



MOBILE BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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News Conference: WORK TO BEGIN IN JOE'S BRANCH WATERSHED

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program has been awarded \$850,000 by ADEM and ALDOT to improve water quality in Joe's Branch Watershed in Spanish Fort. Joe's Branch is part of the D'Olive Watershed, which empties into Mobile Bay.

A news conference to kickoff the project will be held, Monday, Jan. 30 at 10 a.m. at Bayfront Park in Daphne. Congressman Jo Bonner, Spanish Fort Mayor Joseph Bonner and Daphne Mayor Bailey Yelding will join officials from ADEM, ALDOT and other agencies.

Joe's Branch is on the state's list of impacted waterways for sediments which wash downstream into wetlands, D'Olive Creek and Mobile Bay. The rapid urbanization of the area and conversion of natural landscapes to hardened surfaces – roads and buildings – has intensified problems of stormwater runoff.

"Step pools will be constructed along a degraded tributary of Joe's Branch to reduce the volume and velocity of runoff, improve water quality and to decrease the transportation of sediment downstream into Mobile Bay," explained Roberta Swann, Mobile Bay NEP director. The project will showcase best management practices to establish a 'living' or 'green' stormwater conveyance that will restore habitat for aquatic organisms, birds and other wildlife.

"One of the project goals is to demonstrate to public officials, engineers and other professionals how water quality protection through natural 'green infrastructure' is a practical alternative to rock fill and bank retention systems. The project includes an education component to stress the importance of protecting water quality. It will show business owners and residents how to capture rain water where it falls to prevent runoff," Swann said. According to the EPA, polluted stormwater runoff is the primary threat to our nation's water quality.

ADEM is providing \$650,000 toward the project, with ALDOT contributing \$200,000. Dauphin Island Sea Lab is donating in-kind services and Mobile Bay NEP is coordinating the project. ALDOT's involvement stems from concern over the eroded tributary, which if not addressed, will compromise Hwy. 31. Project completion is slated for late summer.

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The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program - Promoting the wise stewardship of the water quality and living resource base of Mobile Bay and the Mobile-Tensaw Delta