

Alabama current connection

WWF/Allianz Foundation Climate Campers Work to Restore Local Habitats

By TOM HERDER, MOBILE BAY NEP

The Mobile Bay NEP “entertained” some special guests this summer that came to use our rich coastal environments as classrooms and laboratories to study impacts of climate change and how they can be mitigated. From June 22 to July 1, the University of South Alabama hosted the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)/Allianz Foundation Youth Climate Camp for 24 high school students. Each of these students from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama has “a dog in this fight,” having been displaced three years ago by Hurricane Katrina.

Climate Camp provides students with opportunities to work with professors, scientists, and resource managers to learn more about climate change and related issues critical to Southeastern coastal environments and do something about them. Climate modeling and meteorology, freshwater ecosystems, business and the environment, groundwater and water monitoring, mapping,



Climate campers carry shovels and tubs of plants down to the bay.

media training, marsh and dune restoration, and endangered species were among topics presented to the students. A boat tour of the Delta; visits to the Estuarium, Exploreum, and beach; and swimming at the University pool were all part of the Camp experience, as was preparation of presentations on selected topics by teams of campers.

WWF Program Organizer Kate Graves recruited the NEP staff to participate in the program. The MBNEP viewed this effort as an opportunity to educate stewards, while utilizing available labor for valuable restoration activities. It recruited partners to help fund and conduct two separate restoration projects: a dune restoration at the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and a marsh restoration in a small bay along the Brookley shoreline.

On Thursday, June 26, half of the campers were bused to Bon Secour, where they were met by U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (F&WS) interns Becca Horton and Molly Wallace. Campers were “trucked” along with 600 sea oats, panic grasses, and morning glories to the Pine Beach Trail to hike to the beach for the restoration work. The plants were purchased with funds from the MBNEP and the F&WS.

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Campers plant Juncus in the sandy cove along the Brookley shoreline as a ship heads north through the ship channel.



Coastal Corner

By PHILLIP HINSELEY, ADCNR, STATE LANDS DIVISION, COASTAL SECTION

Envisioning the Future of Coastal Management

It is hard to believe that next year will mark thirty years of coastal management in the State of Alabama. The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP) was approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the fall of 1979. The purpose of the ACAMP was to promote, improve, and safeguard the lands and waters located in Alabama's coastal area through a comprehensive and cooperative program designed to preserve, enhance, and develop such valuable resources for the present and future well-being and general welfare of the citizens of the State.

All of this was made possible by federal legislation passed in 1972. In that year, Congress passed and the President signed the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). It allowed coastal states, territories, and commonwealths to set up voluntary management programs to balance and manage both consumptive and protective interests in the coastal zone.

Today, thirty-four coastal and Great Lakes states, territories, and commonwealths have approved coastal management programs. Together, these programs protect more than 99 percent of the nation's 95,331 miles of ocean and Great Lakes coastline.

The charge to the States is to comprehensively manage our coastal resources and balance, often competing land and water uses while protecting sensitive resources. State coastal zone management programs are expected to:

- Protect natural resources;
- Manage development in high hazard areas;
- Manage development to achieve quality coastal waters;
- Give development priority to coastal-dependent uses;
- Have orderly processes for the siting of major facilities;
- Locate new commercial and industrial development in, or adjacent to, existing developed areas;

- Provide public access for recreation;
- Redevelop urban waterfronts and ports, and preserve and restore historic, cultural, and aesthetic coastal features;
- Simplify and expedite governmental decision-making actions;
- Coordinate state and federal actions;
- Give adequate consideration to the views of federal agencies;
- Assure that the public and local governments have a say in coastal decision-making; and
- Comprehensively plan for and manage living marine resources.

With all this in mind, the ACAMP will revise its current management document within the next year. The current management plan was adopted and approved by NOAA in 1999. During a recent evaluation of the program, NOAA recommended to the State that the current program document be updated to serve as an education and outreach model tool for the public, federal agency staffs and applicants for various federal actions.

The current ACAMP is split between the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), who is the lead agency responsible for the overall oversight of the program, planning and administration and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), who is responsible for the regulatory and permitting part of the program. NOAA also asked that the two agencies identify specific Alabama statutes, polices, rules and regulations that are part of the approved ACAMP. In addition, NOAA asked the State to determine whether any additional or new Alabama statutes, polices, rules or regulations adopted by the State since program approval should be considered for incorporation into the ACAMP. The State agencies will be working closely together to answer these concerns and welcome NOAA's guidance in improving the ACAMP. With any program, we have to make changes and adopt management strategies to address current issues. At the federal and state level, we are

working with NOAA to look at the future of the CZMA. In 2006 and 2007, the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), in partnership with the Coastal States Organization (CSO), conducted a project in which coastal managers, stakeholders, and federal agency partners engaged in identifying future improvements to coastal management. The project sought ideas for legislative changes through an improved Coastal Zone Management Act, as well as administrative improvements.

The primary outcome is a set of core principles and specific options to consider in drafting a proposal for reauthorizing the Coastal Zone Management Act. The CZMA has not been reauthorized since 1990. The final report of this initiative titled "Envisioning Our Coastal Future: Principles for Advancing the Coastal Zone Management Act" presents an overview of the process and lays out corner stones and principles for the next version of the CZMA. The report will guide the development of the new CZMA and will address the following:

1. The CZMA should ensure the long-term sustainability of coastal resources and communities.
2. The CZMA should be goal-driven and result-oriented.
3. The CZMA should coordinate and align federal, state and local governments to address issues of national importance.
4. The National Coastal Management Program should remain a voluntary partnership between the federal government and the states in which each bears responsibilities for achieving program goals.

The States, CSO and NOAA look forward to working with the next administration and the new Congress to pass a new and improved CZMA. I encourage you to read the full report and provide comments and suggestions on how to move forward with an improved, reauthorized CZMA.

For more information, please visit: www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/czm/czma_vision.html

Estuary Reflections

Symbiosis: Creating a Lasting Relationship of Mutual Benefit for Our Environment and for Us

ROBERTA SWANN, MOBILE BAY NEP

A NASA analysis of land cover and land use changes from 1974 through 2008 showed what most of us who live along coastal Alabama already know: development is expanding north, south, east, and west. Urbanization is spreading and bringing with it not only new roads, roof tops, and run off but also new citizens that have chosen this area because of its extraordinary environmental resources. As we grow in numbers we have a choice. We can exploit these natural resources that draw us to this place or we can establish a symbiotic relationship with our environment that demands our active involvement in conserving these resources.

The levels of community involvement displayed by community organizations and citizens throughout Mobile and Baldwin counties never ceases to amaze me. At present Mobile Bay National Estuary Program knows of thirteen grassroots groups organized to improve environmental conditions throughout their watersheds. The members of these groups, some of which have been in existence for over 10 years, engage in clean ups, volunteer water monitoring, vegetative plantings, and a host of other activities to keep residents and visitors of their areas educated about and aware of environmental issues affecting their watershed. The locations of these groups span from Dauphin Island to Fort Morgan and Portersville Bay to Wolf Bay.

Recently, Stan and Jessy Mahoney, members of Wolf Bay Watershed Watch and master gardeners, reached out to the Prichard community and Councilwoman Ossia Edwards in an effort to assist with the development of Reading Park, a place where Prichard residents could go to enjoy a natural setting in an urban environment. The Mahoneys volunteered to travel to Prichard several times to assist this community with plantings within the Park and

to discuss other opportunities the community had for making environmental improvements city-wide. As a member of the MBNEP's executive committee, Stan encouraged Ms. Edwards to seek assistance from the MBNEP, which has led to a very exciting partnership

these people and am transported into their vision. I always leave the Prichard community with a sense of purpose, hope, and my own resolve to "promote environmental stewardship and protection"—a desire to be witness to the Prichard community restoring its relationship with its environment and taking responsibility for its future protection.

Throughout Baldwin County, communities, private interests, and the county government are coming together to address an issue that knows no city limits. In the wake of explosive development along the eastern shore, storm water is running off of an expanding array of hard or impervious surfaces with resultant flooding, streambank erosion, and increased amounts of dirt and pollutants washing into waterways and ultimately into Mobile Bay. With no regional way of addressing these impacts, Baldwin County communities are barely treading water (no pun intended) to keep up with the costs and solutions necessary

to manage runoff that in some cases may come from communities upstream of their city limits.

In an effort to develop a regional/watershed mechanism for managing the impacts of stormwater runoff, twelve municipalities and the County have been working to establish a regional stormwater management authority. Their vision is to establish an entity that would have the capability of raising the revenue necessary to assess, prioritize, plan and implement projects throughout the watershed to mitigate the consequences of stormwater runoff. This has been no small feat. Their first order of business was to pass enabling legislation at the State level which would allow the County and municipalities to establish such an entity.

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Locations of grass roots organizations in Baldwin and Mobile Counties are depicted by stars on the map below.



between the City and MBNEP to engage in watershed planning throughout the community. The vision of this relationship is to assist the City with characterizing the many streams and tributaries located within the City limits, identifying ways to improve water quality in degraded streams and protect pristine ones, and to develop opportunities for implementing Prichard's comprehensive plan as it relates to protection of natural resources and the use of buffer areas for passive parks and trail systems.

The enthusiasm and resolve of these Prichard residents to celebrate their community through environmental stewardship is truly motivating. They see the possibilities before them and are not deterred by the level of effort that will be required to transform this urban maze into the green oasis that many of the adults in the community recall as part of a free and easy Prichard of years past. I sit among

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab Initiate Historic Partnership for Habitat Restoration Along the Alabama Coast

By LISA YOUNG, DAUPHIN ISLAND SEA LAB, DR. JUST CEBRIAN, DAUPHIN ISLAND SEA LAB, AND CARL FERRARO, ADCNR-STATE LANDS DIVISION, COASTAL SECTION

The ADCNR, State Lands Division and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) have partnered to conduct extensive habitat restoration, monitoring and research along the Alabama coast. This historic partnership will provide \$1.5 million to the DISL over the next three years for research and conservation activities.

“The Department is truly excited about this partnership,” stated Carl Ferraro, a Natural Resource Planner with the ADCNR, State Lands Division, Coastal Section in Spanish Fort. “By partnering with the DISL, we are tapping into a wealth of expertise and experience to obtain the best science available on shoreline restoration efficacy and cost effectiveness. This knowledge will serve us well as we plan future restoration efforts.”

These funds are provided by a post-Hurricane Katrina fisheries restoration grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,

Under this partnership, the DISL will construct shoreline restoration projects at two sites: the northeast shoreline of Point aux Pins and the undeveloped shoreline on the southwest side of the Boggy Point boat ramp site in Orange Beach. Both of these projects will utilize oyster shell breakwaters to protect eroding shorelines and promote the re-estab-

lishment of marsh plants and seagrasses along the shoreline.

Additionally, a seagrass restoration project in Little Lagoon adjacent to the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge will be significantly expanded. This project will compare the feasibility and cost-efficacy of several seagrass planting methods. \$400,000 will be utilized to construct these projects. \$1.1 million dollars will be targeted towards an unprecedented three-year intensive monitoring and research effort on the above-mentioned construction sites and two other sites already carried out by the DISL and a large-scale project planned for Little Bay.

The sites already constructed by the DISL include the Mobile County Bay Front Park Oyster Reef Breakwater research project and the Helen Wood Park Living Shorelines Demonstration project, constructed as part of a partnership between the DISL, ADCNR and The Nature Conservancy, and the Mobile County Bay Front Park Oyster Reef Breakwater research project.

All of the sites will be monitored for a wide range of parameters, including oyster abundance, fish and shellfish abundance, benthic macro-invertebrate abundance, water quality and chemistry, shoreline stabilization and other related parameters. This will provide

the scientific data needed to determine restoration project efficacy, validate project designs and guide the design and construction of future habitat restoration and shoreline stabilization projects.

Additionally, the results of this monitoring will provide cost efficiency and efficacy data for the promotion and construction of “living shoreline” alternative to bulkheads and seawall.

“This is an unprecedented analysis of the real benefits of coastal restoration that will serve as a template for managers across the world,” said Dr. Just Cebrian, Senior Marine Scientist, DISL and principle investigator of the endeavor. “This project will test in an unprecedented manner whether coastal restoration works and, if so, how we can get the most out of it,” he concluded.

The project will kick off in early Fall 2008 with pre-project monitoring efforts. In early spring 2009, construction projects will commence at Boggy Point and Point aux Pins and seagrass planting will take place in Little Lagoon. Post-project monitoring will commence and continue until late summer 2011. The entire project is scheduled to be complete September 15, 2011.

Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association Restoration



MCWCA and volunteers work on planting with the Battleship in the background as the tide begins to come in.

**By TOM HERDER, MOBILE BAY
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM**

The Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association (MCWCA), Alabama's oldest organization dedicated to conservation and natural resources, distinguished itself again on June 7 when members planted 4,000 plants at the site of a November, 2007 restoration. After planting 700 black needlerush last fall, MCWCA members expressed interest in biting off a larger project (when hunting season concluded). Forty volunteers met at the Chocaloochee/Chocalotta Bay Boat Ramps on that clear, sunny June Saturday morning, loaded their boats with tubs of emergent grasses, and hustled out to the planting site to beat an incoming tide. Despite fears generated by tough conditions and strong onshore winds throughout the previous week, the manpower and good attitudes were sufficient to get the effort finished successfully by 10 a.m.

The plants were purchased by the Mobile Bay NEP with funds from a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (F&SW) grant. After planting instructions from F&WS Biologist Randy Roach, 2,000 bull tongue (*Sagittaria lancifolia*), 1,100 hardstem bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*), and 900 black needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*) were added to the stand of needlerush flourishing on a mudflat across the Tensaw channel from the Battleship, hopefully the beginning of a productive new oligohaline (low salinity) salt marsh.

Salt marshes are particularly productive wetland habitats that provide valuable services to the coastal environment. Submerged portions of aquatic

plants provide habitat for many micro and macro invertebrates that in turn provide food for fish, shellfish, birds, and other wildlife species. Many recreationally and commercial-



Volunteers Amiee Watler and Beth Tuttle use teamwork to complete the MCWCA marsh planting.

ly important fisheries species spend the early part of their lives protected in these marshes which offer protection from predators. After aquatic plants die, their decomposition by bacteria and fungi provides food called "detritus" for many aquatic fish and invertebrates. The plants' seeds are consumed by ducks and other birds. The F&WS and MBNEP will monitor the site in hopes that a new salt marsh will develop, since over 17,500

acres of salt marsh have disappeared from the Alabama coast over the past 50 years.



Volunteers pose for a group shot after planting 4,000 marsh plants on a mud flat across the Tensaw channel from the Battleship.

WWF/Allianz Foundation Climate Campers Work to Restore Local Habitats

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After receiving planting instructions, they spread out along the beach, avoiding marked turtle nests, to plant clusters of plants. They could see where new dunes were beginning to form around existing plant life, replacing ones that Ivan and Katrina washed away. Just before planting was completed, a large pod of dolphins swimming southward just outside the sand bars distracted the “workers” and provided another opportunity for education and recreation.



Climate work on the beach at the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge planting dune plants on a mud flat across the Tensaw channel from the Battleship.

On Saturday, June 28, the second half of the crew arrived at the NEP office, where they viewed a presentation on stormwater before taking short bus rides to Helen Wood Park, to view restoration activities in progress, and then to the Brookley shoreline. Campers carried the plastic tubs containing 100 six inch pots of black needlerush down to the bank and then floated them up the shore to a small sandy bay. The plants were grown by and “borrowed” from the Satsuma High School Grasses in Classes Program. After watching a couple plantings, they carefully but enthusiastically converted the bare bay into a young marsh. With a perfectly low tide, they were able to walk a couple hundred meters out into the bay careful to avoid healthy seagrass beds they encountered.

Campers left with NEP hats, t-shirts, and decals and a sense of satisfaction about their work to restore impacted habitats and the many services they provide to our living resources. After departing Mobile, they flew to Washington, D. C., where they discussed their findings and perspectives with lawmakers on Capitol Hill on July 10th. They met with their state and district representatives and took part in a briefing in the House Select Committee on Global Warming and Energy Independence. The MBNEP looks forward to a continued relationship with the WWF, the Allianz Foundation, and Climate Camp.

Wolf Bay Watershed Watch Hosts Fundraisers

By STAN MAHONEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WOLF BAY WATERSHED WATCH

Fall is the time when the energetic membership of the Wolf Bay Watershed Watch directs attention to fundraising efforts.

This active grassroots organization, perpetually engaged in water monitoring efforts and community outreach, will host annual plant sales and a youth fishing tournament.

From Thursday, October 23, through Saturday, October 25, they will host their Annual Plant Sale at the Mifflin Community Center on County Road 20 East near Elberta. This event features native perennials, plants for butterflies and hummingbirds, citrus and other fruit trees, wetlands plants, ornamental shrubs, and various trees and exotics.

On Saturday, November 15, WBWW will host the Riviera Utilities & WBWW Junior Fishing Tournament for kids from three to 16 years of age. The event will take place at the Wolf Bay Lodge between the hours of 6 a. m. to noon. Trophies will be awarded to the top two anglers in both age categories (3-9 years of age and 10-16 years of age) for each division the heaviest fish in categories which include speckled trout, redfish, bass, pinfish, bream (any), catfish (any), croaker or spot, and open. Entry fees are \$10 in advance or \$15 on the day of the tournament. T-shirts will be provided to all participants.

More information and contact info can be found on the WWBF web site at www.wolfbaywatch.org.

Symbiosis: Creating a Lasting Relationship of Mutual Benefit for Our Environment and for Us

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For one year this group, the Baldwin County Storm Water Working Group (BCSWWG) focused on defining organization governance, revenue projections, determination of functions, and education of community stakeholders about the need for such an entity. Next, BCSWWG turned their attention to Montgomery with the mission of passing enabling legislation. In March of 2008 during a special session, the local constitutional amendment was passed.

Today, BCSWWG is intent on making sure that the people of Baldwin County understand their mission and the necessity of establishing a regional approach for managing stormwater in the hopes that in 2010 the people of Baldwin County will take responsibility for protecting their environment by passing a local referendum to create the Baldwin County Stormwater Management Authority.

Individuals need not be a part of a community group or regional effort to be good stewards. Organized efforts such as the Alabama

Coastal Clean Up, community tree plantings, derelict crab trap removals and other efforts to sustain our estuarine environment abound for those looking to get involved.

Symbiosis is a close ecological relationship between the individuals of two (or more) different species. Sometimes a symbiotic relationship benefits both species (mutualism), sometimes one species benefits at the other's expense (parasitism), and in other cases neither species benefits (competition). As the unwelcome visitors to what was once a pristine coastal Alabama landscape, we humans owe it to ourselves and to future generations to ensure that our community growth is balanced “mutualistically” with protection of this area's precious natural resources. To that extent, I encourage all that live, visit, work or play in coastal Alabama to take an active role in protecting the nature around you. Whether in your own backyard, on a beach, or along a causeway: mulch the grass that you mow, pick up that piece of trash, let that banana spider web be, or maybe stop and help that turtle cross the road.

Current events

October

**Thursday through Sunday,
October 16-19**

What: 5th Annual John L. Borom
Coastal Alabama Bird Fest 2008

Where: Fairhope and various venues
around coastal Alabama

For more information, visit:

<http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com>

Thursday, October 23, 2 - 5 p.m.

What: League of Women Voters Critical
Water Issues Forum - Experts will discuss
stormwater, waste water and regional water
management, as well as, nutrients and harmful
algal blooms and jellyfish.

Where: Gulf Shores Adult Activities Center

Contact: Margaret Solberger, (251) 626-4498
or margaretsolberger@earthlink.net

**Thursday through Saturday,
October 23 - 25, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily**

What: Wolf Bay Watershed Watch Plant Sale

Where: Miflin Community Center on
County Road 20 East near Elberta

**Tuesday and Wednesday,
October 28 & 29**

What: Mississippi-Alabama Bays and Bayous
Symposium 2008 - This two-day symposium
hosted by MS-AL Sea Grant Consortium will
focus on practical solutions to complex coastal
problems. Community members, resource
managers, scientists and others will share their
research and ideas.

Where: Mississippi Coast Coliseum and
Convention Center; Biloxi, MS

Sponsored by: MS-AL Sea Grant Consortium

For more information, visit:

www.masgc.org/page.asp?id=208

November

**Saturday, November 1
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

What: Ocean Exploration and Research
Program Professional Development
Workshop for Science Teachers Grades 6-12

Bring the excitement of current ocean
science discoveries to your students using
NOAA Ocean Exploration lesson plan
activities and the Ocean Explorer website
www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov. Second part
of the program will be March 14. **FREE.**
Educators participating in both workshops
will receive \$100 stipend.

Where: Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Contact: Denise Keaton at (251) 861-7515
or e-mail dkeaton@disl.org.

Deadline for Registration: Oct. 17, 2008

**Saturday, November 15,
6 a.m. until noon**

What: Riviera Utilities & Wolf Bay
Watershed Watch Junior Fishing
Tournament For kids aged three to 16.

\$10 advanced entry fee. \$15 on tournament
day. T-shirts for every participant and
numerous trophies for different divisions
and categories.

Where: Wolf Bay Lodge

Alabama current connection

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Tom Herder, *Mobile Bay NEP*

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National Marine Fisheries Service Working to Establish a National Saltwater Angler Database

By JOHN MARESKA, ADCNR-
MARINE RESOURCES DIVISION

Most anglers who fish in Alabama's marine waters are familiar with the marine recreational fisheries statistical survey (MRFSS). Under a review by the National Research Council (NRC) effort estimates were found to be less than accurate. Past protocols required random telephone contacts with coastal county households to obtain estimates of effort of marine fishing activities. This resulted in an over sampling of coastal residents and under sampling of non-coastal residents, since not all salt water anglers live in coastal counties. In turn this led to errors in the effort and catch estimates.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) responded to the NRC findings by establishing the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). As part of MRIP, a national angler registry program is in development. The targeted timetable is to have a new angler registry implemented by January 1, 2009. If this is successful, anglers will be required to register annually starting January 1, 2009 with NMFS if they fish in the nation's state and federal marine waters. A compilation of all anglers ("angler phone book") will assist in the sampling of saltwater anglers regardless of where they live and should increase the accuracy of effort and catch estimates from our marine waters. Registration would be free until January 1, 2011 at which time an anticipated charge of

\$15 to \$25 will be required unless that state has been given an exemption.

Biologists with the Alabama Marine Resources Division have been working with NMFS to get an exempted status for licensed Alabama anglers. What this means to you as an angler is you would not be required to pay any registration fee if Alabama's license database meets the needs of NMFS. If Alabama licensing requirements are accepted by NMFS, licensed Alabama anglers will not be required to federally register and will forego the annual federal fee. Data requirements include your name, address and telephone number. If things go well the transition will go unnoticed, but we thought you should know.