

UNH dedicates research center to Sen. Gregg

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NEW CASTLE — As he leaves behind three terms in the U.S. Senate, Judd Gregg was hailed Monday as a visionary lawmaker who has brought millions of dollars to programs that have affected people and wildlife statewide.

The University of New Hampshire dedicated the Judd Gregg Marine Research Complex on a blustery day on a New Castle pier, but the focus of the morning event was on the soft-spoken senator's service to the state and the university.

The speakers described Gregg as a humble man with considerable foresight, one who saw fit to invest in projects like the Coastal Response Research Center. The CRRC which was created in 2004 and was instrumental in research and cleanup efforts following the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

UNH President Mark Huddleston said Gregg has brought more than \$440 million to the school over his 18 years in the Senate, making the university a "far different, far more robust" school that stands out among its peers nationwide.

It was Gregg who championed the now-tight relationship between UNH and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which has employees at the New Castle research complex. NOAA/UNH Joint Hydrographic Center Co-Director Andy Armstrong said the Joint Hydrographic Center, a partnership of the groups, is an international leader in sea-floor mapping.

It was Gregg who provided funding for the Crimes Against Children Research Center, which director David Finkelhor said has advocated to stop child abuse and set up a national reporting system for such crimes,

"I would say that the children of America owe you a great debt," Finkelhor said.

Then there's the CRRC, which has provided significant technical support and expertise to responders trying to clean up the gulf after a rig exploded and 185 million gallons of oil poured into the gulf. Nancy Kinner, the co-director of that center, said Gregg faced considerable skepticism about the need for the center when he backed its inception, given a lack of recent oils spills at that time.

"Over the years, a lot of people have questioned his wisdom," she said, but "Sen. Gregg had this vision."

A video shown to the dozens in attendance highlighted three areas in which funding that Gregg helped secure made a difference, including local fisheries, the health of Great Bay and the hands-free Project 54 technology in police cruisers.

For his part, Gregg attempted to deflect credit onto his wife, Kathy, who he said has an abiding love of the ocean and a concern for children that drove those projects. He also credited the university, saying it has capitalized on its funding by setting up research through the complex that now bears his name and a host of other initiatives to benefit communities both locally and nationally.

"I think it's been extraordinary," he said.

An amused Gregg, who received a framed aerial photo of the complex named for him, UNH hats and a picture of him throwing the customary fish on the ice at UNH hockey game, called the event "over the top."

The political tide appears to be turning against earmarks such as the ones Gregg secured at the federal level, which Huddleston acknowledged in a conversation with reporters following the event. The university president said the school would reach out to the incoming class of legislators to let them know their support is appreciated and to highlight the work UNH is doing.

But, he added, "I think the world is changing."