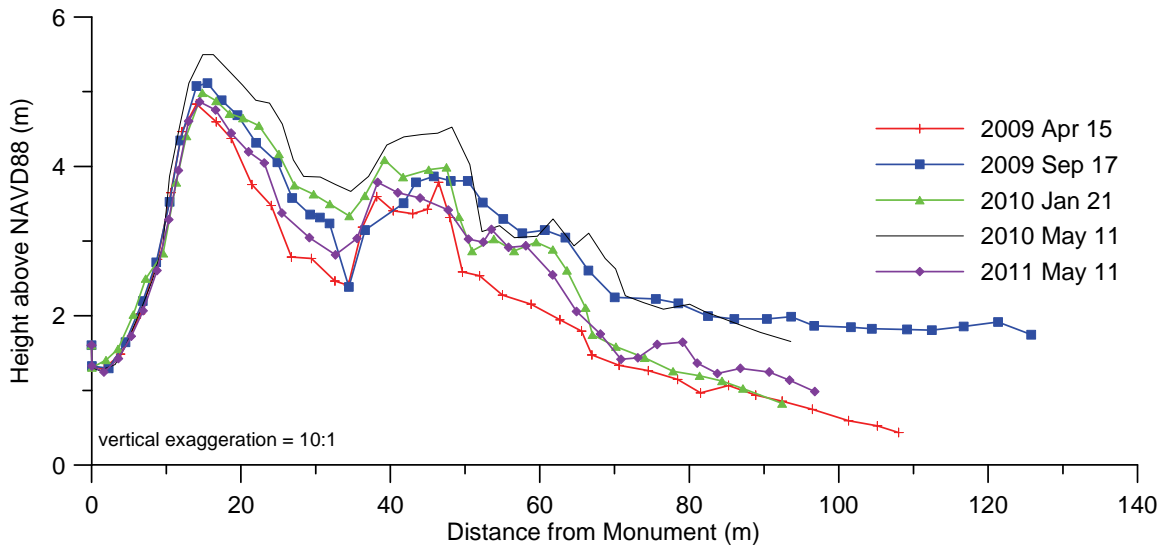
### MUI02 (Mustang Island State Park)



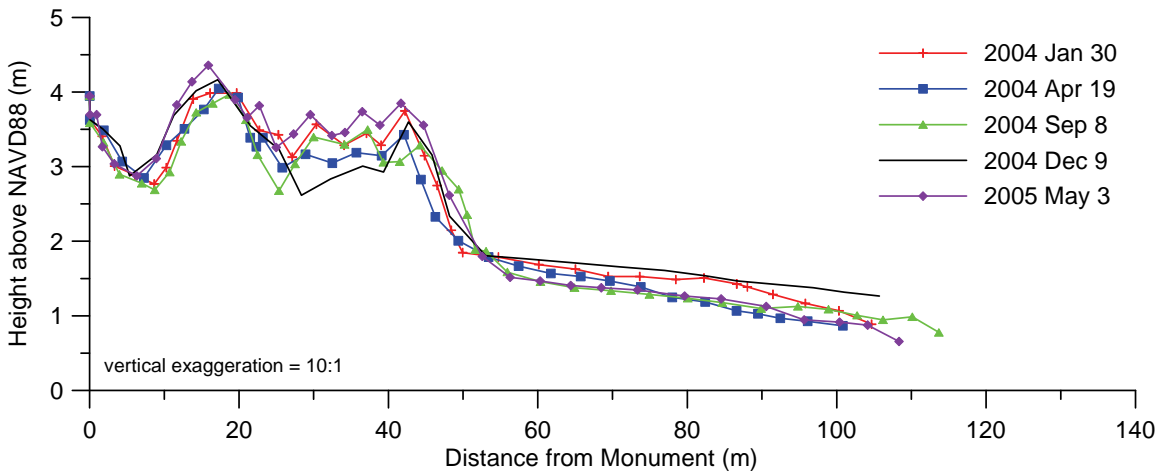
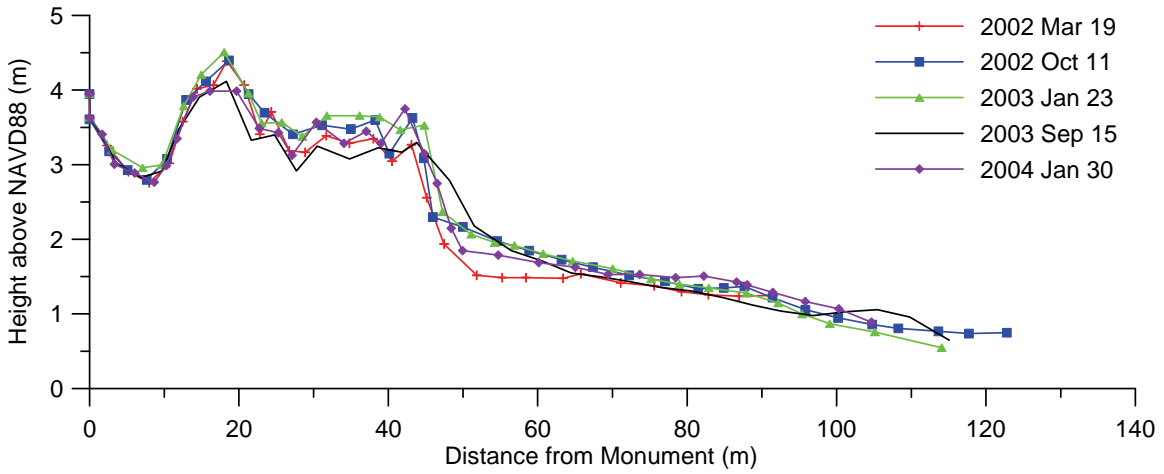
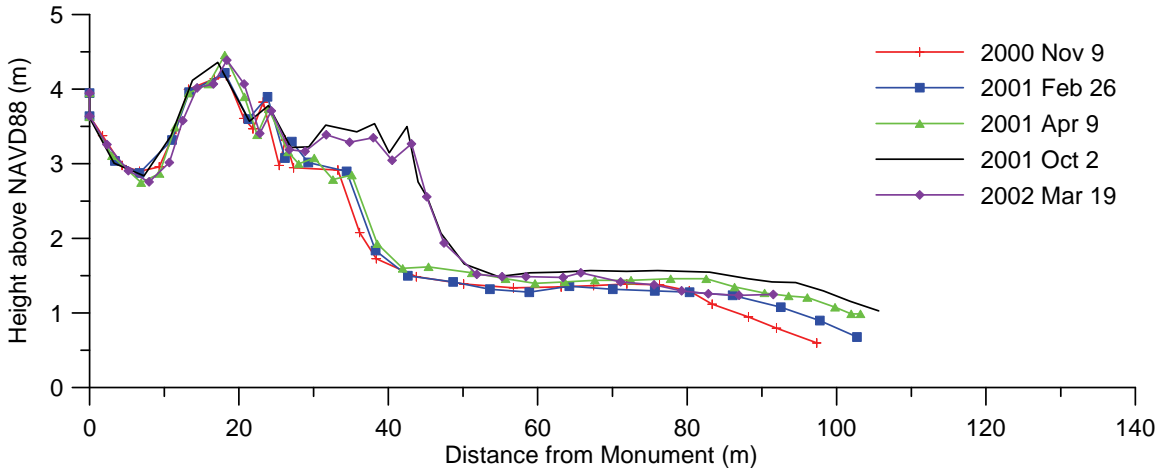
### MUI02 (Mustang Island State Park)



MUI02 (Mustang Island State Park)

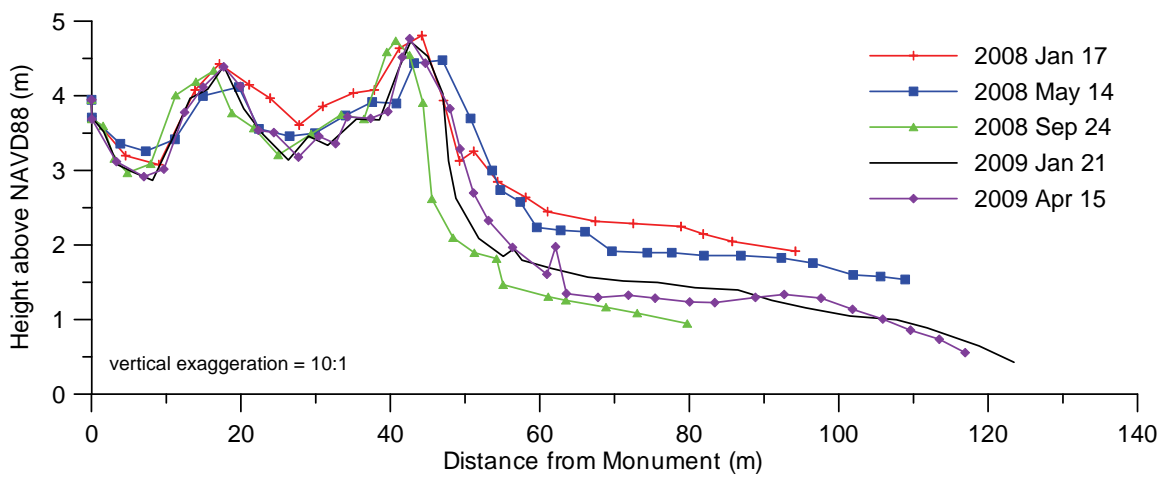
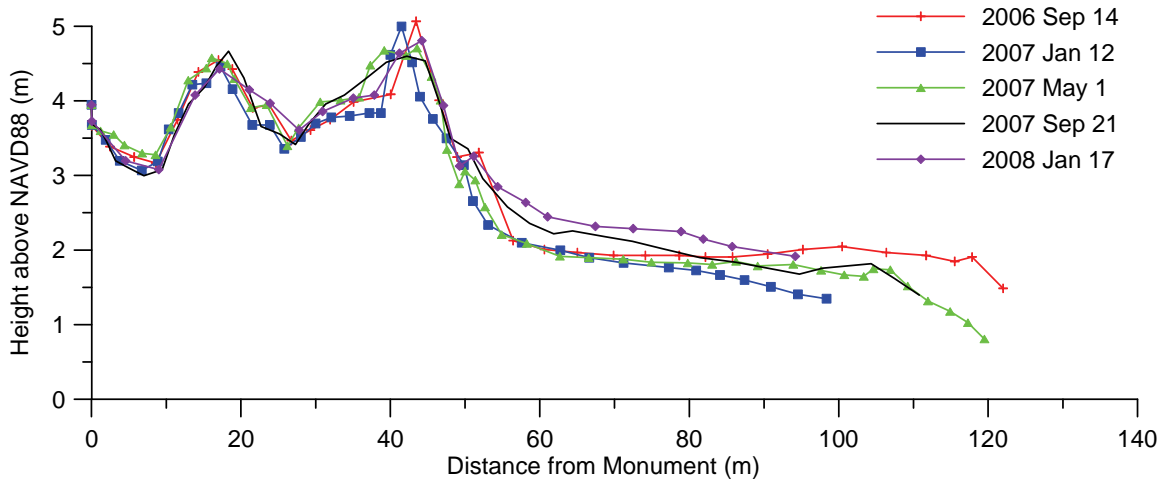
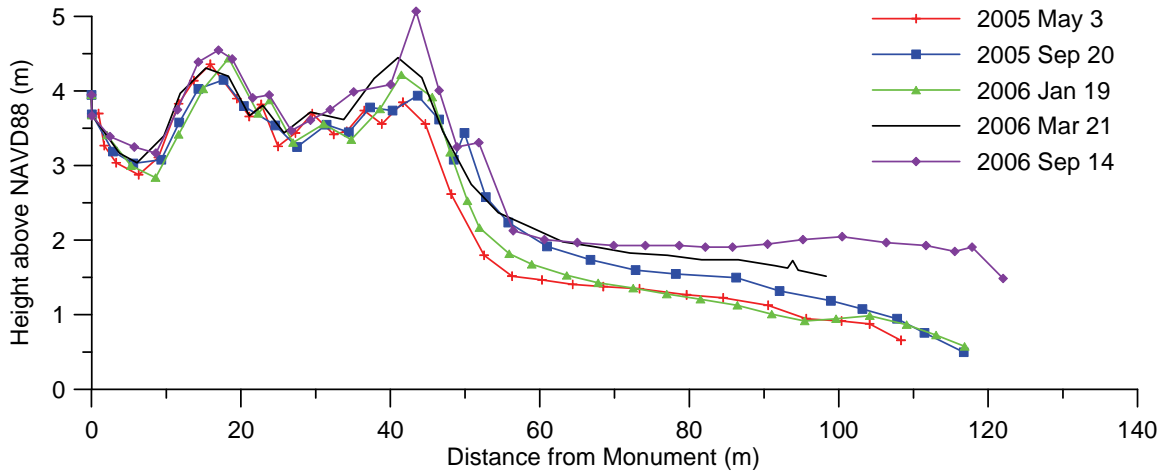


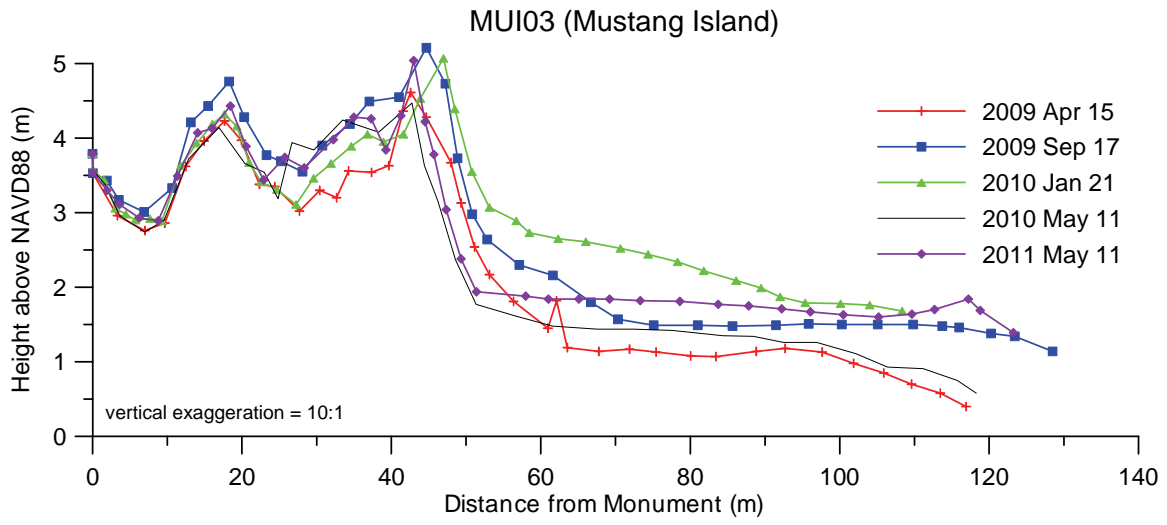
### MUI03 (Mustang Island)

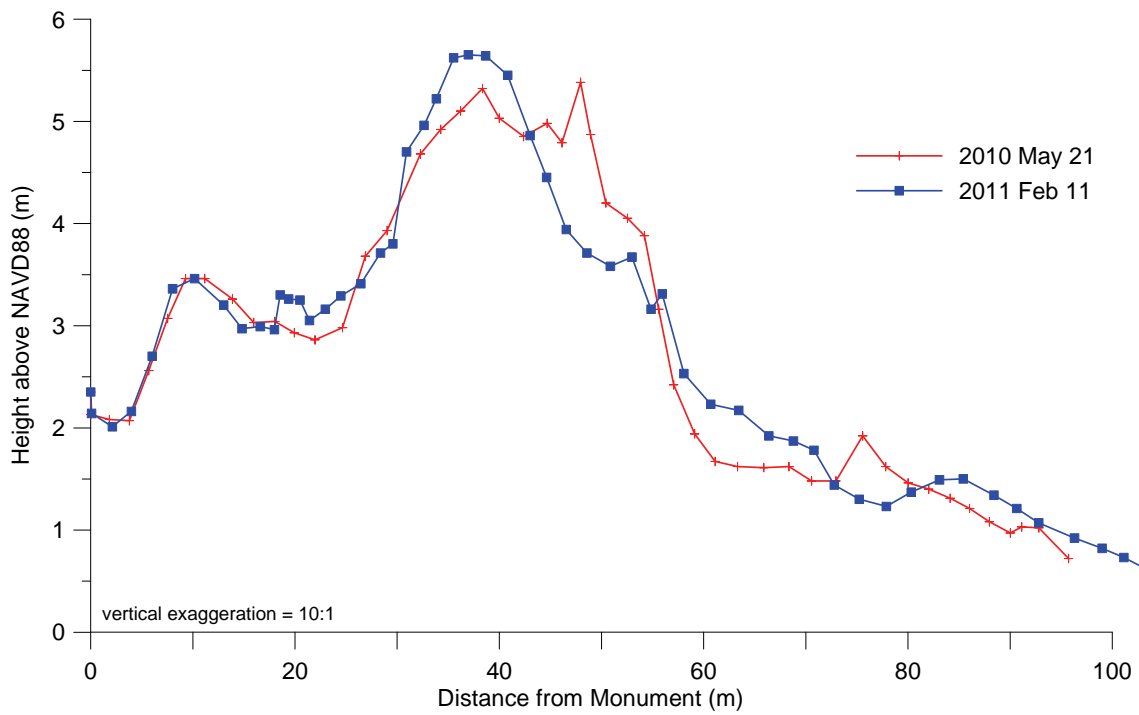
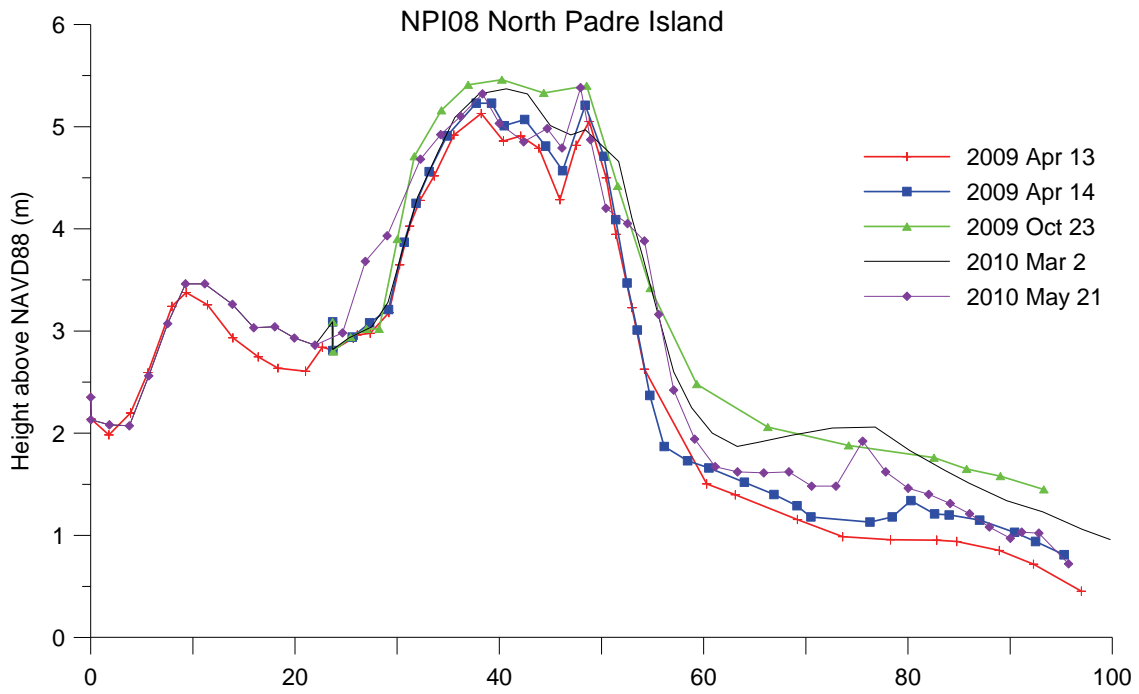




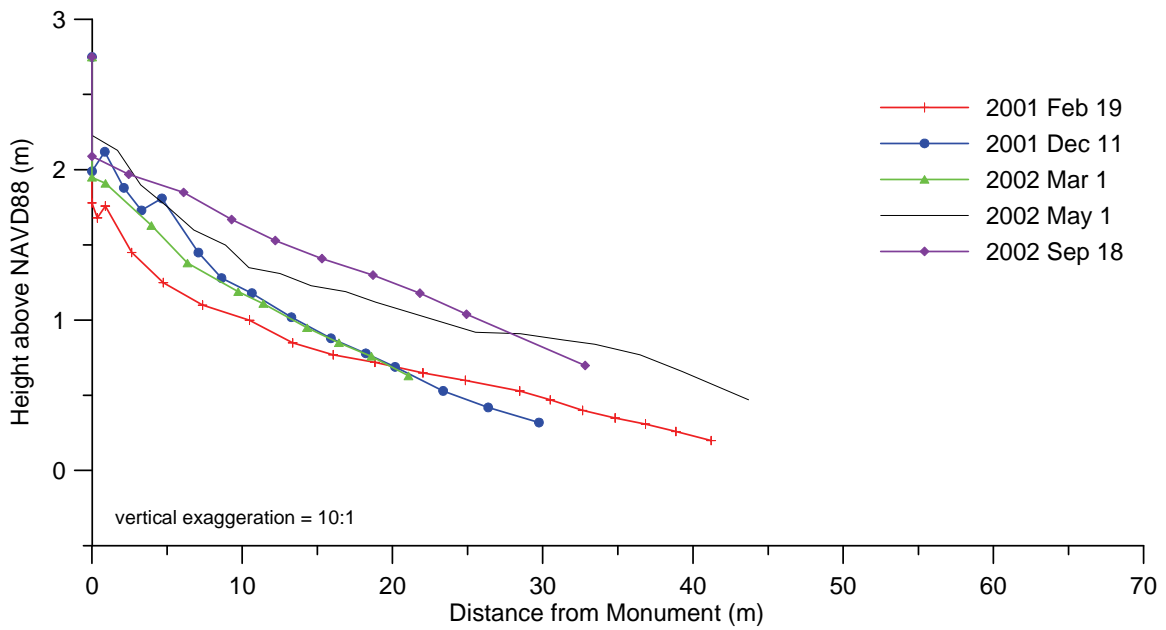
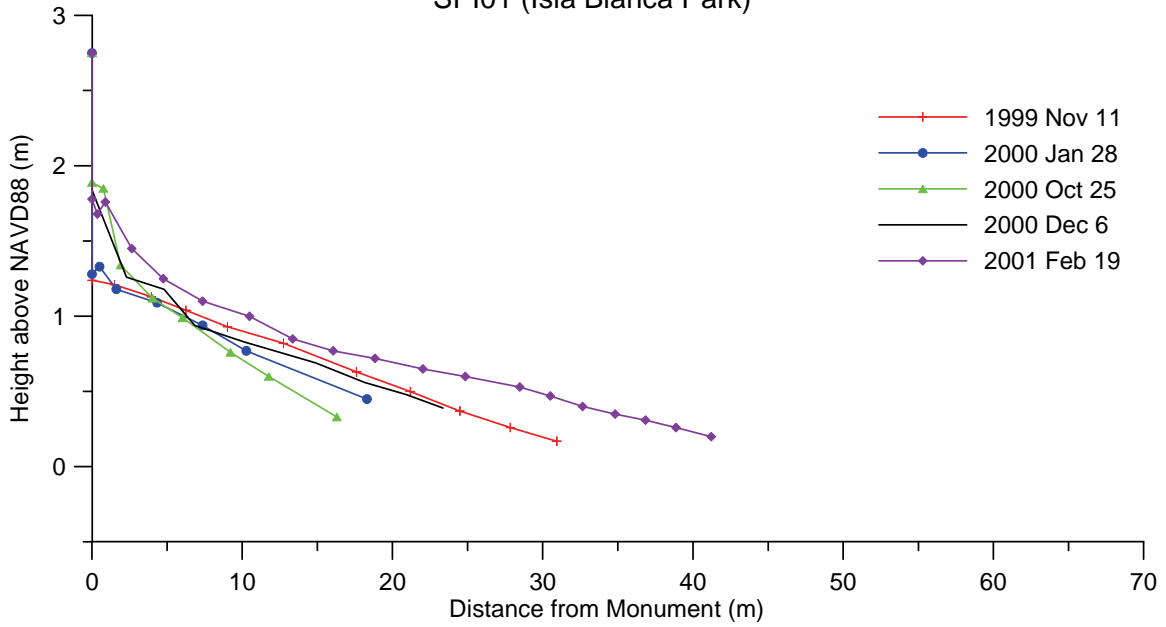
### MUI03 (Mustang Island)

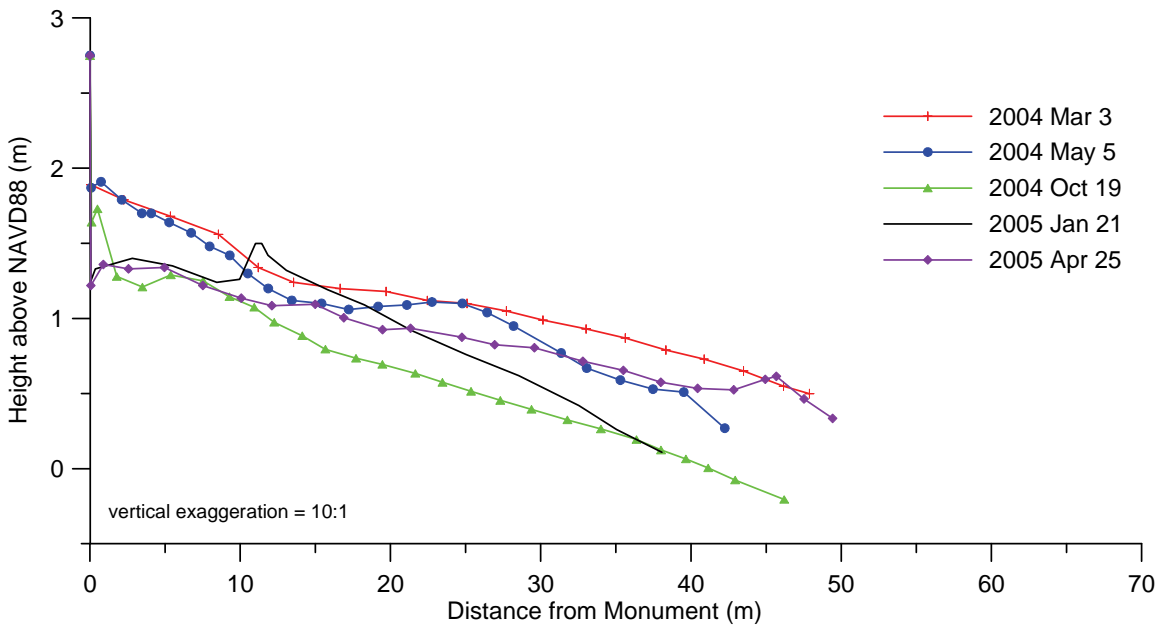
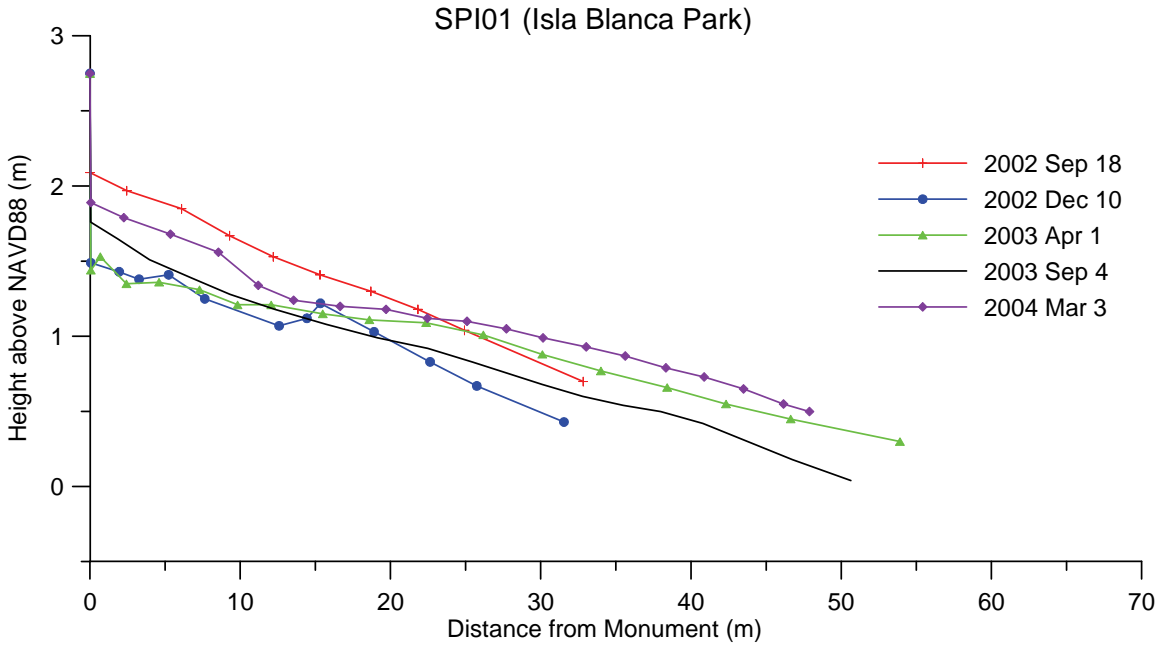




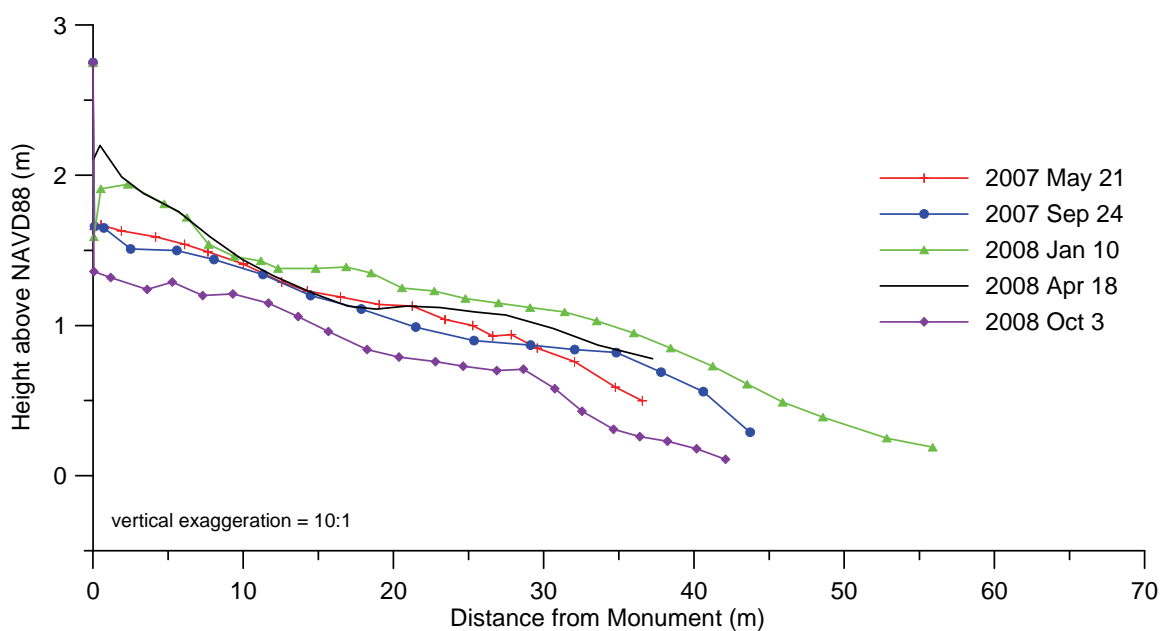
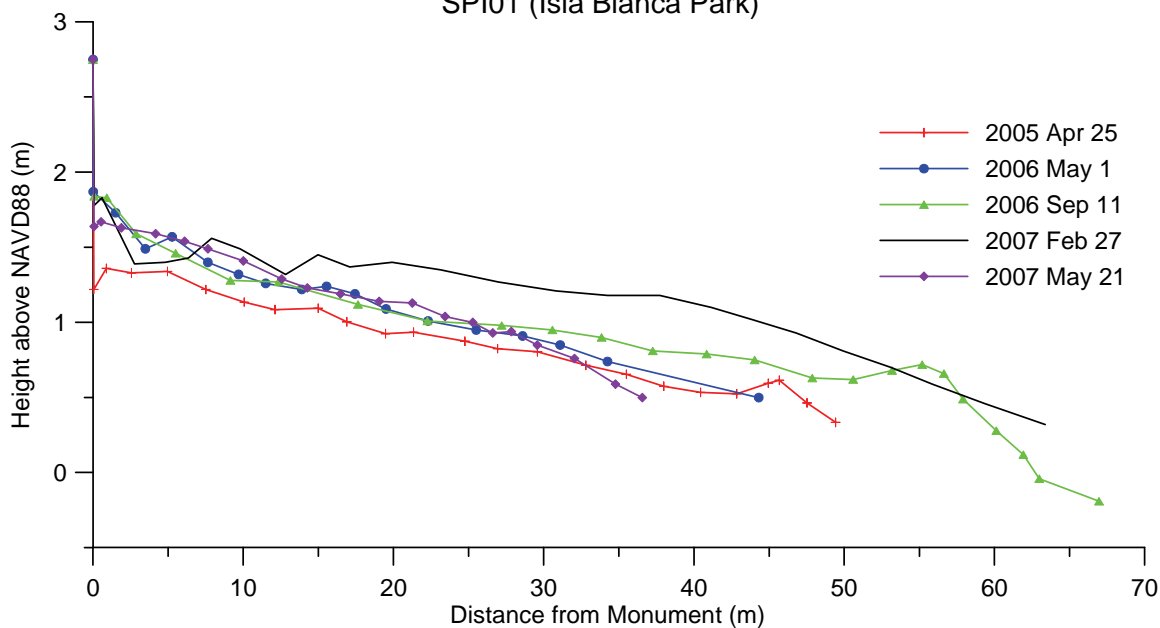


### SPI01 (Isla Blanca Park)

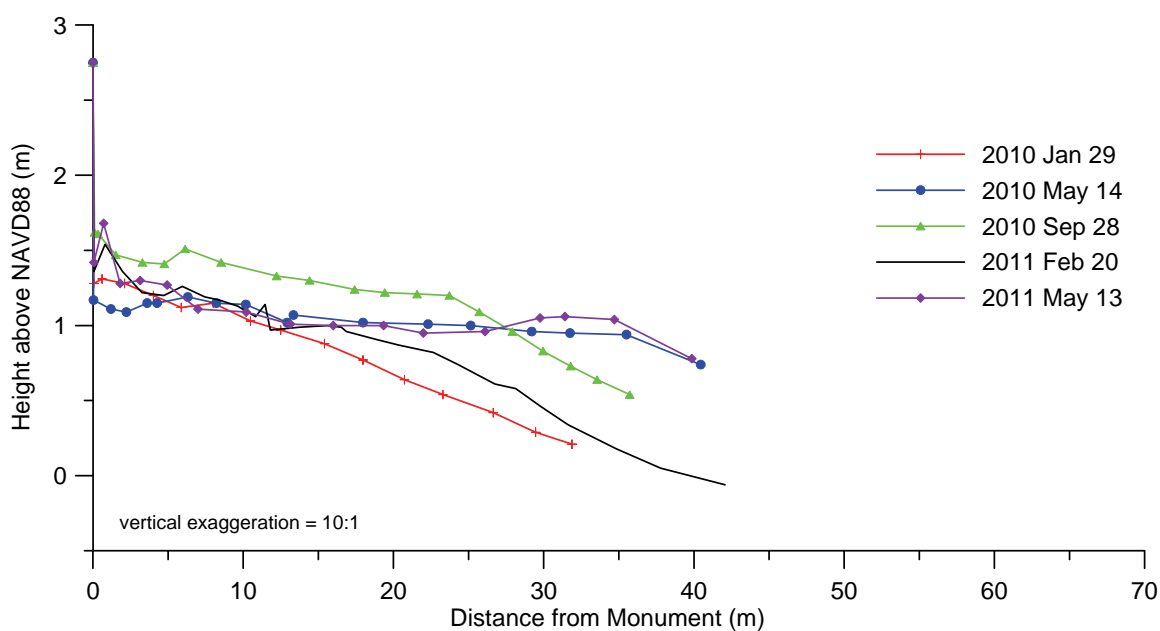
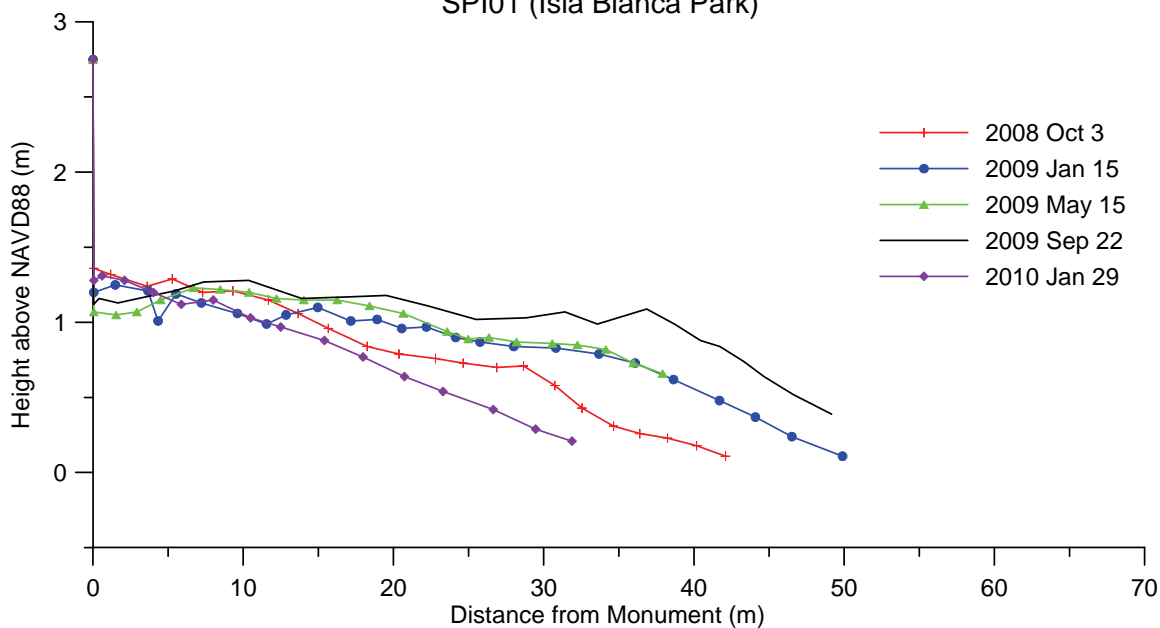




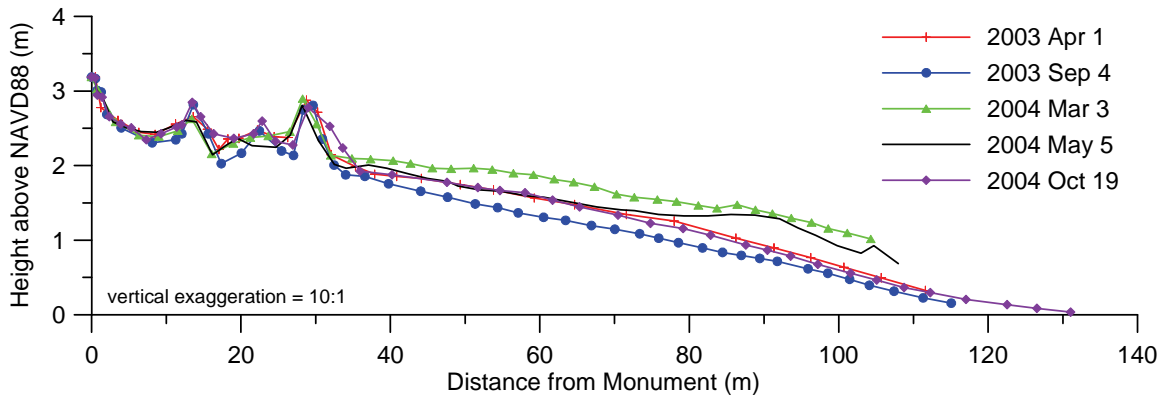
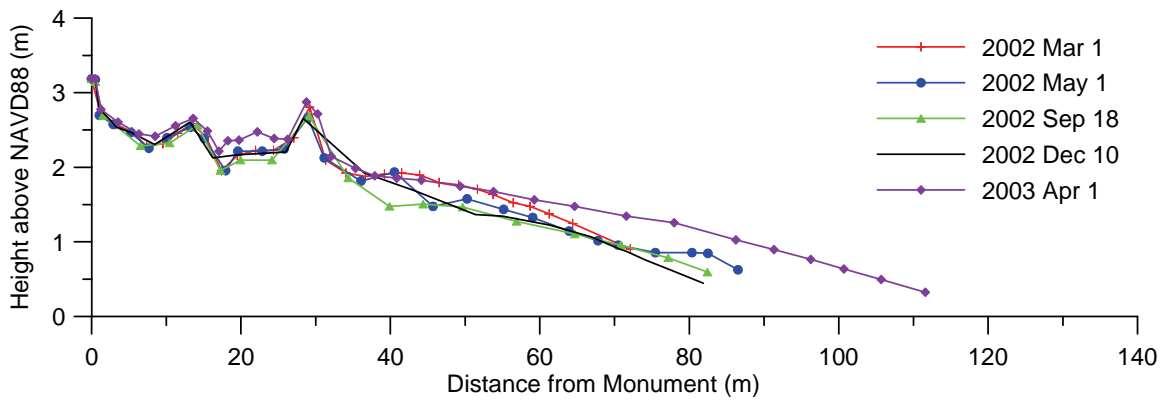
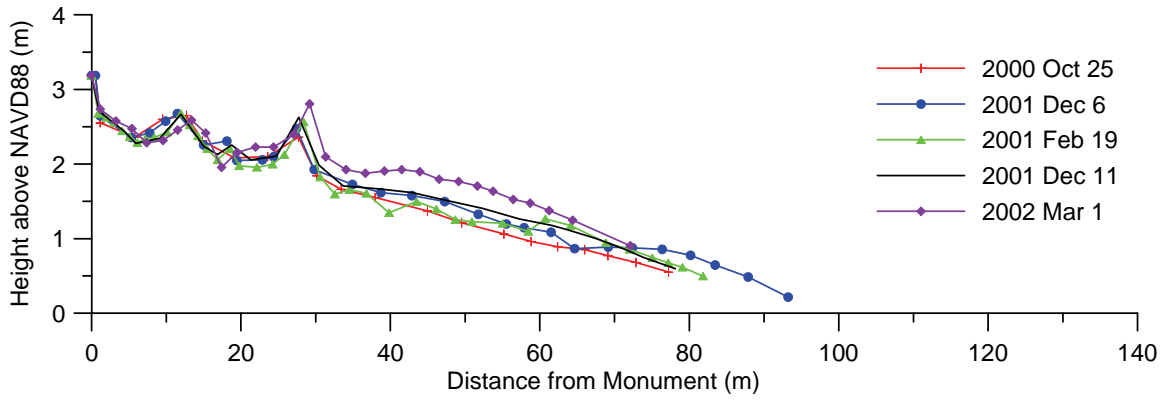
### SPI01 (Isla Blanca Park)



### SPI01 (Isla Blanca Park)

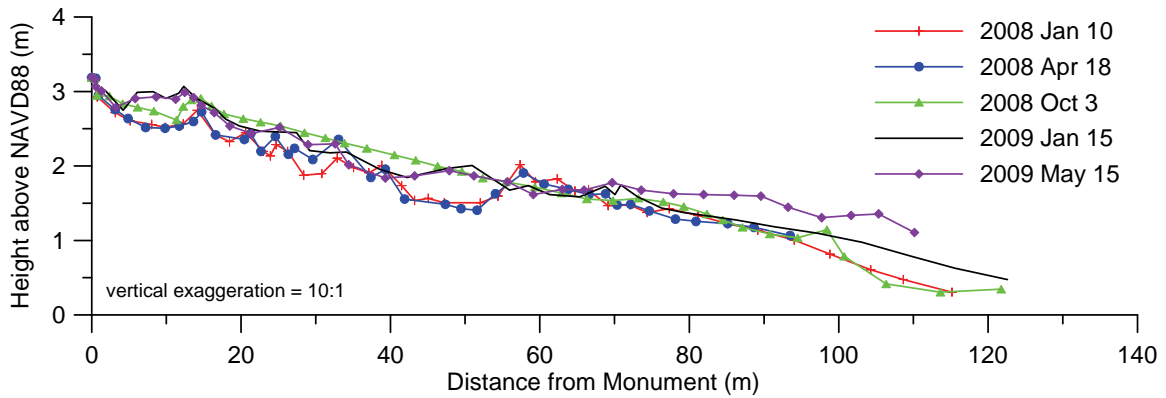
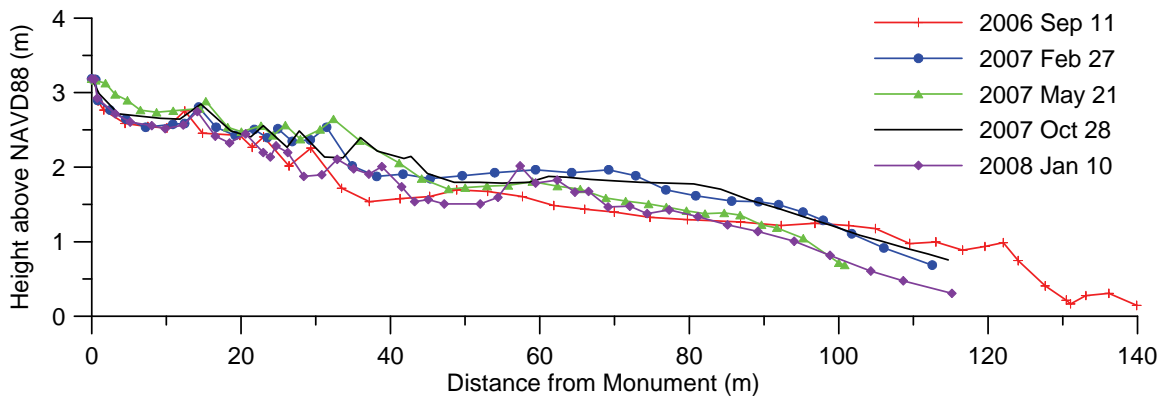
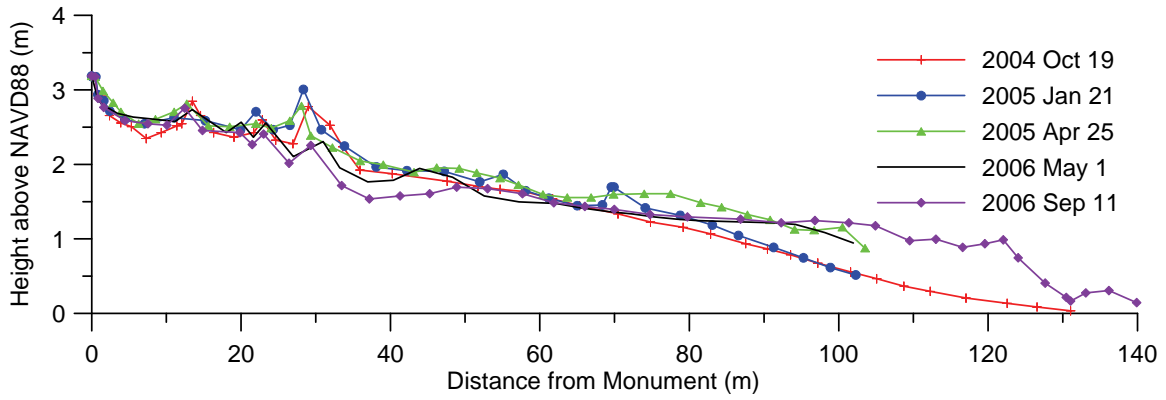


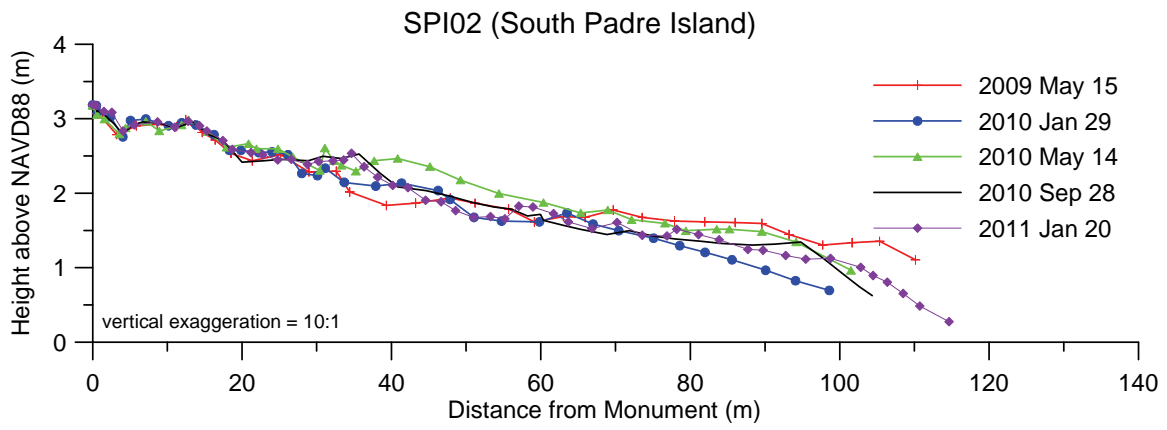
### SPI02 (South Padre Island)



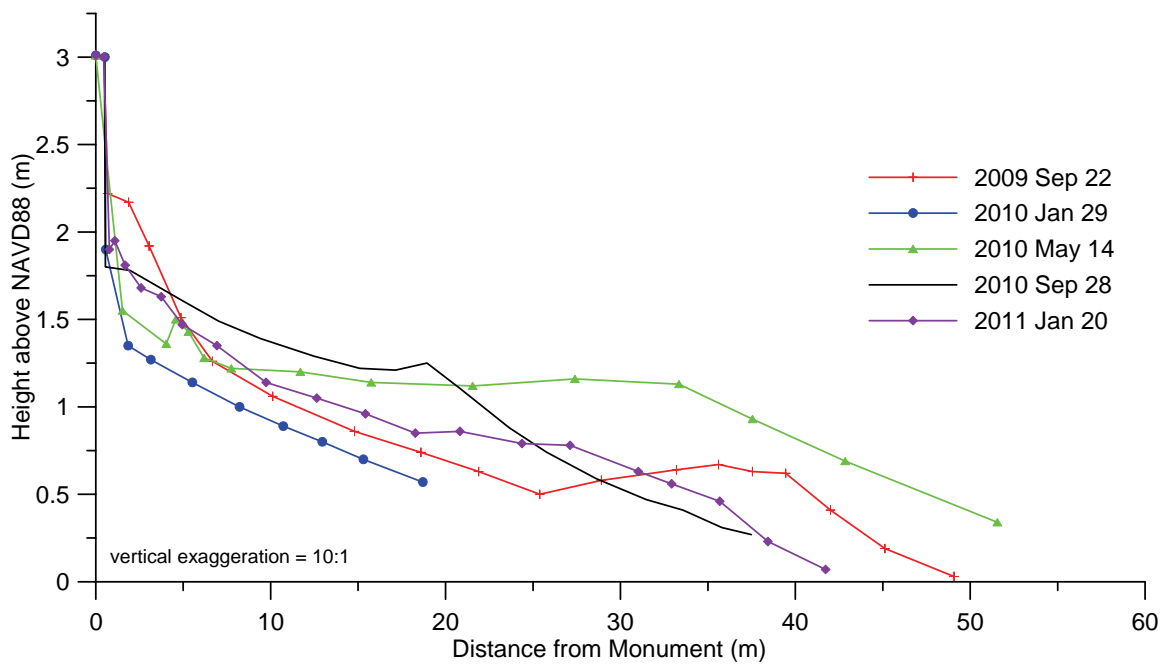
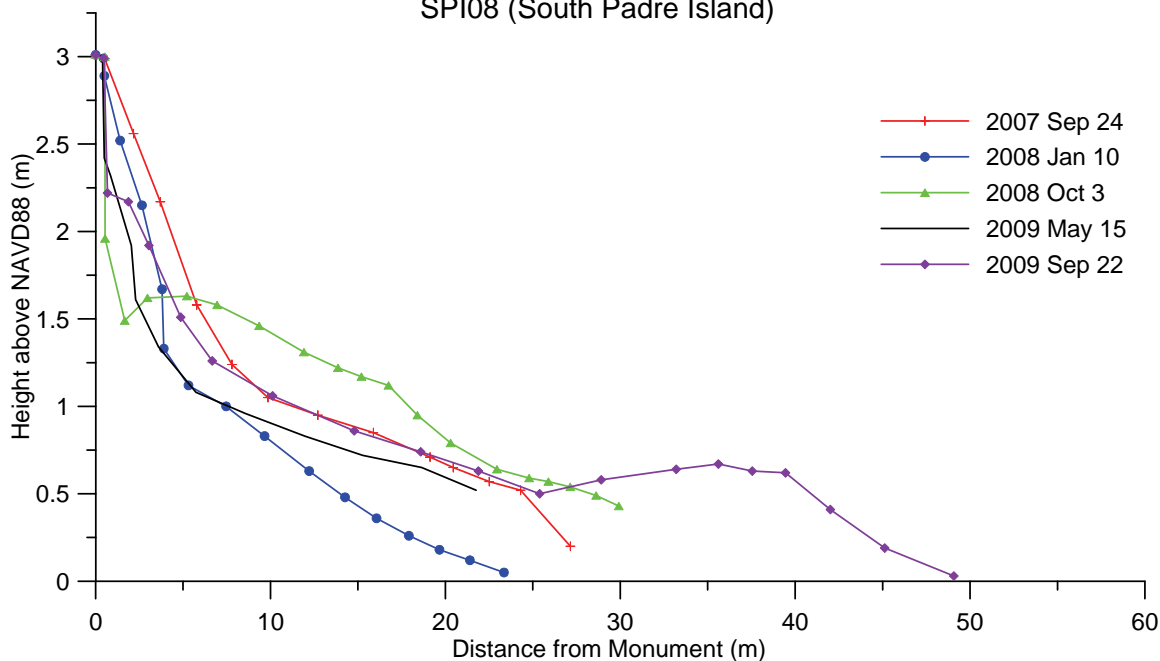


### SPI02 (South Padre Island)





### SPI08 (South Padre Island)



### SPI08 (South Padre Island)

