



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Annual Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival Returns to Pass Christian's War Memorial Park March 31

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, March 31, 2012, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Established 21 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 25 exhibitors have signed up for this event. Children and adults alike will get to experience everything from crawling through NOAA Fisheries Service's ever-popular "Turtle Hurdle" to visiting a special touch tank full of marine creatures that is sponsored by the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies. Many hands-on activities involving native plants, birds and marine life will also be offered. The Mississippi Seafood Marketing Program will be on hand serving up samples of Mississippi Gulf Fresh Seafood.

Celebrate the Gulf's sister festival, ***Art in the Pass***, is taking place on the same site both Saturday and Sunday and is celebrating its 15th 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. on March 31 and April 1.

"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 MDMR'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, Huntington Ingalls Industries, City of Pass Christian, Chevron Pascagoula Refinery, DuPont and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-Gulf of Mexico Program. This festival is presented in partnership with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. 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.

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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 MDMR 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 MDMR online at www.dmr.ms.gov.

[TEXT BOX]

2012 Celebrate the Gulf Exhibitors

- Institute for Marine Mammal Studies
- 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
- Wolf River Conservation Society
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-Gulf of Mexico Program
- The Nature Conservancy
- 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
- Mississippi Wildlife Federation/Adopt-A-Stream/Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
- NOAA Fisheries Service
- Gulf Coast Student Chapter of the Society for Marine Mammalogy
- Marine Education Center-University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Lab
- Pass Christian Codes Office
- Naval Oceanographic Office
- Children of the Spills

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PHOTO CREDITS:

Photos Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

PHOTO AND CAPTIONS: Five images



Photo A: A young lady picks her prize after playing the “Stash Your Trash” game at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources booth. The “Stash Your Trash” game emphasizes the importance of proper litter disposal in order to protect marine life.



Photo B: A determined festival-goer takes aim at the artificial reef ball model to win a prize. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Artificial Reef program has restored 100 percent of coastal fishing reefs since Hurricane Katrina.



Photo C: A youngster at the 2011 Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival sports his Jr. Marine Patrol badge with style. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Marine Patrol is responsible for keeping state waters safe for all to enjoy our natural resources.



Photo D: A boy pops up from crawling through NOAA Fisheries Service’s ever-popular “Turtle Hurdle,” which demonstrates how a turtle excluder device, known as a TED, is used on the nets of shrimp boats to save the lives of sea turtles.



Celebrate Logo

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