



News from the Gulf

Volume 3

A newsletter from the Gulf of Mexico Foundation

Spring 2003



Carrie Robertson photo

Richard DeMay, center, of the Maritime Forest Ridge and Marsh Restoration project at Port Fourchon, Louisiana, leads a site tour March 10. From left are

Rhonda Price, Quanton Dokken, Lore O'Hanlon, Richard DeMay, David Muth, and Kay Jenkins. DeMay works with Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program.

Educators' dive trips planned for summer

Twenty-two teachers from Texas, along with three other educators, have been chosen to take part in the eighth annual Down Under, Out Yonder summer educational workshops this summer.

The two events, to be held in June and July, focus on the Flower Gardens National Marine Sanctuary, a federally protected coral reef area located about 100 miles off the coast of Galveston, Texas.

Participants will take part in a land-based weekend workshop, then take up residence on a live-aboard vessel for three days of scuba diving.

The Gulf of Mexico Foundation and the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary are organizing the event. For more information, contact Sarah Bernhardt, (979) 846-5942.

Foundation staff joins CRP site visits

Tours reveal plans, progress for three restoration projects

Gulf of Mexico Foundation staff members took part in three site visits this winter, gaining a better understanding of the unique aspects of each restoration project.

The projects were all under consideration for funding by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Citizen-Based Restoration (CRP) grant.

For the second year, The Gulf of Mexico Foundation is coordinating the grant project aimed at funding citizen-driven habitat restoration projects which benefit living marine resources and foster local stewardship throughout the Gulf of Mexico region.

On Dec 13, the Foundation staff joined several CRP steering committee members on a preliminary site visit of the Tatton Marsh Enhancement project at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the south Texas coast. After careful consideration, the proposal was declined funding, as it did not demonstrate sufficient benefit to NOAA trust resources such as shrimp, crabs, and fish.

On March 10, Foundation staff and CRP steering committee members visited the Maritime Forest Ridge and Marsh Restoration project at Port Fourchon in south Louisiana.

Project leader Richard DeMay

of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, guided the group on a boat tour of the ridge that is being constructed from dredge material and then vegetated with marsh and maritime ridge plants. The project was approved for funding and received \$90,000 under the NOAA CRP grant this year.

The Foundation's third site visit this winter, April 29, was to the Restoration of Bahia Grande project, which received \$44,940 in NOAA CRP funding. The grant will help fund construction of an educational center/mangrove nursery building within the Laguna Atascosa Reserve.

Foundation board to meet May 23

The Gulf of Mexico Foundation board of directors will meet in Houston on Fri., May 23, at the Hyatt Regency.

Members of the board are: John LaRue, president; Wayne Johnson, vice president; Lawrence Kieschnick, treasurer; Joseph Dial; James Dupree; Colie Donaldson; Tom Matthews; Dr. Gene Meier; Larry Thomas; Mary Yturria; Dr. Quanton Dokken, executive director.



Gulf of Mexico Foundation
 PMB 51 - 5403 Everhart
 Corpus Christi, TX 78411
 361/882-3939 phone
 800/884-4175 toll free
 361/882-1262 fax
 info@gulfmex.org
 www.gulfmex.org

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Gulf Ecological Management Sites meeting fosters communication

On March 11, the GEMS managers from all five Gulf states met in New Orleans to exchange ideas and set new policies for the program.

Joining the GEMS managers were staff from the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Gulf of Mexico Program.

Topics of discussion included the application process of new areas to be included in the GEMS program.

Foundation leads GEMS program into third year

Providing leadership and promotion, the Gulf of Mexico Foundation moves into its third year of coordinating the Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) program, administered by the Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program.

GEMS are marine areas of special ecological significance located all along the Gulf coast, from Florida to Texas.

Starting in 1996, the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program invited each Gulf state to select its own GEMS sites and appoint a GEMS manager.

To date, approximately 120 sites have received GEMS designation.

Current GEMS managers are: Kay Jenkins, Texas (361) 825-3245; Greg DuCote, Louisiana (225) 342-5052; Rhonda Price, Mississippi (228) 374-5000; Jeff Jordan, Alabama (251) 929-0900; Larry Nall and Paula Allen, Florida (850) 245-2094.

When an area is given GEMS status, a high priority is placed on it for protection, restoration, and conservation.

As part of its community-based habitat restoration program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) offers grant money specifically for marine restoration projects lying within GEM sites. Partnering with NOAA, the

Foundation administers the grant, entitled "the Gulf of Mexico Community-Based Habitat Restoration Program Partnership," (NOAA CRP). Year II NOAA CRP funding, totaling over \$400,000, went to the following recipients:

Alabama: Weeks Bay National Estuarine Reserve; Mobile Bay National Estuary Program

Florida: Three Rivers Resource Conservation; Dept of Environmental Protection

Louisiana: Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

Mississippi: University of Southern Mississippi

Texas: Ocean Trust.