

Hannah Sodolak

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To: Hannah Sodolak
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Conservation News for the Gulf of Mexico Region

March 18, 2020

Land Trusts cancel public events but the work goes on.

Spring is typically the busy season for land trusts as they hold family events at their parks and preserves, sponsor volunteer work days, and host fundraisers. Land trusts across the region have cancelled or re-scheduled public events in response to the Coronavirus emergency, but the work of caring for the land continues.

Save the Date!

Gulf Coast Land Conservation Conference

September 14 - 16, 2020

The Courtyard Marriott

Gulfport, Mississippi

Support the 2020 Gulf Coast Land Conservation Conference as a sponsor or exhibitor.

The [Gulf Coast Land Conservation Conference](#), hosted by the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, is the premiere gathering of land conservation practitioners in the Gulf of Mexico region. The theme of the 2020 Annual Conference is *Why Land Conservation Matters*. Become a [conference sponsor and exhibitor](#) and share your message with more than 120 land conservation practitioners. Sponsors and exhibitors will receive visibility and recognition before, during and after the event and will enjoy networking opportunities with colleagues, customers and decision-makers.

2020 is a milestone year – the region will be marking 10 years of restoration efforts since the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster. The conference will include discussions on lessons learned from the first 10 years of restoration efforts. 2020 is also the year in which we join with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance to *Embrace the Gulf*, a year-long campaign to raise awareness about the value, sustainability, and beauty of the region. [Find out more...](#)

RESTORE Council announces initiation of proposals for next round of funding (FPL 3b).

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council) announces the initiation of proposals development as part of the proposed second phase of the RESTORE Council's Funded Priorities List (FPL) 3. This phase is known as FPL 3b.

The Council approves projects and programs for funding through development of FPLs for Bucket 2 of the RESTORE Act funding. Per the requirements of the RESTORE Act, only Council members may submit proposals. The window for Council Members will be open March 9, 2020 through 11:59 pm CT April 24, 2020. [Read more...](#)

How do land conservation projects get considered?

Land conservation organizations should make sure that their proposed projects are in their State's portal. Update projects as needed. They should also be in contact with a Council member to explain how their project will help meet the RESTORE Council's [goals](#). Visit the Gulf of Mexico Alliance [webpage](#) on DWH funding sources to see the list of state-managed portals.

2020 Agricultural Land Conservation Easement Signup Deadline Extended in Florida.

The deadline for applications to fund agricultural easements in Florida has been extended to April 6. USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) provides financial and technical assistance to conserve working lands and wetlands through two programs: Agricultural Land Easements and Wetland Reserve Easements. Although applications are accepted on a continuous basis, funding selections are typically made once a year.

Agricultural landowners and Indian tribes can apply for a [Wetland Reserve Easement](#) to restore wetlands, protect wildlife habitat and recharge groundwater on their property. Eligible landowners can enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement.

NRCS provides financial assistance to conservation partners to purchase an [Agricultural Land Easement](#) that protects the agricultural use of cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland and nonindustrial private forestland. Contact Crenel Francis at 352-338-9508 for questions and submissions.

[Agricultural Conservation Easements Application Forms](#) are now available on the Land Trust Alliance website.

The Farm Bill conservation programs, taken in total, are the largest single federal source of funding for private land conservation. Farm bill programs create significant opportunities for land trusts to protect high-priority farm and ranch lands, grasslands, wetlands and forests. The programs provide matching funds to conservation partners, so federal investments go further to protect America's productive land.

Visit the [Land Trust Alliance](#) website for a summary of the USDA's conservation programs and to view all of the forms. Find out more through the [NRCS](#).

New report: two hours per week in nature improves health, reduces stress.

In a recent study of 20,000 in the United Kingdom, researchers found that people who spent two hours a week in green spaces — local parks or other natural environments, either all at once or spaced over several visits — were substantially more likely to report good health and psychological well-being than those who don't. Two hours was a hard boundary: The study, published last June, showed there were no benefits for people who didn't meet that threshold.



The effects were robust, cutting across different occupations, ethnic groups, people from rich and poor areas, and people with chronic illnesses and disabilities. The U.K. study is only the latest in a rapidly expanding area of research that finds nature has robust effects on people's health — physically, mentally, and emotionally. [Read more...](#)

Partner Spotlight

Galveston Bay Foundation volunteers removed 200 crab traps in clean-up.

Volunteers removed more than 200 lost crab traps at the Abandoned Crab Trap Removal event and released over 100 diverse species of marine life back into the Bay



Wolf River Conservation Society merges with Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain.

The Wolf River Conservation Society (WRCS) was started in 1998 as a volunteer driven organization and has successfully brought nearly 30 miles of the Wolf River into protective easements. In 1999 the Wolf River was the first in Mississippi to receive the Scenic Streams Stewardship Program Designation on lands being protected. The Wolf River Conservation Society has now merged into the [Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain](#) (LTMCP).

After 22 years of volunteer leadership, the WRCS elected to select a full-time organization that could continue to protect and manage the WRCS conservation land in perpetuity. LTMCP is an accredited organization with full-time staff and experience.



Job Opportunities

Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program seeks Estuary Outreach Specialist.

This is a multiple task position that integrates knowledge and skills associated with communication, outreach and education, administrative management, and natural resource conversation.

The position requires a candidate that is detail and outcome oriented, well-organized, able to handle a fast-paced work environment, skilled at multi-tasking, works well in a dynamic team environment and has exceptional interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills. This is a high public visibility position that requires exceptional professional standards for public service and community engagement.

[Read more...](#)



Funding Opportunities

***New!* The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) invites pre-proposals for the 2020 National Coastal Resilience Fund.**

The NFWF National Coastal Resilience Fund will make investments to restore and strengthen natural systems so they can protect coastal communities from the impacts of storms, floods, and other natural hazards and enable them to recover more quickly, and enhance habitats for fish and wildlife.

NFWF will award approximately \$31 million in grants to create and restore natural systems in areas that will both increase protection for communities from coastal storms, sea- and lake-level changes, inundation, and coastal erosion, and also improve valuable habitats for fish and wildlife species. NFWF will invest in projects in four focus areas:

- Community Capacity Building and Planning
- Project Site Assessment and Preliminary Design
- Project Final Design and Permitting
- Restoration and Monitoring

The pre-proposal due date is Wednesday, April 8, 2020. The full proposal by invite only due date is Thursday, June 25, 2020. [Read more...](#)

***New!* Alabama Coastal Area Management Program announces annual request for proposals.**

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Coastal Section is accepting proposals for projects to be completed in the Alabama Coastal Area (defined as Mobile County and Baldwin County) for Fiscal Year 2021 (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021). This competitive funding opportunity is administered by the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP) utilizing federal funds provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

ACAMP is accepting applications for projects that protect, enhance, and improve the management of natural, cultural and historical coastal resources and that increase the sustainability, resiliency and preparedness of coastal communities. [Read more...](#)

***New!* U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) invites proposals for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).**

NRCS will invest up to \$50 million in fiscal year 2020 to fund a unique, partner-led approach to addressing natural resource concerns at local, regional, and landscape scales. Through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program's (RCPP) Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA), NRCS is authorized to fund up to 15 projects where partners will be given greater liberty to manage an RCPP project and the associated relationships with participating producers and landowners.

NRCS will execute AFAs through agreements with eligible lead partners. Lead partners will be responsible for contracting directly with eligible producers and landowners to implement conservation activities on the ground.

NRCS is looking for AFA project proposals now through May 18. Proposals must be submitted through the RCPP portal at <https://nracs-sites.secure.force.com/>. [Read more...](#)

The United States Department of Agricultural Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) is now accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

This program consists of two components: the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) option and the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) option. The ALE assists conservation organizations to prevent the conversion of

productive working lands to non-agricultural uses and maximizes protection of land devoted to food production. The WRE option restores, protects, and enhances enrolled wetlands and improves wildlife habitat. Eligible WRE lands include farmed or prior-converted wetlands that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored.

Applications are currently being accepted and can be obtained anytime at your [local field office](#) or available online at www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted.

NOAA opens Environmental Literacy grant funding opportunity related to community resilience.

The goal of this funding opportunity is to build environmental literacy of K-12 students and the public so they are knowledgeable of the ways in which their community can become more resilient to extreme weather and/or other environmental hazards, and become involved in achieving that resilience.

Projects should build the collective environmental literacy necessary for communities to become more resilient to the extreme weather and other environmental hazards they face in the short- and long-term. Building sufficient environmental literacy in a community means that these communities are composed of individuals who are supported by formal and informal education that develop their knowledge, skills, and confidence to: (1) reason about the ways that human and natural systems interact globally and where they live, including the acknowledgement of disproportionately distributed vulnerabilities; (2) participate in scientific and/or civic processes; and (3) consider scientific uncertainty, cultural knowledge, and diverse community values in decision making. The deadline is March 26, 2020. Read the full announcement [here](#).

Upcoming Events

The 2020 Southeast Land Conservation Conference is going digital.

The Land Trust Alliance has shifted the format of the 2020 Southeast Land Conservation Conference to be virtual in light of the rising number of COVID-19 cases and increasing travel restrictions. We are working with workshop presenters to transform their content into online webinars that will be offered over the coming months. One benefit of this format is that registered participants will be able to invite their land trust staff, volunteers and board members to view each webinar — and recordings of them as well — expanding the impact of each presentation. [Find out more...](#)

Gulf of Mexico All Hands Meeting is slated for June 22 - 25 in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Attendees can expect familiar agenda items to include the "Get to Know GOMA" breakfast, welcome plenary, and Team meetings. Schedule your Wednesday evening for the popular Tools Cafe!. Registration for the meeting is \$160 and is now open. [Read more...](#)

American Farmland Trust will host its 2020 National Conference May 5 - 6 in Washington, D.C.

Farmland sustainability is at a crossroads. Issues such as climate change, the financial stability of family farms and ranches, and government policy surrounding agricultural land and other natural resources are just a few of the pressures the nation's agricultural land is facing.

This must-attend conference will delve into protecting farmland, accelerating adoption of conservation practices, and ensuring the next generation of farmers and ranchers to work the land. Registration is now open. [Read more...](#)

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Save the date for the 2020 Bays and Bayous Symposium

The 2020 Bays and Bayous Symposium will be held Dec. 1-3 at the Golden Nugget Biloxi Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi. The theme for the 2020 event is "Sound Science, Sound Policy: A 2020 Vision for the Future." Bays and Bayous will begin at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 1, and end at noon on Thursday, Dec. 3.

The symposium will focus on (but is not limited to) coastal science research, education and outreach in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Scientists from universities, NGOs and government agencies will share their research findings at the event, and leaders from coastal municipalities will showcase their resilience and conservation efforts. Educators and extension professionals also will present their research and successful outreach efforts. The event is organized by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and many partners. You can find updates and additional information, including sponsorship information, on the event website at baysandbayous.org.

[Subscribe to this newsletter](#)

Donate to the Gulf Partnership's Gulf Coast Project Assistance Fund (PAF).

The Project Assistance Fund is a matching grant program for Gulf Partnership member organizations. Over the past 5 years, our partner organizations have used these small matching grants to leverage big conservation dollars. The program was funded by the Knobloch Family Foundation and administered by the Galveston Bay Foundation. The Gulf Partnership is seeking to raise funds to continue this matching grant program with support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities.

