Coastal Markers

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CMR receives 2008 Tidelands Trust Fund check

Outgoing Secretary of State Eric Clark presented a Tidelands rent check for $2,922,305 along with a Tidelands Assessment check for $400,000 to the Commission on Marine Resources (CMR) at a ceremony held Oct. 8 at Moses Pier in Gulfport. The Tidelands revenue was collected from tidelands leases on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the fiscal year that ended June 30. The Tidelands Assessment revenue is a result of House Bill 44, passed in the 2005 Fifth Extraordinary Session. That bill allowed land-based casinos on the Coast and required them to pay a tidelands assessment, which is based on the casino's capital investment. This is the first year for the tidelands assessment.

"Tidelands lease collections are indispensable to rebuilding the infrastructure of the Gulf Coast," Clark said. "I'm proud to work with the Coast delegation of the Mississippi Legislature and the Department of Marine Resources on the tidelands program. We must keep the tidelands program strong," Clark said.

"As lease holders rebuild and the new tidelands assessment begins for land-based casinos, we'll see more tidelands projects that improve the quality of life for Coast residents and visitors," Clark continued.

The people of Mississippi own the public trust tidelands, the land covered by water at high tide. Rent is collected by the Secretary of State's Office from tidelands leaseholders, including casinos.

From left, State Rep. Steven Palazzo, R-Biloxi, DMR Chief of Staff Joe Ziegler, State Rep. Randall Patterson, D-Biloxi, State Rep. Roger Ishee, R-Gulfport, State Sen. Billy Hewes III, DMR Executive Director William Walker, Secretary of State Eric Clark and State Rep. Michael Janus, R-Biloxi.

The Secretary of State negotiates tidelands leases on behalf of the state. Traditionally, the Mississippi Legislature appropriates the lease revenue for specific projects. During the 2007 legislative session, the Legislature (House Bill No. 1703 - 2007 Regular Session) authorized the annual payment for the purchase of Deer Island and left expenditures on other projects to be determined by the CMR.

The Tidelands Trust Fund Program consists of funds derived from the lease rentals of tidelands and submerged lands. Revenues collected by the Office of Secretary of State are appropriated by the state legislature and administered by the CMR. Since 1990, the Secretary of State's Office has collected more than $60 million in tidelands leases.

"I'm really happy to see the Tidelands Trust Fund allocation continue to rebound after Katrina. These funds are all spent in Coastal Mississippi, and they go a long way in helping to move our recovery effort forward. On behalf of the residents of Coastal Mississippi, I'd like to genuinely thank the Mississippi Legislature for making these funds available," said DMR Executive Director William Walker.

Grand Bay NERR construction begins

The 16,000-square-foot Grand Bay Coastal Resources Center in east Jackson County is slated for completion in about 12 months.

See page 8 for full story.

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dmr.ms.gov

Director's Notes

Dr. William Walker

The hard work of DMR's staff, partners and Mississippi commercial fishermen paid off as oyster season opened last fall on a limited basis on some of the major reefs in the western Mississippi Sound for the first time since Hurricane Katrina. Mississippi oyster fishermen have made 4,087 trips and harvested 66,817 sacks of oysters through February.

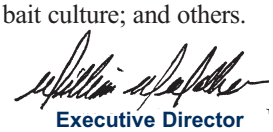
The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources will receive $25 million over the next five years to assist in the recovery of Mississippi's marine resources. Congress appropriated these funds to NOAA/NMFS as part of the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) II. This comes on the heels of Mississippi's completion of projects associated with the $37 million it was awarded in EDRP I, to assist in the restoration of oyster beds and shrimping grounds as well as in the monitoring of the recovery of Gulf fisheries.

As with the previous award, much of the money will go to eligible fishermen willing to assist the DMR in recovery and monitoring of Mississippi's Gulf fisheries.

EDRP II also includes opportunities for training programs for fishermen and individuals employed in the seafood industry.

Oyster relay and cultivation and finfish recovery reporting programs are under way. Call the DMR for info on commercial hook and line/gig fishermen, shrimp and crab programs.

DMR has been given the responsibility of operating the Lyman Fish Hatchery from the Mississippi State Legislature with the plan to cultivate a variety of marine species. We will be working in conjunction with the University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, to modify the Lyman Fish Hatchery into a state-of-the-art marine fish hatchery. Efforts will focus on developing the following technologies: soft shell crab culture; bull minnows bait fish holding and culture; net making and repairs; hatchery feeds and feeding; indoor prawn culture; shrimp bait culture; and others.



Executive Director

CMR adopts rule change for spotted seatrout rec. size limit

The Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources (CMR) adopted rule changes to Title 22, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Part 7 Regulations to Provide Size Limits and Bag Limits on Certain Fish Species and to Prevent Sale of Seafood by Recreational Fishermen, reducing the recreational total size limit of Spotted Seatrout from 14 inches to 13 inches. The CMR adopted the proposed rule at its regular monthly meeting on Jan. 15, 2008. **The rule change took effect Feb. 16, 2008.**

Free Boating Safety Classes

Mississippi Power Company
Auditorium
2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula
April 19, 2008, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Bolton State Office Building
1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi
April 26, 2008, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Pre-registration is required. Call DMR's Marine Patrol (228) 523-4134 to register.

Thanks!

to those who contributed to this issue of Coastal Markers:

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Marcia Garcia

Capitol Day attracts 300 visitors

About 300 people visited the DMR's exhibit at Capitol Day, held in the State Capitol rotunda on Jan. 31, 2008 in Jackson. Capitol Day is a day when any state department or state interest group can exhibit at the State Capitol. The days are scheduled throughout the legislative session to give each exhibitor equal space and time to make an impression on legislators. The exhibit, showcasing the DMR's various programs, was on display for state senators, representatives, other lawmakers, Capitol employees and visitors. DMR staffers were on hand to answer questions and hand out educational materials. The DMR display also included marine information calendars, color fish posters, seafood recipe books, information about recreational saltwater fishing, the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, boat and water safety, coastal ecology, and coastal management and planning.

DMR Executive Director William Walker, left, and DMR Chief of Staff Joe Ziegler, right, visit with House Marine Resources Committee Chairwoman Frances Fredericks, D-Gulfport, at the DMR exhibit at the State Capitol.

Senate Ports and Marine Resources Committee Chairman Tommy Dickerson, left, D-Waynesboro, and DMR Chief of Staff Joe Ziegler stop by the DMR exhibit at the State Capitol Jan. 31.

DMR Fisheries Technician Rudy Balius demonstrates how a TED prevents a terrapin from being inadvertently captured in a crab trap. The BRD allows sublegal crabs and other bycatch to escape.

DMR distributes crab traps

The DMR is providing resident commercial crab fishermen with new crab traps. Through funding from the NOAA Emergency Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) provided by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the DMR is giving each qualified crab fisherman 50 new crab traps. Distribution is in the order of enrollment in the EDRP. Fishermen must be currently enrolled in the commercial crab monitoring program and must have participated in the derelict crab trap cleanup held in February 2007.

Crab traps are equipped with escape rings called BRDs (bycatch release devices), to release undersized crabs and bycatch. They also are equipped with turtle excluder devices (TEDs). Bill Richardson, a fisheries scientist with the DMR Shrimp and Crab Bureau, has been working with the Mississippi Crab Task Force, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, and the Eastern and Regional Diamondback Terrapin working groups to develop Mississippi's TED program for crabbers.

"These TEDs will deter the incidental capture of diamondback terrapins, which can be caught in the trap and die," Richardson said. "This cooperative step is being taken not only to help a species of concern but also Mississippi crabbers who benefit from less bycatch to attend to."

Hydrological monitoring program adds new site

The addition of a new hydrological monitoring station at Popp's Ferry Bridge, increases the DMR's number of Mississippi Sound sites to nine. The new site reports real-time water level, temperature, specific conductance, and salinity.

"This data and real-time access that is available is a valuable tool in marine resource management allowing us to closely observe conditions in Mississippi's marine environment" said Rick Burris, a fisheries scientist with the DMR Shrimp and Crab Bureau.

In addition to water quality parameters, a sensor was also installed to record average wind speed for each 15 minute increment, the maximum gust and corresponding direction for that 15 minute increment, air temp, relative humidity, and barometric pressure.

The eight other stations are located at Biloxi East Channel Front Range Light, Biloxi's Back Bay at Point Cadet, two locations at the Pascagoula River, the Jourdan River at Kiln, Old Fort Bayou at Ocean Springs, and two locations near the mouth of the East Pearl River. The continuously transmitted water quality data can be viewed on the DMR's Web site, dmr.ms.gov, under the heading "Real-Time Water Quality."

Coastal Cleanup volunteers collect 29 tons of trash

Boaters and land-based volunteers flocked to Mississippi's beaches, islands and waterways to pick up marine debris at 55 designated cleanup sites during the 19th annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, part of the International Coastal Cleanup—the world's largest single-day volunteer effort to clean up the marine environment. More than 3,400 volunteers picked up 3,527 bags of trash along 156 miles of coastal waterways in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties and the Barrier Islands during the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup held Sept. 15, 2007.

Volunteers collected 58,830 pounds of trash—that's more than 29 tons of marine debris—including 7 dump truckloads of marine debris too large to fit in trash bags, such as the two refrigerators found on Belle Fontaine Beach. Other items collected were: a baby stroller, car batteries, a motorcycle, a toilet seat, tires, a cash register, an inflatable tent, a car muffler, thousands of cigarette butts, a breathalyzer, a computer circuit board, an above ground pool, fireworks, tires, and a sofa. There was a 6-foot dead alligator reported and 12 dead fish entangled in debris. The most peculiar item reported was a ladies purse filled with rocks, checks and credit cards, found in Bayou Heron, which belonged to a victim of a robbery in Grand Bay, Ala. Although rough waters and low visibility kept the DMR Fisheries Dive Team from conducting an underwater cleanup of the pier at West Ship Island, the six volunteers headed to Cat Island and cleaned a mile of shoreline.

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup—in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC)—takes place each year on the third Saturday in September. Hundreds of thousands of people across the world spend three hours combing the beaches and waterways to pick up trash that pollutes our waters, harms marine life, hampers tourism and poses health risks to beachgoers. During last year's ICC about 350,000 volunteers worldwide removed debris from nearly 35,000 miles of shoreline spanning 68 different nations. They collected 7 million pounds of debris.

Sixty percent of the debris found during the 2006 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup came from shoreline and recreational activities such as beach picnics, festivals, sporting events, and general littering. The source of most debris is human activity. During the 2007 cleanup, green-and-white cardboard boxes for recyclables donated by Waste Management were placed at each cleanup site so that the plastic bottles of water that were handed out to volunteers could be collected and recycled.

"Man-made debris in our marine waters poses serious threats to marine wildlife, navigation and our communities," said Lauren Thompson, state coordinator of the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and public relations director for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. "It's amazing that most of the trash in our waterways in Mississippi and worldwide comes from land-based activities."

Fifty-five students with the Naval Construction Training Center removed 465 pounds of marine debris from Keegan Bayou in Biloxi's Back Bay during last year's Mississippi Coastal Cleanup.

The mission of the International Coastal Cleanup is to remove debris from shorelines, bayous, bays, rivers, waterways and beaches; collect valuable information on the amount and types of debris collected; educate people on the issue of marine debris; and use the data collected to affect positive change. Volunteers clean beaches and collect information on what they find, using the International Coastal Cleanup Data Card, so that sources of marine debris can be targeted for education or pollution prevention campaigns. State coordinators mail the data cards to the Ocean Conservancy in Washington, D.C. where the data is tabulated. Over the years, data from the cleanups have been used to enact local, state, national, and even international legislation and agreements.

After the cleanup, Jennifer Blake and Chris Hein of Bonefish Grill and 20 staff of the Biloxi restaurant provided a free lunch of shrimp po-boys, chips and bottled water to more than 1,400 volunteers between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. In Hancock County, the Office of Congressman Gene Taylor and the Bay St. Louis Rotary Club treated volunteers to hotdogs and drinks at a cookout held at the foot of Garfield Ladner Memorial Pier and Coleman Ave. at the beach in Waveland while Brook's BB's Snowballs provided snowballs. In Jackson County, 1,000 volunteers received a free lunch of brisket and pulled-pork sandwiches, sides and drinks at The Shed Barbeque in Ocean Springs courtesy of The Shed and Chevron.

"Thousands of volunteers donated their time on a Saturday morning to come out and clean up the shoreline, islands and marine waters of South Mississippi, sharing in a worldwide effort to make our oceans and waterways safer and healthier for people and wildlife, and free from the hazards of marine debris," Thompson said. "This was a massive team effort and its success was due to the hard work of the Department of Marine Resources staff, Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force members, cleanup coordinators, zone captains, volunteers and the generosity of our sponsors."

The 20th annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup will be held Sept. 20, 2008.

The 2007 Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force

mscoastalcleanup.org

Mississippi Coastal Cleanup

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup is sponsored by the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force, which is made up of representatives from *Allied Waste Services; Ashman & Son Construction; Bonefish Grill; Chevron Pascagoula Refinery; Domain Furnishing & Décor; Eco-Tours of South Mississippi; Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; Gulf Islands National Seashore; Hancock County Chamber of Commerce; Hard Rock Cafe; Harrison County Beautification; Harrison County Sand Beach Dept.; Jackson County Solid Waste; Keesler Air Force Base; Mississippi Air National Guard CRTC-Gulfport; Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium; Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality; Mississippi Department of Marine Resources; Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; Mississippi State University Coastal Research & Extension Center; Naval Construction Battalion Center; Office of Congressman Gene Taylor; Office of the Mississippi Secretary of State; Rotary International District 6840; Sea Coast Echo and Waste Management.*

Co-sponsors (in-kind donations) include: *Allen Beverages, Inc.; The Bay Press; Beverage Association of Mississippi; Cellular South; City of Biloxi; City of Pascagoula; Coast Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Inc.; Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Consolidated; Delta Sanitation of Mississippi, LLC; Desporte's Biloxi Paper Company; The Dive Shop; Hancock County Board of Supervisors; Jackson County Chamber of Commerce; K99FM, Magic 93.7, 92.5 Hallelujah, and News Radio 104.9; Keep Mississippi Beautiful; Kmart; Knight-Abbey Commercial Printing & Direct Mail; Lamar Advertising of South Mississippi; Macland Disposal Inc.; Mississippi Department of Transportation; Mississippi Media; Ocean Conservancy; Ocean Springs Chamber of Commerce; Outback Steakhouse; The Shed Barbeque; Ship Island Excursions; The Sun Herald; WLOX-TV 13.*

Volunteers cleaning up along the shoreline at Gulf Park Estates, record the amount and type of debris collected on a data card.

USM Sierra Club members uncover entangling debris on the beach near Preservation Oaks in Gulfport.

After cleaning the beach in Pass Christian, a group of friends receive meal tickets for free lunch at Bonefish Grill in Biloxi.

2007 STATISTICS

3,483 volunteers
58,830 pounds of debris
156 miles cleaned
3,527 bags filled
55 designated sites

COUNTY & ISLAND TOTALS

Harrison County
1,668 volunteers
1,685 bags of trash
16 sites
34 miles cleaned

Hancock County
264 volunteers
355 bags of trash
12 sites
25.8 miles cleaned

Jackson County
1,430 volunteers
1,352 bags of trash
23 sites
77.5 miles cleaned

Barrier Islands
121 volunteers
135 bags of trash
4 sites
19 miles cleaned

Peculiar Items Found
toilet seat
breathalyzer
ladies purse with checks
motorcycle
swimming pool

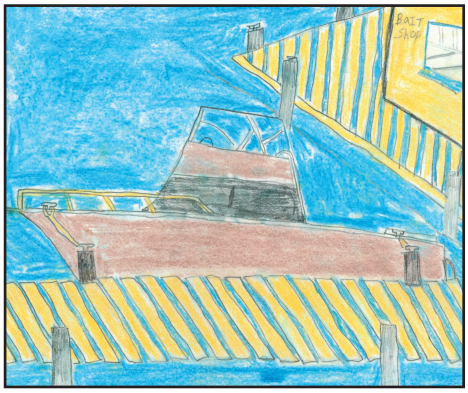
2008 Marine Information Calendar feat

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) held an art contest for third-, fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties for the annual marine information calendar. In an effort to generate interest and promote awareness of the value of our coastal resources, students were asked to create artwork illustrating the contest theme: "Preserving and Enjoying Mississippi's Coastal Resources." More than 1,300 students from 30 schools submitted entries. The winning artwork appears in the DMR 2008 calendar.

Thank you to the following schools for participating in the contest: Bayou View Elementary, Beach Elementary, Beauvoir Elementary, Cedar Lake Christian Academy, Central Elementary School, Coast Episcopal, D'Iberville Middle, East Central Upper Elementary, Eastlawn, Gautier Elementary, Grace Christian, Hancock North Central Elementary, Harper McCaughan Elementary, Lake Elementary, Lopez Elementary, Martin Bluff Elementary, New Life Academy, North Bay Elementary, North Woolmarket Elementary & Middle, Oak Park Elementary, Our Lady of Fatima, Pass Christian Middle, Sacred Heart Elementary, Second Street Elementary, Three Rivers Elementary, West Elementary, Westminster Academy, W.J. Quarles Elementary, Waveland Elementary and Woolmarket Elementary.

The calendar, which was printed through a grant from the federal Sport Fish Restoration Program, highlights DMR programs and contains handy information for Coast fishermen, such as tide information, sunrise and sunset times, moon phases, reef coordinates, size and possession limits, boating safety information, Mississippi saltwater fishing records and marine debris information.

January



February

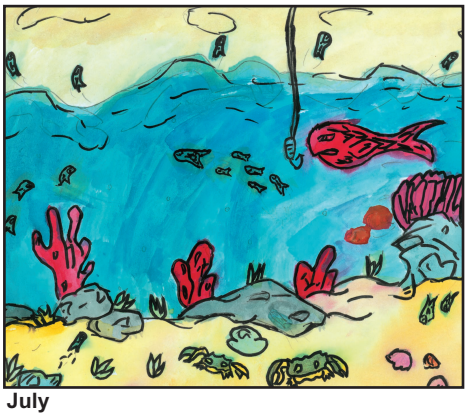
March

April

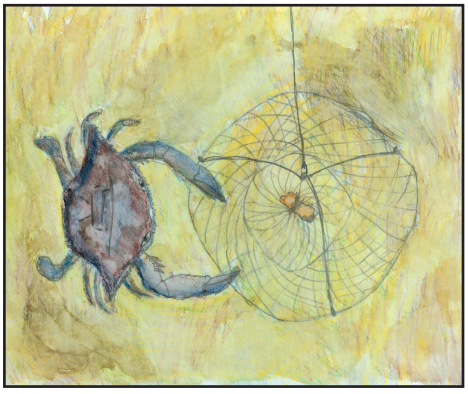
May

June

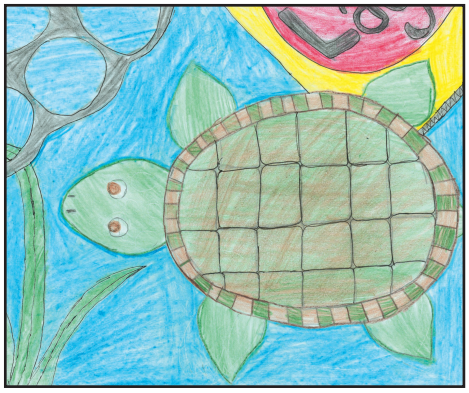
tures Coast students' winning artwork



July



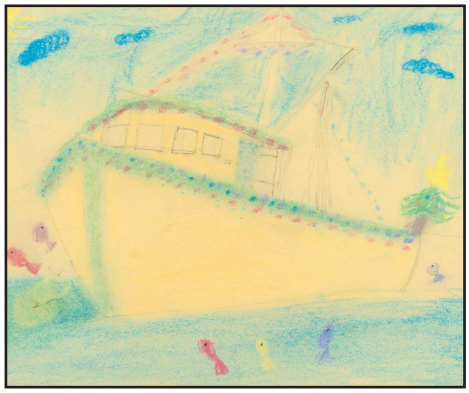
August



September

October

November



December

And, the winners are:

Front Cover:

- Wes Jamison, age 10, Second Street Elementary
- Grandlund Torjusen, age 9, Beach Elementary
- Elias Cortez, age 11, Lopez Elementary
- Matt Edwards, age 10, Westminster Academy
- Jacob Kutch, age 10, Hancock North Central Elementary
- Zachary Torricelli, age 10, Our Lady of Fatima

Back Cover:

- Derrick Reed, age 11, Lopez Elementary
- Malone Harrison, age 8, Coast Episcopal
- Alyssa Young, age 9, North Woolmarket Elementary and Middle

Months:

- January, Kara Krivanec, age 10, Our Lady of Fatima
- February, Kody Davis, age 8, Eastlawn Elementary
- March, Dakota Rolkosky, age 10, Our Lady of Fatima
- April, Dawson Coleman, age 9, North Bay Elementary
- May, Caty Lesso, age 11, Our Lady of Fatima
- June, Regan Hairston, age 11, Westminster Academy
- July, Jordan Le, age 12, Lopez Elementary
- August, Ryan Rouse, age 10, East Central Upper Elementary
- September, Caitlyn Glaskox, age 11, East Central Middle
- October, Isiah Gray, age 11, Pass Christian Middle
- November, Jaden Stanbro, age 9, North Bay Elementary
- December, Willow Olier, age 9, Eastlawn Elementary

NERR Notes

Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Grand Bay NERR construction begins

After several years of planning, construction on the Department of Marine Resources/Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve has begun. A ground breaking ceremony was held at the east Jackson County reserve Oct. 31, 2007, celebrating the beginning of construction.

Rod Cooke Construction of Mobile, Ala., is the general contractor for the project. Construction of the 16,000-square-foot building is slated for completion in about 12 months. The facility, Grand Bay Coastal Resources Center, will house staff of the reserve and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge. In addition to the office space, the facility will include classrooms, research laboratories, an interpretative area and a dormitory for visiting researchers and educators.

David Ruple, manager of the reserve said, "We are pleased that construction has finally begun after operating our programs out of small trailers since our inception in 1999. This will be a first-class facility for Jackson County and will serve the entire Mississippi Coast."

The facility is being built using many advanced energy efficient strategies and will be certified L.E.E.D. building meeting high "green" standards.

"This project will be a demonstration of the Department's environmental ethic, using the most environmentally friendly technologies available," Ruple said.

The Grand Bay reserve represents a State of Mississippi and U.S. Department of Commerce partnership as part of a national program of estuarine research reserves. There are currently 27 reserves nationwide. The focus of the reserves is to demonstrate wise stewardship of our coastal resources while gaining a broader understanding of our resources through the research program and transferring this understanding to coastal decision-makers and the general public.

Sparrow Sweep a success

Photo by: Bruce Reid

Henslow's Sparrow

Over 70 outdoor enthusiasts, including birders, Girl Scouts, and envirothon team members, helped celebrate World Wetlands Day February 2 at the Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge and National Estuarine Research Reserve. In honor of the special day, researchers and educators of the reserve and refuge organized a Sparrow Sweep and Pitcher Plant Walk through the wet pine savanna habitats of the refuge. The theme of this year was "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People." Jennifer Buchanan, education coordinator for the Reserve said, "Our goal with this activity was to demonstrate how healthy coastal wetland habitats are not only important to the people of the community but also to the many species of plants and animals that live in or depend on them."

The highlight of the field trip was capturing Henslow's Sparrows, a species of concern, in mist nets. According to Mark Woodrey, research coordinator for the Reserve, "Wet pine savannas along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico provide important winter habitat for probably 60 to 70 percent of the world's populations of Henslow's Sparrows." Other species caught included Loggerhead Shrikes and Sedge Wrens. Expert and amateur birders alike were excited to observe these rare species overwintering in the savanna. Many who attended the event got to hold a bird in their hand for the very first time!

Photo by: Janet Wright

Lina Rademacher of Junior Girl Scout Troop 639 learns how to properly hold one of the sparrows caught during the afternoon activity.

Register now for the ninth annual Smart Growth Conference for Southern Mississippi to be held May 5-6

The ninth annual Coastal Development Strategies (Smart Growth) Conference will be held May 5-6, 2008 at the Historic Saenger Theatre in Biloxi. Conference attendees will learn about possible solutions to build sustainable communities, spur economic development and improve the quality of life in southern Mississippi.

The conference is hosted by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Office of Coastal Management and Planning CRMP Program and conference partner, the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce.

The deadline for pre-registration is April 25, 2008 and is $125 per person ($80 for students). After April 25, the registration fee will be $155 (until May 4) and on-site registration is $175. Conference fees include two breakfasts, refreshment breaks, two lunches and conference materials. Lunches and all exhibits will take place at the Nativity Sacred Heart Center.

CRMP is a program within the DMR. CRMP's mission is to develop a plan to sustain Mississippi's coastal resources while providing a healthy economy in the region.

Two full days of conference will feature speakers and breakout sessions. Topics under discussion by the conference planning committee include sustainable development, clean energy and energy efficiency, insurance strategies, building resilient communities, heritage tourism, sustainable gardening, building in the watersheds, economic development, green building, linking housing and transportation to land use, transfer of development rights, and community citizen stewardship.

"We are proud to host this annual event," said Tina Shumate, DMR Office of Coastal Management and Planning director. "The conference is an excellent opportunity to share ideas as we keep current with national smart growth trends and build for the future of the Mississippi Gulf Coast."

This multidisciplinary event draws elected officials, city and county staff, contractors, developers, bankers, planners, zoning officials, realtors and appraisers, engineers, landowners, industry, students, federal and state agencies, boards of supervisors, lawyers, private and corporate entities, environmentalists, resource managers and others committed to rebuilding the Gulf Coast.

Gov. Barbour speaks last year at the Smart Growth Conference in Biloxi.

"I highly encourage people to attend this annual event," said Kimberly Nastasi, CEO of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce. "The Department of Marine Resources continues to be a driving force in the rebuilding efforts on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and we are honored to co-host this event with them."

Real estate agents and appraisers can earn 10 hours of continuing education credit by attending the ninth Annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference; receipts will be provided to all other professions—such as, engineers, teachers and architects—to submit for credit to their respective organizations.

Beau Rivage donated oyster shells for reef located in Fort Bayou.

DMR and Beau Rivage plant recycled oyster shells on Fort Bayou Fishing Reef

The Shellfish and the Artificial Reef bureaus of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) teamed up with Beau Rivage Resort & Casino in November 2007 to enhance a low-profile fishing reef using recycled oyster shells.

The oyster shells were a byproduct of the casino's regular barge maintenance and were destined for a landfill.

"This is a great example of how a private company is proactive in protecting the environment, giving back to the community which they serve," said Bradley Randall, DMR Shellfish Bureau Program Coordinator. "We would like to thank Ed Reardon and Jeff Abel of Beau Rivage for coming up with the idea and coordinating the oyster shell plant."

Over 200 cubic yards of oyster shells were used to enhance 20 acres of fishing reef located in Fort Bayou in Biloxi's Back Bay.

The oyster shells were donated and all expenses to deploy the shells were paid for by Beau Rivage.

Seafood Safety Corner

Jeff Davis

During winter, the DMR's Seafood Technology Bureau (STB) participates in many activities in addition to their normal seafood facility inspection duties. Inspections are conducted on a quarterly basis to ensure that each facility abides by proper sanitation regulations and produces a wholesome seafood product that is safe for human consumption. In addition to conducting quarterly inspections, the STB also collects water samples from each certified seafood facility. Samples are collected to determine if the facility's water supply is safe. Each water sample is collected on a biannual schedule and submitted to USM's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory for analysis. Before a special oyster season opened in September 2007, members of the STB visited each seafood facility to collect water samples and ensure they were safe for processing. The STB is proud to announce that all analyzed samples are safe for processing.

During the summer of 2007, the total number of active certified seafood dealers and processors in Mississippi was 44. Since that time, the total number has risen to 53. Seven of the new facilities are oyster shellstock shipping operations and the remaining two operations are oyster shucking-packing facilities.

Members of the STB would like to remind everyone (both industry employees and the public) to remember to wash your hands before and after handling any raw food of any type. Microorganisms can be easily transferred from one place to another; therefore, it is vital that a strict handwashing routine be practiced when returning from breaks, restrooms, or even after handling different foods. Liquid antimicrobial soap is commonly used in the food service industry and aids in killing possible microorganisms that may be on one's hands. First lather your hands with soap and vigorously scrub your hands together under running water for 2 to 3 minutes. Make sure to clean the spaces in between your fingers and scrub underneath fingernails too. The temperature of the water should be at least 100°F. When hands are thoroughly washed, use a disposable paper towel to dry your hands. After washing your hands in a restroom, open the door with the used paper towel to avoid recontaminating your hands and then dispose of the paper towel.

Jan Welker

Finally, the members of the STB regret to inform that one of our seafood officers, Jan Welker, passed away on Oct. 2, 2007. Jan was a fine and caring woman who took great pride in her job at the DMR. Jan never let her illness get the best of her. She was an encouraging woman with a positive attitude and when times were rough she was always there to assist. Jan will be sadly missed by all those who knew her.

Mr. Pettis, right, and his son shuck oysters at D.L. Pettis and Son shucking and packing facility in Moss Point.

DMR Coastal Preserves staff member Travis Williams, right, and burn boss Bob Wilken patrol the main roadway during the Admiral Isle Coastal Preserve prescribed fire.

Prescribed fires help restore Coastal Preserves in Hancock County

The Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program in coordination with the Mississippi Forestry Commission and Fire Trax, a private contractor out of Wyoming, recently conducted prescribed fire management burns on two Hancock County Coastal Preserve areas: one in the Bayou La Croix Coastal Preserve and one in the Hancock County Marsh Coastal Preserve near Ansley. The main objectives of these controlled burns were to reduce the heavy fuel loads present on these public lands following Hurricane Katrina, to help control Chinese tallow infestations, to improve access for storm debris cleanup, and to aid in overall habitat restoration efforts. By using prescribed fire, managers can effectively decrease the risk of catastrophic wildfire, decrease the risk of falling trees, and promote the healthy regeneration of native species, which thrive in these fire-dependent habitats.

Since Hurricane Katrina, the Coastal Preserves Program has been concentrating its efforts on restoring the most severely damaged areas within the preserves. Although the program has made significant progress in the past two years, it will take many years and a lot more work for these areas to fully recover.

Since 1997, the Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program has been a partnership between the DMR and the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office whereby both agencies agree to effectively preserve, conserve, restore, and manage selected coastal wetland ecosystems, associated uplands and tidelands. The program currently manages about 35,000 acres.

Take a Bow

Recognizing employees' commitment to excellence

Health Fair 2007

DMR Marine Patrol Chief of Enforcement Walter Chataginer tests his grip at the DMR Health Fair.

On June 15, 2006 Governor Haley Barbour started his Healthy Mississippi initiative to focus on wellness "where we live, where we work and where we learn" in order to improve the health of Mississippians and to reduce the devastating problem of chronic disease in the state. Healthy Mississippi – A Worksite Wellness Program for state employees is the "wellness where we work" component for state agencies. The goal of the program is to improve the health of state employees and encourage healthy lifestyles, which in turn will improve employee morale, decrease absenteeism and improve employee productivity.

The Department of Marine Resources kicked off its program with a health fair on Dec. 5 put on by the DMR Healthy Mississippi Committee and the Center for Industrial Health & Wellness. Health screenings included a Lipid Profile, Body Composition, glucose, blood pressure and grip strength. It is important for employees to "know their numbers" so they can make changes in order to reduce the development of chronic diseases. For more information contact Christine Murrell, Barbara Synowiez, Diane Roth, Lauren Clark or Matthew Kasovich at (228) 374-5000.

DMR's Office of Coastal Management & Planning Wins Gulf Guardian Award

At the November 2007 awards ceremony in Tampa, Fla., the DMR's Office of Coastal Management and Planning received the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program's Gulf Guardian Award for Youth Education. The award was for Marker Madness, the first program of its kind on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Director Tina Shumate and Staff Officer Marcia Garcia received a Gulf Guardian Award for Youth Education for Marker Madness, a storm drain marker program.

DMR Employees Judge Magnolia Park Elementary Science Fair

Marine Fisheries Scientist Christine Murrell likes what she sees.

Student shows her frogs at the Magnolia Park Elementary Science Fair Jan. 10 in Ocean Springs.

A student smiles for the judges.

Wetlands Permitter James Davis judges the moldy cheese exhibit.

Staff Officer Joe Jewell asks questions.

Happy Anniversary!

These anniversaries mark employees' years of service with the Department of Marine Resources and the state of Mississippi.

(1/16/85) Donnie Armes
(1/15/98) Jan Boyd
(1/29/01) Wesley Dever
(1/1/90) Dale Diaz
(1/1/95) Doug Drieling
(1/1/95) Rita Duvernay
(1/1/95) Kerry Endris
(1/13/05) Gretchen Grammer
(1/1/95) Olin Gunter
(1/1/03) James Herring
(1/1/00) Melanie Lane
(1/1/00) R.T. May IV
(1/1/07) Baron O'Grady
(1/1/00) Jeffery Payne
(1/29/01) Ruth Posadas
(1/1/99) Rhonda Price
(1/10/00) Diane Roth
(1/1/00) Andy Ryals
(1/1/95) Rocky Southern
(2/1/89) Steve Breland
(2/25/02) Karen Carron
(2/1/99) Jeffrey Clark
(2/15/06) Jennifer Clark
(2/1/06) Jeff Grant
(2/12/04) Willa Henriksen
(2/1/90) Tom Van Devender
(3/25/02) Debbie Belk
(3/17/99) Leo Christie
(3/27/89) Ava Coleman
(3/1/02) Jeff Davis
(3/5/07) Tom Doster
(3/1/02) Janet Doucet
(3/1/90) Rusty Pittman
(3/26/01) Jimmy Sanders
(3/1/98) Amy Taylor
(3/12/01) Evelyn Thompson
(3/15/04) Patrick Webb

We thank them for their dedicated service to the management of our marine resources.

Mississippi Department
of Marine Resources
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Save the date!

9th annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference
May 5-6. Call (228) 374-5000 or (228) 604-0014 to register.

DMR Calendar

April 15
Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources meeting, Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, 1815 Popp's Ferry Road, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

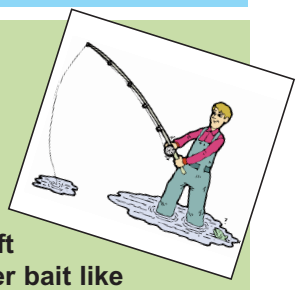
April 22
Earth Day

May 5-6
9th annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference, Saenger Theatre, 416 Reynoir St., Biloxi. Call (228) 374-5000 or (228) 604-0014 to register.

May 20
Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources meeting, Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, 1815 Popp's Ferry Road, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

Celebrate Earth Day

Doc's Fishing Tip



Early Spring is one of the best times to fish for speckled trout here along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and a live shrimp fished under a popping cork almost guarantees your success with these gamesters. For more of a challenge, try fishing a soft plastic jig under that cork. Better yet, toss a topwater bait like a Zara Spook or Mirrolure Pup for some really spectacular spring fishing action. No matter what approach you take, you can bet you'll have plenty of fun.... -- Fred Deegen, Ph.D.

Mississippi Oyster-Stuffed Mushrooms

1 pint large, whole mushrooms
1 pint oysters, chopped
1/4 cup crumbled cooked bacon
1/4 cup bread crumbs
1/4 teaspoon dried parsley
1/2 teaspoon instant minced onion
pinch of basil
1 tablespoon oyster liquid

Wash the mushrooms.
Remove stems.
Mix all ingredients and heap into mushroom caps.
Arrange on plate lined with paper towel.
Microwave for 3-4 minutes.

Reprinted from: Get Hooked on MS Seafood Oyster Recipe Book