

Alabama current connection

ADCNR-Marine Resources Division Partners with Fishermen



Area fishermen deposit oyster cultch in shallow areas after their boats are loaded by a front-end loader from deeper water barges.

By **LESLIE HARTMAN, ADCNR-MARINE
RESOURCES DIVISION**

Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, from Texas to Alabama, with homes and businesses destroyed, families separated, and lives lost. In Alabama, Bayou La Batre was particularly hard hit. Shrimpers, crabbers, hook and liners, and oystermen all suffered loss of income as they struggled to repair homes and businesses after the storm. Because the damage to this multi-billion dollar industry was so extensive, the Federal government provided funds to rebuild and repair the damages done to the fishermen and the habitat. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources-Marine Resources Division (MRD) has helped allocate some of these funds to research, habitat restoration, and fishermen partnerships. Recently, MRD has partnered with the Organized Seafood Association of Alabama (OSAA), Oyster Farmers Association of Alabama, and the Orange Beach Fishing Association to help get much needed money into the hands of our fishermen.

The OSAA is managing several projects to improve or repair our marine habitat while providing funding to qualified fishermen. Currently OSAA is overseeing the replenishment of shallow water oyster reefs in Heron Bay.

When oysters are spawned, they become free swimming larvae which settle on any hard surface,

preferring existing, live oysters. Following storm events, the oyster reefs are often broken up or covered in mud and become unsuitable for settlement by young oysters. The addition of hard material, or "cultch", to these areas ensures a consistent supply of oysters. Planting cultch in shallow areas of Heron Bay improves the settlement potential for new oysters and provides additional areas for oystermen to harvest.

To plant in the shallow waters of Heron Bay, cultch material – either limestone or oyster shell – is barged in from Bayou La Batre. Because of the size and weight of the barge, the vessel cannot get into shallow water. Smaller boats are used to carry scoops of cultch into shallow waters, of one to three feet depth, for planting. Qualified fishermen are being paid to transport cultch material from the barge to designated shallow water areas where the material is shoveled, pushed or blown overboard. Within a year, much of this material will be covered with harvestable-sized oysters.

From Monday through Saturday, as many as 65 fishermen can be found in Heron Bay helping to plant cultch material. As boats arrive in the morning they check in at the OSAA vessel and are assigned a number corresponding to the order in which they arrive. On the barge, Bobcats (small front end loaders) sit at either end of the barge waiting to distribute scoops of material on to the awaiting vessels.

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Coastal Corner

BY AMY KING, ADCNR-STATE LANDS

Two Decades of Getting the Trash Out of the Splash!

For two decades the Alabama Coastal Cleanup has brought volunteers from across the state to the coast for one purpose...to clean up the debris and trash they find there. In what sometimes feels like the "endless pursuit" of removing marine debris from the shoreline, these volunteers and sponsors have dedicated their time and energy to making the coast of southern Alabama a safe and beautiful place to visit and to live.

But the effort of one morning's work does not stop there. The effect of removing all that debris is compounded by the fact that a hazard, or potential hazard, to the environment is no longer a threat. In addition to being an eyesore, marine debris also poses a real danger to both marine wildlife and people. Afflictions from marine debris entanglement can include lethal cuts, hampered mobility, suffocation, and drowning. Wildlife can also fall victim to trash that people cannot see, such as ingested debris. Many animals, like seabirds, are indiscriminant eaters and unintentionally ingest debris. Others confuse trash (like plastic bags) with food. In many cases, debris ingestion can lead to strangulation, starvation and death.

The Alabama Coastal Cleanup is part of an international effort to remove marine debris from coastal waters. Alabama joined the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) in 1987. Since then 48,446 volunteers in Alabama have removed a total of 902,242 pounds of debris and cleaned 2,847 miles of Alabama coastline. The International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) is the largest single-day volunteer event for the marine environment with nearly one-hundred counties

participating all on the same day. Part of this unique experience is data collection.

After years of collecting data on the specific types of marine debris being found, ICC data now focuses on the activities that cause the debris. The Ocean Conservancy compiles, analyzes, and tracks this data to identify the activities and general sources of the debris in a region, state, or country. This analysis has resulted in six primary human activities that lead to marine debris. These activities are:

- **Recreational and Shoreline Activities** – Debris from beachgoers, picnics, sports and games, and festivals, as well as litter washed from streets, parking lots, and storm drains.
- **Ocean/Waterway Activities** – Debris from recreational fishing and boating; commercial fishing; cargo, military, and cruise ships; and offshore industries.
- **Smoking Related Activities** – The littering of cigarette filters, cigar tips, and tobacco products packaging is common on land and sea.
- **Dumping Activities** – Debris from legal and illegal dumping of building material or large household items.
- **Medical/Personal Hygiene** – This debris can be left by beachgoers as well as disposed of improperly into toilets and city streets. Because medical and hygiene debris often enters the waste stream through sewer systems, its presence in the beach can indicate the presence of other, unseen pollutants.



The Alabama Coastal Cleanup engages local citizens to remove trash and debris from the Gulf Coast beaches and waterways, to identify the sources of debris, and to change the behaviors that cause pollution. In a continuing effort to clean up the coast, the 20th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup is scheduled Saturday, **September 15, 2007** from **8:00 a.m. until noon**. Come show your support and concern for Alabama's waterways by participating. You or your organization can make a difference by volunteering to clean up our cherished coastal area. For more information about participating in the 20th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup, please call 251-621-1216 or visit www.AlabamaCoastalCleanup.com.

The Alabama Coastal Cleanup is proudly sponsored by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Lands-Coastal Section, Alabama PALS, Baldwin County Commission, Bebo's, ExxonMobil, Vulvan Materials, Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau, Baldwin EMC, Bay Title Insurance, City of Orange Beach, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, and The Original Oyster House.

Estuary Reflections

DAVID W. YEAGER, DIRECTOR MOBILE BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM WILL BE BACK FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. HIS STAND IN FOR THE FALL ISSUE WILL BE TOM HERDER, MOBILE BAY NEP

A Residential Approach to Stormwater Management

The increase in stormwater run-off resulting from rapid urban growth has been characterized by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency as the number one water quality problem in the U. S. Water that gathers momentum, sediments, and pollutants as it runs over roofs, roads, parking lots, and other impervious surfaces on its way into the Bay causes many problems. Flooding, sediment deposition, pollution from nutrients, petroleum products and toxins, erosion, habitat destruction, and reduction of property values are all consequences of increased and untreated stormwater run-off. The overwhelming majority of Baldwin County municipalities have recognized the gravity of problems related to storm water run-off, and they are working to enact legislation that will address regional treatment/management of stormwater. But what can a concerned individual do to address this problem effectively?

The saying goes, "think globally, and act locally", and there are lots of ways to act locally to address this global problem. Keep in mind that curbside storm sewers drain directly into the bay without any treatment, so never let any hazardous material find its way into the storm sewer. In your day-to-day activities:

- Be conservative in the use of fertilizers, pesticides, or other topical lawn or garden treatments. Follow directions, and avoid over-use.
- Pick up and dispose of pet wastes before they can be carried into a storm sewer.
- Mulch your grass clippings and leave them on the lawn, or use them for composting.
- Mulch and seed bare soil as soon as possible to prevent it from eroding into the storm sewer.
- Water only as a supplement to rain-fall and not so frequently. Even during the driest summer days, St. Augustine

grass only needs an inch or so of water every four to five days. Watering every day or every other day results in either shallow, weak root systems or rot. And avoid sprinkling water onto paved or other areas that drain into the storm sewer.

- Wash your vehicles at a commercial car wash or on a non-paved surface to avoid drainage into the storm sewer.

Or if you are involved in construction, consider the following:

- Employ alternatives to concrete- or asphalt-paved surfaces. Instead, consider more porous surfaces such as brick, gravel, or wood chips. If you must pave, keep it to a minimum, and direct run-off onto grassy or pervious areas.
- When landscaping, use natural plantings that are deeper-rooted than turf grass, require less water, and allow for more water infiltration.
- Avoid excessive soil compaction.
- Avoid directing downspouts into the stormwater sewer system or onto paved surfaces.

- Plan and construct your landscape topography to facilitate water retention and infiltration. For example, terrace to reduce gradients, use low areas for "rain gardens," or create small wetlands on your property.

On Saturday, October 6, Mike Shelton, Watersheds Coordinator at the Weeks Bay Reserve, will host a Rain Gardens Workshop at the Volunteer Activities Center in Fairhope. Rain gardens are beautiful, natural looking gardens situated in low areas to capture storm water run-off and allow it to seep slowly into the ground. To register for this free workshop, call or email Mike at (251) 928-9702 or michael.shelton@dcnr.alabama.gov. For those interested but unable to attend the workshop, "Rain Garden Design for Homeowners" at <http://www.aces.edu/waterquality/nemo/>

Fact%20Sheets/rain%20garden,%20mg,%20final.pdf provides a comprehensive guide for Alabama gardeners interested in the design and installation of a rain garden.

Elected officials and other stakeholders in Baldwin County have demonstrated a willingness to initiate and support local actions to address and manage stormwater issues on a regional level. Each of us can do the same in our yards and neighborhoods to reduce the impacts of storm water run-off in our Bay.

Oyster Gardening Program Gets Underway in 2007

BY KARA LANKFORD,
MOBILE BAY NEP

The Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening program, established in 2001, is a volunteer-based project supported by the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP), the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium (MASGC), and the Auburn University Shellfish Laboratory (AUSL). The 2007 season is off to a great start! Spat were delivered to 44 eager volunteers around Mobile Bay during the first week of July. The volunteers will care for the oysters until November by removing predators from the cages and keeping the cages clear of fowling organisms. This valuable program educates volunteers on the importance of oysters in the Mobile Bay ecosystem and allows them the opportunity to participate in a hands-on restoration project.

Dog River Clearwater Revival – Working to Protect the Watershed

By *JANET MILLER, DOG WATER CLEARWATER REVIVAL*

Dog River Clearwater Revival (DRCR) is an incorporated, non-profit association of property owners, recreational users, commercial interests, and other stakeholders concerned with environmental issues affecting Dog River. To learn more about DRCR and the Dog River Watershed visit our website at <http://dogriver.southalabama.edu/>.

A few of our current projects are listed below: **Storm Drain Marker Project.**

DRCR is seeking volunteers to install markers (see illustration at right) and/or contribute funds to help pay for markers and supplies. We are gluing the markers to storm drains throughout the watershed, which includes West Mobile, Springhill, Mid-Town, Tillman's Corner, Theodore, the DIP area, and many other neighborhoods.



Many people believe storm drains lead to the sewage system along with water from toilets, sinks, and bathtubs. In fact, anything that goes into a storm drain in the Dog River Watershed flows directly into a canal, stream, or the river, which empties into the Bay. Rain water is the only thing that should go down a storm drain.

Anyone can participate in this project. You don't have to be a member of DRCR or even live within the watershed. Anyone can volunteer for as much time as they wish or contribute any amount they desire. If you

are interested in helping please contact Janet Miller at 654-1827 or j46miller@yahoo.com. We would be delighted to have you work with us!

Dog River Cleanup. The Dog River Cleanup, part of the National Rivers Cleanup, was held on Saturday, June 2, 2007, at Luscher/Navco Park on the River. Sponsored locally by DRCR and the Mobile Sail and Power Squadron, the park

and surrounding waters were cleaned, and boat safety checks were conducted.

Public Meeting. A public meeting will be held September 25, 2007 at the West Regional Branch of the Mobile Public Library on Grelot Road with Mobile City Councilwoman Connie Hudson of District 6 in attendance (if her travel schedule allows). The meeting will feature a Power-Point presentation by Dr. Mimi Fearn that lasts about an hour and provides a fascinating overview of the factors that affect the Dog River Watershed specifically, and any watershed in general. There will also be a general discussion of DRCR's goals and objectives and a chance for anyone present to voice their concerns and suggestions. The meeting begins at 7:00 PM and is open to anyone interested in attending. For more information or directions to either of the meetings please contact Valerie Blankenship, President, DRCR at 510-0403 or val@dogriver.us.

The Little Lagoon Preservation Society

By *DENNIS HATFIELD, PRESIDENT LLPS*

Little Lagoon, located on the Fort Morgan Peninsula in southern most Baldwin County, is a remarkable, prolifically productive, eight mile long, three quarter mile wide, sand-dominated, brackish coastal lake. National publicity, low-interest loan money, federal flood insurance, and a general desire to live on and visit the coast have resulted in dramatic development within the Lagoon watershed. Such vigorous development has resulted in damage and destruction to wetlands within the watershed and contributed to a measurable degradation of water quality in the Lagoon. Nutrient and fecal coliform levels have trended upwards over the past 10-15 years, and it is suspected that other pollutant (petroleum products, pesticides, etc.) concentrations are also increasing. Water quality problems are complicated by low circulation and slow turnover, resulting in long residence time for pollutants and accumulation of nutrients, creating ideal conditions for phytoplankton "blooms". Increasing boat traffic, recent tropical weath-

er events, and haphazard development practices are accelerating shoreline erosion and loss of shoreline-stabilizing vegetation and habitat. Unfortunately, bulkheading is the primary shoreline stabilization method being used to address erosion.

Little Lagoon Preservation Society (LLPS) was formed in the late 1980's – "To preserve and improve the quality of life on and around Little Lagoon by: 1) endeavoring to assure that the quality of water in the Little Lagoon is maintained to the highest standards set by the appropriate state and federal regulatory agencies, and 2) banding together as a group to influence items of interest or concern to the majority of the membership". These include: a) protecting the lagoon and surrounding wetlands and wildlife habitat, and b) monitoring government activities as an advocate and watchdog group to influence matters that might impact Little Lagoon.

A defining moment for the Society was a hard-fought legal battle that resulted in a 1990 court order requiring the state to maintain tidal flow (flushing) into and out of the

Lagoon. LLPS has partnered with ADEM for over a decade to monitor bacteria and chemistry within Lagoon waters. We have trained members to participate with Alabama Water Watch and partner with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab to 1) expand chemistry and bacteria monitoring, and, 2) assist researchers in identifying phytoplankton species and abundance within the Lagoon. LLPS promotes and instructs use of shoreline-friendly stabilization methods and has facilitated and participated in shoreline stabilization and submerged aquatic vegetation projects. LLPS monitors, opposes, and works to modify development projects which could impair the Lagoon and its watershed. We partner with MBNEP as a member of their Management Conference Community Action Committee.

The Society meets as a group at least quarterly and invites citizens to join our efforts to preserve and protect one of Alabama's finest crown jewels. Our next membership meeting will be October 16 at the Adult Activity Center in Gulf Shores at 6 p.m.

The Endangered Longleaf Pine Communities of the Southeast

By TOM HERDER, MOBILE BAY NEP

A considerable portion of the Mobile NEP area of concern consists of sandy upland habitat, intermixed with spots of wetland, and dominated by the state tree of Alabama, the longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*). This habitat represents one of the most diverse in North America in terms of species richness and endemism (species found nowhere else). Once dominating the southeastern landscape with a vast range of 92 million continuous acres from Virginia to Texas, longleaf pine woodlands have been reduced to around three million fragmented acres. As rich in plants and animals as most tropical rainforests, this native ecosystem is in similar danger of permanent destruction.

These legendary southern yellow pines were used by America's first European residents to provide the masts, resin, turpentine, and timber for their ships. Since then, longleaf pine forests have been clear cut for timber (and usually replaced with faster growing loblolly or slash pine), to create farmland, or for urban or suburban development. Longleaf pine is extremely fire-resistant, and its communities have evolved to require periodic fires to reduce invasion by hardwood species, allowing dominance by longleaf pine, and stimulate flowering by many herbaceous plants. In places where fires have been suppressed, longleaf pine woodlands have been replaced by mixed hardwood-pine communities. Feral hogs, whose menu includes the juvenile grass stage of *P. palustris*, have also contributed significantly to its decline.

Although relatively slow-growing, longleaf pines may live for three to four centuries and can grow to over 120 feet in height with trunks more than three feet in diameter. Large, straight and tight-grained,



Longleaf pines are fairly sparsely distributed, forming an open canopy, with a lush understory that consists of grasses and herbaceous undergrowth. This community structure relies on periodic fires.

it is the hardest pine in North America and resistant to many pine-damaging insects and diseases. Seedlings sprout rapidly to form a ground-hugging "grass stage", which lasts for three to seven years while a deep tap root develops to access water below the typically poor, sandy soil. The grass stage remains below the hottest part of periodic fires and supports the energy storage that in time sustains a dramatic growth spurt of three to four feet in a single summer. Thereafter, the needles and cones of the seedling remain above the hottest part of a typical fire. The community structure of longleaf pine woodlands or savannahs provides the conditions which favor extraordinary diversity. Typically, longleaf pine trees form a sparse canopy, the midstory remains open, and lush ground vegetation includes grasses and other herbaceous undergrowth.

While the longleaf pine is the dominant tree species in this community and essential to its integrity, it is the understory that sustains enough species to make it the most diverse North American ecosystem north of the tropics.

It contains from 150 to 300 species of groundcover plants per acre, more breeding birds than any other southeastern forest type, about 60 percent of southeastern amphibian and reptile species (many endemic to the longleaf forest), and at least 122 plant species classified as "threatened" or "endangered". Insectivorous pitcher

plants and other species characteristic to their communities are found in wet bogs located within longleaf pine habitats. Federally protected gopher tortoises are characteristic residents of longleaf pine communities. Their burrows are used by a host of species, including the threatened burrowing owl and indigo snake that, like their hosts, exploit them for protection from fire, weather, and predators. Perhaps the most publicized species imperiled by loss of this habitat is the red-cockaded woodpecker. RCWs require 84 to 500 acres of home range, old pines with hollow centers for nesting and roosting, and open, forested landscapes for population growth and dispersal. They excavate cavities in living pine trees that provide essential habitats for other cavity-nesting birds and mammals and some reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates.

Approximately 100,000 acres of longleaf pine forest are lost annually, mostly as a consequence of development. In Alabama, there are still healthy remnant communities dominated by longleaf pine and even some landscape-scale examples of what the Europeans saw 300 years ago. Among the fifty states, Alabama ranks fifth for species diversity and second for species extinctions. Conserving and managing the longleaf pine tracts that remain and working to restore longleaf pine forests should be priorities for anyone interested in conserving our natural gifts.



The gopher tortoise is a characteristic resident of a longleaf pine woodland, digging burrows that it shares with other endangered residents, such as the indigo snake, scrub jay, and burrowing owl for protection from fire, predators, and weather.

The Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust – A “Home Grown Nature Conservancy”

By HANK CADDELL, SECRETARY/TREASURER, ALABAMA COASTAL HERITAGE TRUST

The past 30 years have witnessed mushrooming urbanization of Alabama’s beaches. Grieving at this *New Jersey-ization* of a once beautiful coastline, the late Dr. Joy Morrill, a marine biologist and a native of Orange Beach, became the plaintiff in Alabama’s first beach mouse litigation in 1993. The lawsuit failed to save the beach mouse and dune habitat at Florida Point on Perdido Key but did result in settlement funds that gave birth to the Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust (ACHT). Headquartered in Mobile, the ACHT is a charitable foundation dedicated to preserving Alabama’s pristine beach and dune systems for the enjoyment of future generations.

Over the past 12 years ACHT has grown its original endowment by almost 500 percent while contributing its income to acquire endangered habitat and educate our citizens about the need for preservation. Since March of 2001 it has contributed more than \$54,000 to preserve migratory bird habitat on Dauphin Island. The Friends of Dauphin Island Audubon Sanctuary (FODIAS) were able to get all of those contributions matched, multiplying the effect of our grants. FODIAS has an ambitious, ongoing preservation campaign which ACHT will continue to support.

In 2004 when state funding was eliminated for Blakely State Park, ACHT made an emergency grant of \$10,000 to help the Historic Blakely Foundation “weather the crunch” while they sought stable permanent funding. Beginning in 2004 ACHT endowed the “Tom Hodges Sea Lab Scholarship” providing tuition each year for a deserving high school student to participate in the summer program at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Over the same period, ACHT has given regular support to Mobile Baykeepers and others advocating to protect Alabama’s natural coastal habitat.

ACHT’s chance to become more of a “player” came in 2003 when the Sierra Club entrusted almost \$900,000 to it for acquisition of endangered habitat on the Fort Morgan Peninsula. Those funds have been used to acquire over 45 acres of habitat within the boundaries of the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, now pending for addition to the refuge. When the Refuge buys these parcels, ACHT intends to recycle the funds into further habitat acquisition.

ACHT is blessed with a Board of Directors reflecting many decades of advocacy and experience in preserving Alabama’s coastal

habitat. Board members John Porter and Ralph Gilges have spent much time “in the trenches” building opportunities to acquire and preserve habitat at Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan. Recently joining our board are John Winn, John Borom, and George Crozier. The Board has set a goal of building its endowment to one million dollars by the end of the decade, but that depends on greatly expanding our individual and corporate support.

The modest successes of ACHT have been possible through the efforts of our 100 or so contributing members, together with some larger gifts from ExxonMobil Corporation. We now embark on a drive to get the support of our business and corporate community. We see the depressed real estate market – behind Ivan and Katrina – as an opportunity to acquire some parcels that may otherwise have been beyond our reach. For further information or to become involved with the ACHT, contact: Hank Caddell, Secretary/Treasurer, Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust, 1911 Government Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606, hhc45@bellsouth.net.

ADCNR-Marine Resources Division Partners with Fishermen *Continued from page 1*

Once barge crew, fishermen, state observers, and the ever diligent receipt recorders are in place, the boats will begin loading, with odd numbers at one end even numbers at the other. Once secure next to the barge, the Bobcat scoops up a level scoop of cultch and carefully dumps it midline of the boat. Vessel sizes vary; larger boats will carry up to eight scoops in one trip, smaller ones may carry just one. Once a boat is safely loaded, fishermen proceed to that day’s designated planting area and offload their vessels. Each licensed fisherman can plant a maximum of eight scoops per day and is paid weekly.

This is the first time this type of partnership has been attempted, and from “day one” it has been a success. Fishermen, OSAA, barge crews, and state officials all work in together to ensure that each fisherman is fairly and safely loaded and that any issues that in tandem arise can be addressed quickly and effectively. It is truly a community affair with barge crews being sent off to aid the elderly in planting, state agents handling boats, and everyone sharing supplies and conversation with their neighbors.



Map showing areas of shallow oyster cultch planting around Heron Bay. The operation represents a partnership between ADCNR-MRD, the Organized Seafood Association of Alabama, the Oyster Farmers Association of Alabama, the Orange Beach Fishing Association, and area oystermen.

Current events

September

Tues. Sept. 4 - Wed. Sept. 5
8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

What: Wetlands Rapid Assessment Workshop
Where: Weeks Bay Reserve

Sponsored by: WBNERR and Alabama Water Watch
Contact: Mike Shelton (251) 928-9792 or michael.shelton@dcnr.alabama.gov

Saturday, September 15

What: Alabama Coastal Cleanup

Where: Varied Locations
Contact: Amy King, ADCNR, Amy.King@dcnr.alabama.gov

Thursday, September 27

What: Red water Blues – Erosion Control Workshop

Where: Baldwin County
Contact: Kara Lankford, Mobile Bay NEP/CACWP, (251) 431-6409, or klankford@mobilebaynep.com

Saturday, September 29

What: National Estuaries Day

October

Saturday, October 6

What: Residential Rain Gardens Workshop
Where: Volunteer Activity Center, Weeks Bay Reserve, Fairhope, AL

Contact: Mike Shelton (251) 928-9792 or michael.shelton@dcnr.alabama.gov

Friday, Oct. 5 - Saturday, Oct. 7

What: Native Plant Sale

Where: Safe Harbor at Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Contact: Maureen Nation (251) 928-9792

Wednesday, October 10

What: Coastal Alabama Clean Water Partnership Steering Committee Meeting

Where: 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, Spanish Fort on the Causeway
Contact: Kara Lankford, Mobile Bay NEP/CACWP (251) 431-6409, or klankford@mobilebaynep.com

Thursday, Oct. 18 - Sunday, Oct. 21

What: 4th Annual Alabama Coastal Birdfest

Where: 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, Spanish Fort on the Causeway
www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com

November

Friday, November 2

What: Stephen Small - Conservation Easement Seminar: Financial Strategies for Landowners

Where: 5 Rivers Delta Center
Contact: Walter Ernest IV (251) 990-5004 or walter@weeksbay.org

Landowner Tools, Conservation Easement Seminar by Stephen Small

By WALTER ERNEST IV, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WEEKS BAY FOUNDATION

On November 2, 2007, the Coastal Training Program (CTP), the Weeks Bay Foundation, and the Eastern Shore Chamber will present a one-day seminar for accountants, appraisers, attorneys, foresters, planners, realtors and the land trust community. This seminar will feature nationally known attorney Stephen Small. As stated in Forbes Magazine, Mr. Small is "the nation's top authority on saving land and money with conservation easements." Small is the author of *The Federal Tax Law of Conservation Easements and Preserving Family Lands, Books I, II, III*. Mr. Small wrote the Federal Income

Tax Regulations on conservation easements while he served as an advisor in the Office of Chief Counsel of the Internal Revenue Service in the early 1980s. The topic for the seminar will be financial strategies for landowners. This seminar will offer continuing education credits and will be conducted at the Five Rivers Center – Alabama's Delta Resource Center. The Foundation will also host the Fall 2007 Gulf Coast Land Trust meeting. This meeting will take place the day before Mr. Small's seminar. Look for more details on the Weeks Bay website and in the fall edition of The Pelican Post, or call or email Weeks Bay Foundation Executive Director Walter Ernest at (251) 990-5004 or walter@weeksbay.org.

Alabama current connection

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Mobile Manatees – How Citizens Can Help

By LISA YOUNG, DAUPHIN ISLAND SEA LAB

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in sightings and anecdotal reports of manatees in Mobile Bay. These gentle, slow-moving creatures are well documented in Florida, but little study has been conducted in local waters. Dauphin Island Sea Lab Senior Marine Scientist Dr. Ruth Carmichael is establishing *Mobile Manatees*, a program that encourages the public to report their sightings of these animals in Alabama waters, particularly in Mobile Bay.

“We simply don’t know how these endangered animals are using the Bay, what they are eating, or why they are here,” states Dr. Carmichael. “By tracking their locations and other conditions, we will gain a better understanding of how they live.”

By calling a toll-free number, 866-493-5803 or visiting the webpage to e-mail their sightings (<http://manatee.disl.org>), the public can help scientists find, study, and protect these vulnerable creatures. Information needed includes:

- Date and time of sighting (please use

military time or note AM or PM)

- Location of sighting with as much detail as possible, including an associated street address, river name, and (if possible) GPS coordinates

- Name and phone number or e-mail address of reporting party

- Number of animals and approximate size

- Any distinguishing marks, scars (manatees can be identified by scarring patterns)

- What they were doing (swimming, floating, foraging)

- How they were spotted (from boat, dock, etc.)

- Please send a photograph (or .jpg file), if one was taken

The Mobile Manatee program is part of a larger study that will include aerial and ground surveys of manatees in Mobile Bay and research to determine what manatees eat while in the Bay. The project, funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is a collaboration between Dauphin Island Sea Lab and researchers at Wildlife Trust in Florida.



Manatees are gentle, slow-moving creatures that have been increasingly sighted in Alabama waters. Report any sightings to 1-866-493-5803.

“We really need everyone’s help. We want people to be aware of manatees in Alabama waters, and to help us observe these animals in a positive way. We hope that by including the public, we can improve the success of our study and reduce the likelihood of negative interactions such as boat strikes,” Dr. Carmichael adds. “We appreciate as much information as possible to confirm a sighting, but we discourage people from approaching the animals. Manatees need plenty of space. We do not want to alter their natural behavior, scare them away, or harass them,” she emphasizes. “The best rule of thumb is to stay at least 100 feet from manatees. If you spot one, don’t chase them, feed them, or touch them. Give us a call or visit the website as soon as possible, and we will get to work.”