
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION

CONTACT: Chris Smith, Public Affairs Officer
(727) 570-5301, Pager 888-955-4854
John Iliff, Southeast Restoration Center
(727) 570-5440

NOAA 02-030

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2002

**NOAA ANNOUNCES \$337,200 FEDERAL FUNDING FOR
SOUTHEAST FISHERY HABITAT RESTORATION**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, awarded eight grants totaling \$337,200 to help communities in the southeast United States restore coastal and marine habitats important to our nation's fisheries.

The funds were awarded through NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program to support grass-roots efforts to restore critical fisheries habitats in South Carolina, Florida, and Alabama. Staff from the NOAA Restoration Center and NOAA Fisheries southeast region work closely with communities to develop and implement projects. Community volunteers monitor and maintain completed projects which promotes stewardship and a heightened appreciation for the environment.

"The Community-Based Restoration Program has proven to be a catalyst for habitat restoration throughout the southeast," said Joseph Powers, acting administrator for NOAA Fisheries' southeast region. "Restoration projects enhance critical habitats that are important to building sustainable commercial and recreational fisheries and promoting the recovery of many threatened and endangered species."

South Carolina

- NOAA awarded \$23,300 to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for the restoration of oyster reef habitat. Members of many coastal communities will collect oyster shells and recycle them to provide substrate that will create dozens of artificial oyster reefs. Once established, the reefs are expected to grow significantly and will help to stabilize beaches, prevent erosion during storms, improve water quality, and serve as a source of food.

(MORE)

Florida

- NOAA awarded a \$75,000 grant to Pinellas County's Ft. DeSoto Park Aquatic Habitat Management Area. This project entails the construction of two 40-foot bridges to replace portions of filled causeways to reestablish natural water circulation in the back bays of Mullet Key and at Ft. DeSoto Park that should result in the restoration of about 200 acres of seagrass.
- NOAA awarded \$16,000 to Mote Marine Laboratory to begin training volunteers to participate in the lab's reef medic program. The Florida Keys' coral reefs are protected by Federal and State regulations and many people want to help keep the reefs healthy. So the Mote staff will train people how to recognize and report vessel and other mechanical damage to coral reefs, seagrass beds and other benthic resources; how to assess and map damage; how to safely remove debris; and how to restore, stabilize, and monitor damaged areas.
- NOAA awarded \$60,000 to the Marine Resources Council of East Florida to help restore mangroves and wetlands. This project is part public/private partnership that includes all levels of government, the business community, and private citizens who are committed to reversing the loss of coastal wetland habitat and removing invasive plants adjacent to the Indian River Lagoon. A major component of this project is to educate local residents about the gravity and scope of the problems and then recruit and organize people into teams that will engage in restoration activities. Their tasks will include removing invasive species and planting desirable native species such as mangroves.
- NOAA awarded \$14,400 to the Environmental Learning Center for fringe mangrove restoration in the southern Indian River Lagoon. Residential and commercial development has devastated many miles mangrove trees that once fringed the lagoon. Hundreds of seawalls and bulkheads now stand in their place. This objective of this project is to restore mangrove habitat by expanding plantings at new sites, monitoring previously planted sites, and educating the public about how important mangroves are to the health of the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem.
- NOAA awarded \$36,000 to Friends of Rookery Bay for the Tarpon Bay restoration project. Sam Williams Island is 25 percent infested with Brazilian pepper, downy rose myrtle, melaleuca, ceasar wood and Australian pine which are changing functions of existing habitats. This project will involve the removal of those invasive plants and the recovery of native species.
- NOAA awarded \$50,000 to Ecosystem Restoration Support Organization, Inc., for the first phase of an oyster reef construction for Project Green Shores in Pensacola Bay. The organization is creating a series of oyster reefs to provide valuable habitat, improve water quality, and serve as a breakwater to protect a planned emergent saltmarsh and seagrass bed. These oysters will never be harvested. Their sole purpose is to enhance the bay's ecosystem by filtering water to improve its quality and to serve as valuable fish habitat.

(MORE)

Alabama

- NOAA awarded \$62,500 to the University of Southern Alabama to create a fringe of wetlands in an urban estuary for the purposes of research and demonstration to the local community as an alternative to bulkheads. The university will construct several fringe wetlands along the Dog River shoreline, in and around Mobile. They will plant locally common wetland species at sites with a variety of wave climates.

The NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program has been working with community organizations since 1996 to support effective habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine, and riparian areas. The program works by providing seed money and technical assistance, which is leveraged at the national and local level to promote significant, locally-driven restoration projects. To date, more than 80 projects have been funded in seven southeast states. For more information on NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program, visit the following web site:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.