

Deer Island Restoration Project

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has received a grant from the Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership (GCRP) to help fund a part of the Deer Island Restoration Project. The GCRP is a multi-year, regional partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program (CRP); the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Gulf of Mexico Program's Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) Initiative; and the Gulf states and Caribbean territories. The purpose of this partnership is to strengthen the conservation efforts of the CRP and GEMS by supporting on-the-ground restoration activities and fostering local stewardship of ecologically significant areas.

The \$20,000 grant, to be matched by DMR, will be used to help protect about 800 linear feet of shoreline on the northeast corner of Deer Island from erosion by creating a breakwater/berm using bags of recycled oyster shell stacked and staked along the shoreline. The breakwater/berm should be just below the surface of the water during high tide and exposed during low tides, and will break up the wave action along the shoreline, therefore reducing erosion. The recycled shell will be bound in mesh wire bags, which will eventually rust away leaving the oyster habitat free of debris.

Once the breakwater is in place, live oysters will be deployed along the base of the shells. The recycled oyster shells will provide suitable substrate for oyster spat (small oysters) to settle and create an oyster reef. The oyster reef in turn will attract fish and create a habitat for small marine plants and animals.

The initial deployment of oyster shell is planned for early March 2010.

The Deer Island Restoration Project is part of an ongoing effort to restore Deer Island to its original size prior to Hurricane Katrina. Deer Island is a GEMS site, which is part of a program developed in coordination with the EPA and the Gulf of Mexico Program to acquire information about coastal wetland sites and make them accessible to the public through the Internet. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Management Team for the Mississippi GEMS Program includes: Jeff Clark, site manager, and Rhonda Price, coordinator; DMR Shellfish Bureau Director Scott Gordon and DMR Marine Fisheries Scientist Marty Jones, project grantee; and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation Restoration Program Manager Ryan Fikes and Executive Director Quenton Dokken, corresponding project grantor.