



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival Joins Art in the Pass April 2 at Pass Christian's War Memorial Park

BILOXI, Miss. – Come out and enjoy two free festivals at one time! For a **FREE**, fun and educational event for the whole family, visit the annual ***Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival*** on Saturday, April 2, 2011, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Established 20 years ago this year, Celebrate the Gulf will be held in conjunction with ***Art in the Pass*** at War Memorial Park in Pass Christian, Miss. Come enjoy lively, hands-on exhibits addressing marine and estuarine environmental issues and recreational and commercial activities associated with the Gulf.

More than 20 exhibitors have signed up for this event. Children and adults alike will get to experience everything from crawling through the ever-popular "Turtle Hurdle" to visiting a special touch tank full of marine creatures that is being sponsored by the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies. Participants will also learn how to protect their property by being FireWise. Also, as a special treat this year, the Audubon Zoo's Wetland Express will be displaying from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Many hands-on activities involving native plants, birds and marine life will also be offered.

For those of you interested in art, From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Coast artist **Marty Wilson** will be on hand to sign copies of the saltwater fish poster that he illustrated for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR). The free, full-color poster identifies more than 30 saltwater fish common to Mississippi. This activity is designed to link us with our sister festival, ***Art in the Pass***, that is taking place on the same site both Saturday and Sunday. ***Art in the Pass*** is celebrating its 14th anniversary this year. Attracting a sophisticated, buying public and a talented group of national artists, this juried art festival has grown from a few local artists presenting their works to more than 70 exhibiting artists. The art festival will take place between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. April 2 and 3.

"Prizes will be awarded to the schools that send the most students to the Celebrate the Gulf event," said Jennifer Buchanan, education coordinator for the DMR's Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). "So come on out and have fun while supporting your school."

Sponsors of Celebrate the Gulf include the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Mississippi Power Company, Northrop Grumman, City of Pass Christian, Chevron Pascagoula Refinery and DuPont. This festival is presented in partnership with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance.

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For more information, call Jennifer Buchanan at 228-475-7047.

The Grand Bay NERR is located near the community of Pecan in southeast Jackson County and includes wetlands and waterways from Bang's Lake to the Alabama state line. A major goal of the Reserve is to provide for research coordination and dissemination of scientific data to the community and local decision-makers to provide sound information on which to base management decisions.

The 18,000-acre reserve is home to several rare or endangered plant and animal species and serves as an essential nursery habitat for numerous important commercial and recreational fish species. The Reserve is managed through state-federal partnership between the DMR and its local partners—Mississippi Secretary of State's Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mississippi State University and the Nature Conservancy—and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.ms.gov.

[TEXT BOX]

2011 Celebrate the Gulf Exhibitors

- Institute for Marine Mammal Studies
- Gulf Coast Student Chapter of the Society for Marine Mammalogy
- Mississippi Coast Fly Fishers
- Mississippi Museum of Natural Science
- Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR)
 - MDMR Artificial Reef Program
 - MDMR Seafood Marketing Program
 - MDMR Seafood Technology Bureau
- Mississippi Power's Renew Our Rivers
- Mississippi Wildlife Federation/Adopt-A-Stream/MDEQ
- NOAA Fisheries Service
- Wolf River Conservation Society
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Gulf of Mexico Program
- Audubon Institute/Audubon Zoo
- The Nature Conservancy
- Mississippi Forestry Commission
- Pass Christian Public Library
- Grand Bay Coastal Resources Center
- Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain
- Gulf Islands National Seashore
- Dauphin Island Sea Lab
- Pascagoula River Audubon Center
- Crosby Arboretum, MSU Extension Service
- Lynn Meadows Discovery Center

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PHOTO CREDITS:

Photos Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

PHOTOS:



Photo A: A curious youngster at the 2010 Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival reaches for a plastic crab in a crab trap. The crab trap is equipped with turtle excluder devices know as TEDs, to prevent diamondback terrapins (a type of aquatic turtle) from entering. The 2011 event will be held Saturday, April 2, at War Memorial Park in Pass Christian.



Photo B: Sabrina Cummings, a USM graduate student, holds a friendly snake and encourages festivalgoers to feel the snake's skin and movement. The 2011 Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival will be held Saturday, April 2, at War Memorial Park in Pass Christian.



Photo C: Artist Marty Wilson draws a big crowd when he stops by the 2010 Celebrate the Gulf event to sign the DMR fish identification poster, which he illustrated. Marty will be at the 2011 Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. to sign posters for attendees, while supplies last. The festival will be held Saturday, April 2, at War Memorial Park in Pass Christian.



Photo D: Jessica Rankin with DMR's Seafood Technology Bureau helps a festivalgoer paint an oyster shell to be used as an ornament. The 2011 Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival will be held Saturday, April 2, at War Memorial Park in Pass Christian.