

Mon Louis Island Report #3

Mobile Bay National Estuary Program



Wanted

1,000 Feet



Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) is seeking a group of contiguous property owners that collectively own between 850-1,000 feet of Mon Louis Island shoreline along Mobile Bay. This TEAM of owners would be willing to commit to undertaking a living shorelines project that will provide MBNEP and the State of Alabama with an opportunity to demonstrate how living shoreline projects would be implemented and constructed under existing regulations and what benefits they would provide.

Interested TEAMS of property owners must submit a signed **Statement of Commitment** to the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, 4172 Commanders Drive, Mobile, AL 36615 by close of business **JULY 22, 2011**.

Note: The original plan to undertake a living shorelines project on Mon Louis Island identified the project location to begin on the northern end of the island. However, it has become clear to the MBNEP that there are island residents, albeit not necessarily on the northernmost end, ready and willing to team up and install a project in front of their properties. Given these residents' interest and in anticipation of conducting similar projects along other sections of the island, MBNEP is now seeking all potential living shoreline locations based on agreement and interest of adjacent property owners.

*We encourage any group of waterfront property owners interested in pursuing a multi-property living shorelines project to form a TEAM; agree to work with us in designing and installing a project that may consist of but not be limited to headlands/pocket beaches, breakwaters, and native planting; and sign and send back the enclosed **Statement of Commitment**.*

On May 26, 2011, Mon Louis Island residents met once again to learn about the benefits and challenges associated with building a living shoreline by installing breakwaters adjacent to the shoreline. This meeting, held to address concerns expressed in the on-going dialogue with shoreline residents, included Ms. Niki Pace of the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Legal Program who discussed Alabama policies and laws related to shoreline change on *ambulatory* waterfront borders, which shift with natural change in the shore. In addition, Dr. Bhaskaran Subramanian and Mr. Kevin Smith, both of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, described experiences gained through 25 years undertaking living shorelines projects in their state, including creation of headlands/pocket beaches and installation of breakwaters, and seeing State policy change to favor alternatives to shoreline armoring.

Ms. Pace presented and handed out an overview of State policies related to shoreline changes. To summarize, land ownership is private down to the Mean High Water line (MHW) – or the average of tidal high water marks over an extended length of time – and shoreline changes are classified by how fast they occur. While the State owns water bottoms seaward of MHW, waterfront property owners have certain *riparian rights* over waters seaward of their parcels, including the right to build a pier or dock, harvest oysters, and access the water. “Accretion” and “erosion” are slow, natural gains or losses of shoreline, respectively, while “avulsion” refers to rapid gains or losses of shoreline, usually due to a single event like a hurricane or flood. For further information about Ms. Pace’s presentation, see her handout at <http://www.mobilebaynep.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/UnderstandingShorelineRights.pdf>. Ms. Pace also provided a follow-up summary of the materials presented at the meeting and additional information gathered (view it at http://masgpl.olemiss.edu/Advisory/Mon_Louis_Island.pdf).

Dr. Subramanian presented *Living Shorelines Projects in Maryland* including the use of fiber coir logs, sills, groins, breakwaters or other natural components in combination with sand, other natural materials, and/or marsh plantings to protect, restore, enhance or create natural shoreline habitat. Dr. Subramanian discussed the ecosystem impacts of bulkheads. Although offering temporary and limited protection to upland property, bulkheads deflect wave energy which scours the bottom, eliminates near shore habitat, and accelerates the rate of erosion along a shoreline.

In contrast, he outlined the benefits of living shorelines, which:

- provide shallow water habitat that supports higher abundance/ diversity of aquatic species both near shore and offshore
- help maintain a link between aquatic and upland habitats, providing shoreline access for wildlife and recreation
- look natural rather than artificial
- improve water quality- trapping sediments, filtering pollution, absorbing erosive wave energy
- maintain natural shoreline dynamics and sand movement
- often cost less to construct than bulkheads.

For more information or to see Dr. Subramanian’s presentation, visit http://www.mobilebaynep.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Bhaskar_Subramanian_5-26.pdf.

Mr. Smith discussed how to effectively incorporate habitat components into shoreline restoration and enhancement. His presentation can be found at http://www.mobilebaynep.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Kevin_Smith_MDDNR_5-26.pdf.

Mon Louis Island Living Shorelines

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

TEAM Name:					
	Property Owner's Name	Address	Telephone	Email	Feet of Property
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					

As part of the Living Shorelines project TEAM, we will develop consensus on issues of concern to the mutual benefit of all parties involved and we will commit to executing a legal instrument to protect these benefits into perpetuity. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Accident liability | Safety signage |
| Protection of navigation interests | Maintenance post construction |
| Riparian Rights waiver | Volunteer monitoring |

As part of the Living Shorelines project TEAM, we will develop consensus on the design of the living shorelines project, with the understanding that it may contain more than one element over the total length of the project.

We the undersigned, by our signatures below, do agree to commit to participate in the Mon Louis Island Demonstration Living Shorelines Project sponsored by the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Date: _____

Mail to: MBNEP-Mon Louis Island, 4172 Commanders Drive, Mobile, AL 36615



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MBNEP is looking for water front property owners to participate in a living shorelines project. This project behind multiple private Mon Louis Island properties will provide a unique opportunity to benefit from a Federally-funded improvement project.

If you are interested in being a Mon Louis Island Living Shorelines pioneer, talk with your neighbors. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Mon Louis Island community to enhance fisheries and shoreline habitat, a resource vital to coastal Alabama's quality of life.

If you would like to learn more about our efforts, please feel free to contact Tom Herder (therder@mobilebaynep.com) or call 251-431-6409. If there is a better way for us to get in touch with you, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Roberta Arena Swann
Director

