

Memorandum of Understanding Between Mississippi Secretary of State and Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Secretary of State serves as the trustee of State of Mississippi trust properties and has a mandated interest in coastal tidelands and recognizes the public benefits in the conservation and preservation of certain coastal areas in the interest of present and future generations; and,

WHEREAS, the mission of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is to enhance, protect, and conserve marine interests in the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands, and waterfront areas for multiple uses considering environmental concerns and social issues; and,

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program has been established by the Department of Marine Resources to preserve, conserve, restore and sustain the ecological integrity of several coastal wetland ecosystems, for the public benefit; and,

WHEREAS, the purpose of this document is to establish a cooperative management agreement between the Secretary of State and the Department of Marine Resources for certain areas within the Mississippi Coastal Preserves System and to outline specific agency responsibilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, in order to meet the specific objectives of this Memorandum, the aforementioned agencies agree as follows:

1. The Secretary of State and the Department of Marine Resources will jointly (coordinated by the Department of Marine Resources):
  - Consolidate all warranty deeds and other documents providing a state interest in real properties within or adjacent to Coastal Preserve boundaries.
  - Develop a Coastal Preserves Strategic Plan.
  - Develop a priority acquisition program.
  - Develop preserve-specific management plans.

The Department of Marine Resources will:

- Coordinate the above joint tasks with the Secretary of State and others;
- Develop boundary surveys and mark as appropriate;
- Conduct biological surveys and environmental assessments;
- Coordinate restoration and enhancement projects;
- Develop and maintain preserve specific land use land cover maps and other appropriate management maps;
- Consider selected public access improvements;
- Coordinate the state's effort to establish a National Estuarine Research Reserve in the Grand Bay/Bangs Lake region of Jackson County;
- Coordinate contractual or other preserve staff;
- Secure additional properties for the preserve system through various means;

Develop preserve specific emergency response plans;  
Coordinate preserve surveillance and security;  
Implement acquisition and management plans;  
Coordinate preserve public relations; and,  
Secure federal, state, local or private match for preserve projects.

3. The Secretary of State will:

Assist with planning activities as appropriate;  
Provide annual financial support based upon availability of funds to the Department of Marine Resources to implement the Coastal Preserves Program; and  
Secure additional properties through various programs.

4. Specific annual tasks will be outlined in a separate contract document between the Secretary of State and the Department of Marine Resources.

5. The Department of Marine Resources will provide an annual report summarizing preserve activities for the previous year and further coordinate with the Secretary of State as needed.

6. This agreement may be terminated upon mutual agreement of both agencies, providing a minimum of 90 days to develop alternative plans.