

Alabama current connection

Helen Wood Park Restoration Update

BY TOM HERDER, MOBILE BAY
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

The City of Mobile's Helen Wood Park, improved and enhanced through a partnership between the City, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Coastal Section (ADCNR) and the MBNEP, has been a recent hub of restoration activity. Located on the Bay shore just north of the mouth of Dog River, the park was developed on a seven and a half acre parcel donated to the State by Ms. Helen W. Wood of Daphne. It provides access for residents who fish, watch wildlife, picnic, and view the Bay. It is also the site of two ADCNR-partnered projects concurrently taking place. The park development project with the City and the MBNEP, funded through a NOAA Gulf of Mexico Community Based Restoration Partnership, involves restoration of the three and a half acre wetland area between the parking lot and the bridge. The other project involves establishment of a living shoreline by a partnership that includes the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), the ADCNR, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The park development project involves removal of a thick stand of common reed (*Phragmites australis*), restoration of hydrology by excavation, and then replanting with native wetland plants. Results will include enhanced security, since the reeds block the view of the developed park area from the Dauphin Island Parkway, and restoration of the ecological services provided by native wetlands plants. Original plans for *Phragmites* removal included an early spring controlled burn



A blue heron enjoys Helen W. Wood Park.

followed by treatment with a glyphosate herbicide. To restore natural water flow into the area, six to eight inches of substrate are to be excavated and removed. Then native wetlands plants – bulrushes, cord grass, needle rush, and bull tongue – will be planted. However, some problems have been encountered.

Three separate attempts by the Alabama Forestry Commission to burn off the reeds were unsuccessful, forcing project managers to develop "Plan B" and investigate excavation prior to herbicide treatment. Excavation and disposal efforts are being complicated by sky-rocketing fuel costs. A topographical survey of the marsh has been performed by Vittor and Associates, and further progress awaits development of an affordable strategy for restoring hydrology to provide native emergent plants with a competitive advantage over the persistent reeds.

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Coastal Corner

By KELLY BRINKMAN, ADCNR, STATE LANDS DIVISION, COASTAL SECTION

Alabama Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Initiative

The Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Initiative is making its way to the Alabama coast. The Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program (MRRP) was started by Pure Fishing, the parent company of Berkley Fishing (makers of Trilene and Fireline monofilament). Here's how it works: clean monofilament (no hooks, tackle, trash or other debris) and empty spools are collected and shipped to Pure Fishing via pre-postage paid boxes. Pure Fishing then melts the monofilament and spool material down to plastic and nylon beads. Then the beads are used in a variety of recycled products, most notably the FishHab. FishHabs are artificial habitat structures that can be placed under piers, in ponds or lakes, or anywhere you would like to have habitat. These structures can be purchased directly through Berkely.

If you haven't seen them already, look for the white PVC pipes at your local fishing hole, and fill them with your used and broken fishing line. These outdoor bins are made of 4- or 6-inch PVC, and may be labeled with a variety of stickers including "We recycle. Don't leave your line behind" and "Monofilament Recovery and Recycling." Please pay special attention to the "Warning: No Garbage" sticker.

Indoor bins, where you can drop off line and empty spools, will soon be placed in local tackle shops.

These cardboard bins are about three feet tall and about 17 inches wide and deep and consist of two cardboard boxes: one for monofilament and one for your empty spools. Some shops may prefer to keep these bins in the back area, so if you'd like to recycle please ask shop staff or look for the red and gold "Recycle Your Line Here" sticker.



Indoor recycling bin
Photo: Kelly Brinkman
AL State Lands-Coastal

ment and one for your empty spools. Some shops may prefer to keep these bins in the back area, so if you'd like to recycle please ask shop staff or look for the red and gold "Recycle Your Line Here" sticker.

Why should you recycle your monofilament? Because discarded monofilament takes 600 years to begin to biodegrade. During those 600

years, it can entangle or be ingested by fish, sea turtles, birds, marine mammals, and other wildlife. Monofilament can also foul boat propellers, causing costly damage to motors, and it can trap SCUBA divers and swimmers as well. Even when you throw your line in a garbage can there is a risk that it will ensnare other wildlife or wash its way back to the water.

If you have any questions about the program or would like to become a partner, please contact Kelly Brinkman at (251) 621-1216 or Kelly.Brinkman@dcnr.alabama.gov. If you would like to volunteer for the Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Initiative or participate in a local coastal cleanup, please contact Mark Langner of the Southeastern Wildlife Conservation Group at (205) 243-4755 or mark.langner@swcgroup.org. Partners in the Alabama Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Initiative are: Southeastern Wildlife Conservation Group, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center, Alabama State Lands Division-Coastal Section, Alabama Marine Resources Division, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant, and the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau.



Laughing Gull ingested monofilament.
Photo: Jaime Miller,
AL Marine Resources



Outdoor recycling bin
Photo: Kelly Brinkman
AL State Lands-Coastal

Recycle Your Line Here

Recycle Your Line Here	
Baldwin County	Mobile County
Indoor Bins	Indoor Bins
Gulf Shores Marine Resources Office	Dauphin Island Marine Resources Office
Southern Bama Shop	
Outdoor Bins	Outdoor Bins
Boggy Point Ramp	Dauphin Island Pier
Cotton Bayou Ramp	Dauphin Island Campground
Fort Morgan Ramp	Dauphin Island East End Pier
Canal Park Ramp	Little Billygoat Hole Ramp
Weeks Bay	Billygoat Hole Ramp
Big Bob's	Dauphin Island Marina
Scott's Landing	River Delta Marina
Alabama Point (4 bins)	Helen Wood Park
Lake Shelby at Gulf State Park (5 bins)	
Sportsmans	

Estuary Reflections

Captain David E. Yeager Steps Down as Mobile Bay NEP Director

After serving as Director for eight years, David W. Yeager will step down from the position at the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) on July 1, 2008. Yeager began his tenure in early 2000 after a highly successful 30-year career with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps. A committee has been created to conduct a national search to identify candidates and recommend a selection for a new head of this important program.

Captain Yeager has been active in numerous local organizations during his

tenure as Director, including Associate Director, Coastal Policy Center, Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Board of Directors, Baldwin County United; Mobile United; Past Chair, Southeast and Gulf Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, Member, Habitat Protection Advisory Panel of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Fisheries Management Council, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium Advisory Committee for Alabama Center for Estuarine Studies; Board Member, Association of National Estuary Programs; and 2004 graduate of the Leadership Coastal Alabama program.

He was recently honored by the Partners for Environmental Progress with their 2008 Community Partner Award.

His association with the MBNEP will continue on a contractual basis for the near term to manage certain specific tasks and to provide support during the transition. He cites the need to focus on other interests as a reason for stepping down and says, "As Chaucer put it, 'time and tide wait for no man' and I'd reckon it's about full flood coming on to slack water for me at this point."

Wolf Bay Watershed Watch – Making A Difference...

By *STAN MAHONEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WOLF BAY WATERSHED WATCH*



Left to right, Councilwoman Edwards, Mrs. Jesse Mahoney and Mrs. Ward help plant donated plants in the "Reading Park" in the Whistler community.

senior citizens in the Whistler community of Prichard. On the initial visit to the park site, Baldwin County Master Gardner Jessy Mahoney completed a rough landscape design, matching the topography and soils of the land with the varieties of plants grown by Wolf Bay Watershed volunteers in their greenhouse. On a subsequent visit, plants were delivered and planted by local volunteers.

As noted by Mrs. Mahoney, "...Councilwoman Edwards is an inspiring bundle of energy and is working very hard for her constituency. We sincerely hope our efforts make a difference in the lives of those using this park."

...in Prichard Sometimes, you have to make a road trip to make a difference. In this instance, members of the Wolf Bay Watershed Watch were contacted by Prichard City Councilwoman Ossia Edwards to help with a "Reading Park" for

...in awareness In an effort to raise public awareness of the rich, ecological tapestry surrounding Wolf Bay, Commissioner Charles "Skip" Gruber and the Baldwin



Commission funded eighteen new signs for the Wolf Bay Watershed which highlight its designation as an "Outstanding Alabama Water." The signs were designed by Watch member Terry Hanson and installed by the Baldwin County Highway Department's Cal Market.

In a complimentary effort, WBWW and Spencer Ryan of "PALS" (People Against a Littered State) in Montgomery designed 12 new signs which will be installed at public boat launches and beaches around the watershed in an effort to maintain the pristine beauty of local waters. These signs will be installed within the next few weeks.

Mobile Manatees – Report Your Manatee Sightings

By LISA YOUNG,
DAUPHIN ISLAND SEA LAB

This year, the Mobile Manatees program, based at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), received its first manatee sighting on March 3 in Fowl River, earlier than expected. A manatee sighting also was reported from Mississippi waters. The DISL research team looks forward to more reports as the weather warms. It will continue regular visits to areas frequented by manatees and will conduct aerial surveys in June.

“As bay waters are warming up, we expect to see more manatees moving into Mobile Bay and up into the rivers and delta. Our primary goal this time of year is to remind people that these animals are here and that the Mobile Manatees Sighting Network is active,” states DISL Senior Marine Scientist Dr. Ruth Carmichael.

“Based on early sightings, we expect this season to be very busy. We encourage everyone to please report sightings as soon as possible and contact us or visit our website for more information,” she concluded.

This vital research depends on community participation. Please contact Mobile Manatees to report sightings or for more information.

What you can do to assist our research and help protect manatees in Mobile Bay:

- **Report any manatee sightings to Mobile Manatees** via our website <http://manatee.disl.org> or toll free number, 1-866-493-5803

- **Spread the word.** Tell your friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues to report manatee sightings to Mobile Manatees.



A manatee sited in Dog River.

- **Give manatees space.** Do not do anything to alter manatees' natural behavior. Do not entice, chase, feed, or touch them. The best rule of thumb is to stay at least 100 feet from manatees. According to federal law any activity that changes manatees' natural behavior is harassment and is illegal.

- **Boat with caution.** Boat strikes are the leading cause of human-related mortality among manatees.

- **Purchase a Manatee-shirt.** Contact the DISL Estuarium gift shop to buy a

Mobile Manatees T-shirt. All proceeds go to support Mobile Manatees outreach program.

The Mobile Manatees program has focused on defining where manatees live and what they eat while visiting Mobile Bay and adjacent waters. The program also is dedicated to sharing data with other researchers, managers, and the public.

In 2007, DISL and Wildlife Trust (WT) in Florida started the Mobile Manatees Sighting Network, the first formal network to receive and track manatee sightings in AL waters. The program successfully processed more than 100 sightings in 2007 (in contrast, only 156 sightings were recorded for the area in the entire 20 years prior). The program serendipitously served as a contact for sightings from other regions such as MS, FL, NC, and GA. In less than one year, Mobile Manatees was featured in 4 regional TV news broadcasts, 14 newspaper articles throughout AL, and newspapers in WI and OH. Data provided by this program also was responsible for the AL Natural Heritage Program's recent decision to reclassify manatees in AL waters from accidental (SA) to priority (SI). Mobile Manatee's partners include Wildlife Trust, USFWS, USGS, NMFS, AL Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, NOAA's National Data Development Center (NCDDC), MS-AL Sea Grant, community members, and media.

Helen Wood Park Restoration

Continued from page 1

While fires failed to catch, and project planners looked over the marsh, things were moving quickly and according to plans in the other project. Steven Scyphers, other DISL graduate students, and ADCNR and TNC personnel busily loaded concrete “reef balls” and net bags filled with oyster shells onto a shallow draft boat. The living shorelines project is designed on a scale that would be useful to a bayside homeowner trying to protect a waterfront lot from erosion. This project will compare two reef/breakwater designs, one formed from stacks of bagged oyster shells and the other consisting of large,

hollow balls of concrete known as reef balls. Both were set offshore, parallel to the shoreline in about three feet of water with the tops only about six inches below the water's surface, to dissipate wave energy and provide habitat for fish, shellfish, and other marine life. Hopefully, they will provide a cheaper, environmentally friendly alternative to bulkheading by preventing erosion and creating calmer areas landward where submerged vegetation can grow along with emergent marsh grasses along the shoreline.

While protecting property, bulkheads eliminate important shoreline and shallow water habitats.

This project's experimental design will serve as a thesis project for Scyphers, a University

of South Alabama graduate student working in the DISL lab of his major professor and co-principal investigator, Dr. Sean Powers. Dr. Ken Heck of the DISL, the other project PI, sits on Scyphers graduate committee. Other studies, including a local project conducted by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium at Alonzo Landing near the Dauphin Island ferry landings have shown that concrete structures rapidly become covered in oysters. The project will be monitored monthly for several years to assess settlement by fish, crustaceans, oysters, and other marine animals. The bottom inshore and shoreline will be monitored bathymetrically and with GPS along with vegetation growth and changes.

Marine Resources Division Activities

JOHN MARESKA, ADCNR, MARINE RESOURCES DIVISION

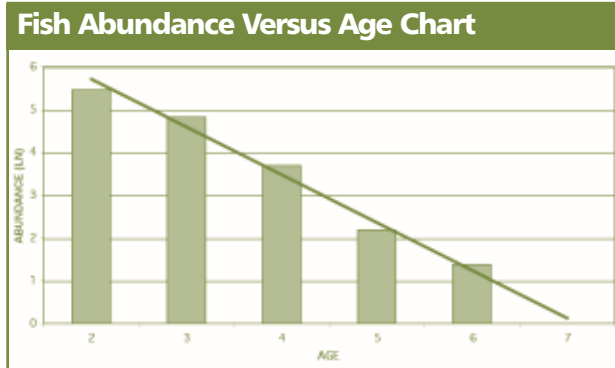
Determining the Age Structure of Saltwater Fish

The Marine Resources Division (MRD) is gearing up for another season of collecting hard parts from the recreational catch. These hard parts are structures of a fish's anatomy, which can be used to determine its age. Otoliths (earbones) are calcified structures located in the fish's head that can be extracted through the gill cavity for many species of fish. However, gray triggerfish have a large spine on their back, which can be removed to determine age. Both otoliths and spines are returned to the lab and processed. The processing procedure captures a cross-section of the structure that is representative of the fish since it was hatched. Cross sections are typically less than 1 millimeter thick and mounted on a microscope slide. Under the microscope, rings are viewed and counted to determine the age, just as one would count rings in the cross section of a tree.



Extracting otoliths (earbones) from a fish to help determine the age of the fish.

The age of a fish when compared to the length, sex, and reproductive state of the eggs is essential to management of the fishes. Comparisons of fish length and reproductive state of the eggs help to determine the minimum length at which this species will spawn for the first time. The premise is to allow most of the population of first time spawners to contribute once to replacing the population before they may be caught legally. The abundance of the fish in a population



allows managers to determine how fast fish are disappearing (see graph above). Fish disappear from the waters via catch, disease, predation, and seasonal immigration/emigration. Fish abundance and composition of males and females provides data used to estimate the reproductive potential of the living population. MRD's recent assessment of spotted seatrout indicated that this population of fish is stable and able to perpetuate itself based on the current level of fishing. The assessment used information from the recreational catch along with

fishery independent sampling. MRD extends thanks to those anglers that allowed their fish to be sampled for their contribution to the management of the fishes.

2008 Derelict Crab Trap Removal

Saturday March 1, 2008 was a great day for the removal of derelict crab traps. Preliminary surveys by the Alabama Marine Resources Division had estimated about 200 traps scattered across the delta region of Mobile Bay.

Two stations, Tensaw River ramp and Meaher State park, were established as collection points, one on each side of the bay. The target of the Tensaw River ramp was to remove traps from the extensive mud flat across from the USS Alabama. These traps were easily visible from the USS Alabama and I-10. Extensive efforts of volunteers recovered 356 traps. This far exceeded expectations considering the absence of storm events that typically are blamed for derelict traps. Derelict traps can catch fish, crabs, birds, turtles and other animals in what is termed 'ghost fishing'. The gear is functional and in the water, but no fishermen are retrieving it to remove the catch. Derelict traps also have the potential to damage lower units on outboards and pose a threat to anglers that have to remove the barnacle encrusted traps while leaning over the back of their boat. Thanks are extended to the volunteers and those providing financial support; Mobile Bay NEP, Holcim Inc., Coastal Conservation Association, Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association, Waste Management, Auburn University Marine Extension Service and all others that provided their time.

New Projects Highlight Mobile Bay NEP's 2009 Work Plan

By TOM HERDER, MOBILE BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

The recently completed MBNEP Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2009 includes exciting projects with potentially positive impacts across the five priority areas of the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) – Water Quality, Habitat Management, Living Resources, Human Uses, and Education and Public Involvement. Many of the projects are on-going from past years, but 17 were added as a result of new project proposals submitted this spring and selected for funding.

Baldwin County's Fish River, selected as an area of concentration for MBNEP activity by its Project Implementation Committee (PIC), is the focus of three new projects for the coming fiscal year. Each project focuses on different aspects of characterization, and both the PIC and Finance Committee agreed that a combination of all three would be likely to achieve significant environmental improvements on the river. The projects were selected for funding contingent upon agreement by the three grantees – the Alabama Coastal Foundation (ACF), Auburn University, and the Weeks Bay Foundation (WBF) – that they would work in partnership. ACF will assess water quality, streambank characteristics, and plant communities between the mouth of the river at Weeks Bay and County Road 48. Auburn will create a digital and hard graphic display that depicts the ecosystems and shoreline conditions along Fish River for the purpose of identifying new opportunities for public access. The WBF hopes to identify likely sources that have caused Fish River to be listed on the 303(d) list for pathogen contamination.

Also in Baldwin County, the Town of Magnolia Springs has received funding for a comprehensive analysis of sediment loading in the Magnolia River. They hope to identify man-made and natural point sources that contribute significantly to the increasing turbidity in a river that is currently being proposed as an Outstanding Alabama Water

Across the Bay in Mobile County, two Dog River projects will receive significant funding. At Helen Wood Park near the mouth of the river, MBNEP will join the

Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) and other partners currently involved in examining potential benefits of alternative shoreline stabilization methods ("reef balls" vs. bagged oyster shells) discussed elsewhere in this edition. The Dog River Clearwater Revival, which has already installed a trash barrier across tributary Eslava Creek, received funding for purchase and installation of two additional barriers to collect debris at Moore and Montlamar Creeks. Elsewhere in Mobile County MBNEP funding will be used by Auburn to generate a community plan for Bayou la Batre, and public access improvements will be made at Steele Creek Park by the City of Satsuma.

Other funded projects will benefit both coastal Alabama counties. Two projects conducted by DISL faculty will focus on coastal living resources. Dr. Rich Aronson's lab will compare black needlerush, (with primary herbivore/prey species *Neritina*) with smooth cordgrass (and primary herbivore/prey species *Littoraria*) as habitats for blue crabs. Dr. Ruth Carmichael's lab will study the population of the West Indian manatee in Mobile Bay. The National Audubon Coastal Bird Conservation Program will use funds to conduct a second survey of breeding beach-nesting birds and initiate a monitoring/protective signage program. Two Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center projects are being funded: one to support continued operation of the Alabama Clean Marina Program and the other to facilitate a land trust for coastal Alabama for the purpose of accepting conservation easements on small, fragmented parcels of valuable and/or sensitive habitat. The Southeastern Wildlife Conservation Group will use funds to facilitate monofilament recycling programs (discussed in Coastal Corner) along the coast. The Wolf Bay Watershed Watch will partner with the Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau and several municipalities to oversee the manufacture and installation of interpretive signage along an "Alabama Coastal Connection Scenic Byway" to highlight the cultural and ecological assets that make coastal Alabama so unique.

Statewide, funds will be used by the Alabama Clean Water Partnership to

produce an interactive multimedia program for watershed education and by grassroots, inc. to educate real estate and development professionals about land use issues such as stormwater management, wetlands preservation, and low impact site design.

Current events

Wed., June 25 - Sat., July 26, and Tues., July 29 - 9 a.m. - 12 Noon

What: Beach, Dune, and Forest Excursions
Walk through the Audubon Bird Sanctuary's maritime forest. **Cost:** \$15 adults/\$10 children.
Contact: Mendel Graeber (251) 861-2127 or mgraerber@disl.org for info.

Friday, June 27 & July 11 - 1 - 4:30 p.m.

What: Alive! - At the Dauphin Island Sea Lab for children ages 5-8. Half day camps from 1-4:30 p.m. Parents/guardians required to attend.
Cost: \$35/student includes T-shirt, Estuarium pass, snack and certificate. **Call:** (251) 861-2141

Sun. - Friday, July 6-11, 13-18, 20-25, and July 27- August 1

What: Gulf Island Journey - At the DISL for middle school students. Beach scavenger hunts, ghost crab crawls, marsh mushing and collection trips aboard the R.V.A.E. Verrill.
Cost: \$550, includes tuition, room, meals, and lab fees. **Call:** (251) 861-2141

Saturday & Sunday, July 5 & 6

What: Gulf Coast Exploreum, Mobile - Five Rivers, Alabama's Delta Resource Center, will join the Exploreum to showcase some of the common snakes, turtles, frogs and lizards found in South Alabama and the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Biologist Shonda Borden and herpetologist Joel Borden will be on-hand to answer questions.

Saturday, July 12 and Friday, July 18 9:45 a.m. - 12 Noon

What: Salt Marsh Field Excursions - Explore the salt marsh ecosystem, including flora and fauna. Use seine nets, yappy pumps, and sieve boxes to discover the wonders of this highly productive habitat. Showers and changing facilities will be available after the trip. **Cost:** \$15 adults/\$10 children
Contact: Mendel Graeber (251) 861-2127 or mgraerber@disl.org for info.

Saturday, September 20 - 8 a.m. - 12 Noon

What: Alabama Coastal Cleanup
Contact: Amy King, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division (251) 928-9792 or amy.king@dcnr.alabama.gov

Call the Dauphin Island Sea Lab for information on a variety of exciting courses available to K-12 Educators this summer. The Delta; Beaches, Birds, & Barrier Islands; an Sharks and Rays. Most courses require overnight stays. Credit hours available for most courses. **Contact:** Call (251)861-2141 or visit www.sealabestuarium.org for more information.

Overview of Mobile Bay NEP Funding of \$350,000 in FY2009 to Implement New Projects

BY TOM HERDER, MOBILE BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) will invest \$350,000 of its annual budget in Fiscal Year 2009 to implement seventeen projects which contribute to actions prescribed in its Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan

(CCMP). Thirty-eight proposals were received and reviewed by members of four Management Conference committees – the Community Action Committee, Community Resources Committee, Project Implementation Committee, and Science Advisory Committee. Reviewers prioritized and ranked proposals before passing them to the Executive Committee for final funding decisions.

Organization	Proposal Name	Funding Amount
Alabama Clean Water Partnership	Waters to the Sea: Rivers of Alabama and Georgia	\$10,000
Alabama Coastal Foundation	Shoreline Assessment and Survey of Fish River	\$5,800*
Auburn University	A Graphic Ecological Characterization of Fish River	\$35,533*
Auburn University	Creating a Better Community through Planning and Design (Bayou la Batre, AL)	\$17,000
Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center	Alabama Clean Marina Program	\$10,000
Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center	Facilitating a Land Trust for Coastal Alabama	\$4,140
City of Satsuma	Public Access Improvements	\$10,000
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	Study of the West Indian Manatee Population in Mobile Bay, AL	\$29,726
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	Developing Salt-Marsh Restoration Strategies to Optimize Habitat Use by the Blue Crab, <i>Callinectes sapidus</i>	\$49,813
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	Alternative Methods for Shoreline Stabilization and Habitat Enhancement at Helen Wood Park	\$34,114
Dog River Clearwater Revival	Moore & Montlimar Creek Trash Barriers	\$20,324
grassroots, inc.	Land Use Education for Real Estate and Development Professionals	\$5,000
National Audubon Coastal Bird Conservation Program	Protecting Beach-Nesting Birds on the Alabama Coast	\$5,500
Southeastern Wildlife Conservation Group	Alabama Coastal Clean Oceans Initiative	\$5,814
Town of Magnolia Springs	Magnolia River Comprehensive Sediment Loading Analysis	\$34,250
Weeks Bay Foundation	Identifying Sources of Pathogen Contamination in the Upper Fish River	\$22,000*
Wolf Bay Watershed Watch	Interpretive Signage in South Baldwin & Mobile Counties	\$51,000

*Contingent upon agreement to work as partnership between Alabama Coastal Foundation, Auburn University, and Weeks Bay Foundation on Fish River, selected as focus site by Project Implementation Committee.

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Tom Herder, *Mobile Bay NEP*

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The editorial staff reserves the right to edit submissions for content and grammar.

Project funding reflects the broad base of citizen and stakeholder involvement that defines the MBNEP and will implement projects across different geographical areas, priority issue areas, and types of action. Two projects will be state-wide in scope, seven will be area-wide, and four each will be performed within Baldwin and Mobile Counties. Six projects fall under the Human Uses priority issue area, four fall under Water Quality, three are Habitat Management, and two each are classified as Living Resources and Education and Public Involvement. Seven of the projects entail data collection; three each involve education, citizen involvement, and on-the-ground activities; and one project involves community planning.

Alabama current connection

Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Marine Environmental Science Consortium
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Dauphin Island, Alabama 36528

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Fourth Annual Alabama Coastal BirdFest is Big Hit

By D. FRAN MORLEY, DISL

Looking toward its fifth year in October 2008, the Alabama Coastal BirdFest is making a significant impact on the economy of the area and drawing visitors from all over the Southeast and beyond. According to a study conducted by Dr. Semoon Chang, Professor of Economics at the University of South Alabama, nearly half of BirdFest's paying participants (those who registered for a guided tour or evening event) traveled here from outside of the "immediate area", which Dr. Chang considered to be Baldwin and Mobile counties, Jackson County (MS), and Escambia County (FL). Those coming from outside that area included 20 from the rest of Alabama, seven from the rest of Florida, seven from Georgia, seven from Louisiana, seven from Texas, and others from Arkansas, California, Kentucky, Michigan, other parts of Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and Canada.

Birdfest Steering Committee Chairman Dr. John Borom said this emphasizes the wide appeal of birding on the Gulf Coast. "People appreciate the wonderful opportunities we have for watching birds and other wildlife here. And it emphasizes how important it is

that we continue to work to preserve our natural environment."

Dr. Chang's survey also highlighted the buying power of birders. "Of the paying participants, no less than 72.4 percent had household incomes of \$50,000 or more and nearly a quarter of the participants had household incomes of \$100,000 or more," he reported.

According to Dr. Borom, all of the survey results reflect national trends. "A survey by the National Forest Service found that in 2003, 39.8 percent of the U.S. population went bird watching, and these people are very likely to travel a great distance for a chance to see a particular bird," he said. "Other studies have indicated that people who participate in bird watching come from households with higher than average incomes, and they are willing to spend money on their hobbies. We're more than happy to welcome them to do that here."

Proceeds from the first four years of the Alabama Coastal BirdFest have been donated toward the purchase of habitat land in Baldwin and Mobile Counties. "With proceeds from 2007, we have dedicated \$10,000 to be used as matching funds for a grant for the purchase of four lots on Dauphin Island, adjacent to the Shell Mounds Bird Sanctuary," Borom said. "This is land that would be forever

set aside for wildlife and never developed or sold for commercial development. This is the type of land preservation that we need in Alabama, and I am very pleased that the Alabama Coastal BirdFest can help with this project."

Organizers are already making plans for the 2008 Alabama Coastal BirdFest, scheduled for October 16-19. Details will be posted at www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com as they are announced.

BirdFest relies upon the dedicated support of many sponsors and supporters, including the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division; its 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center; Alabama Power; The Forum; Mobile Bay National Estuary Program; Faulkner State Community College; Degussa; Baldwin County Commission; Mobile County Commission; Dauphin Island Sea Lab; Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary; Weeks Bay Foundation; The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; The Talking Phone Book; City of Fairhope; Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce; Gulf Shores Convention & Visitors Bureau; and Mobile Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau.