

Hannah Sodolak

From: Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation <julia.weaver@gulfpartnership.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2020 10:39 AM
To: Hannah Sodolak
Subject: Conservation News for April 30, 2020



Conservation News for the Gulf of Mexico Region

April 30, 2020

Becky Prado joins the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation as its first Executive Director.



"We are so pleased to welcome Becky Prado as our first Executive Director. Becky understands the importance of land conservation in the Gulf of Mexico region, and she has the expertise, vision, and drive to enable us to get to the next level."

- Christine Johnson, Gulf Partnership Board Chair and President of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast

Becky Prado brings a wealth of experience to her new role. She worked in Florida state government for 16 years and most recently served as Deputy Director of the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. She has extensive knowledge of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill environmental recovery process and strong relationships with conservation colleagues across the Gulf region. She received a Master's Degree in Marine Science from the University of South Alabama and a Bachelor of Science Degree from Auburn University. She lives in Tallahassee, Florida with her family.

"The Gulf Partnership is a leader in landscape scale conservation, and I am thrilled to be joining this team. As people across the Gulf are relying on clean and vibrant natural spaces for reflection, exercise and enjoyment, the Partnership's mission touches more lives than ever. Building off the organization's accomplishments over the past ten years, I look forward to applying my experience in coastal policy, science, and administration to benefit the Gulf's natural resources for future generations," said Prado.

The Gulf Partnership is a network of 26 land trusts whose mission is to increase the pace, quality and permanence of land and water conservation. Our partner land trusts have worked together to protect more than 30,000 acres of critical coastal habitat and leveraged more than \$55 million in conservation investments since 2010. Visit gulfpartnership.org for more information.

Charitable donations rules in the CARES Act may spur giving.

The Land Trust Alliance (Alliance) continues to share resources to support land trusts during the Coronavirus emergency. According to the Alliance, the federal CARES Act includes provisions that encourage Americans to contribute to churches and charitable organizations in 2020:

- Taxpayers can claim up to \$300 for cash donations to charitable organizations on their federal income tax return, even if they do not itemize deductions;
- The 50% adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for cash contributions to charitable organizations by individuals; and

The 10% limitation for corporations is increased to 25% of taxable income. [Find out more...](#)

Mississippi Trustee Implementation Group Releases Second Draft Restoration Plan.

The Mississippi Trustee Implementation Group has released its second draft restoration plan for public review and comment until May 22, 2020. The Draft Restoration Plan II and Environmental Assessment: Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats and Oysters (PDF, 218 pages) proposes four projects for implementation.

- Wolf River Coastal Preserve Habitat Management - Dupont and Bell's Ferry Tracts
- Hancock County Coastal Preserve Habitat Management – Wachovia Tract
- Oyster Spawning Reefs in Mississippi
- Mississippi Oyster Gardening Program

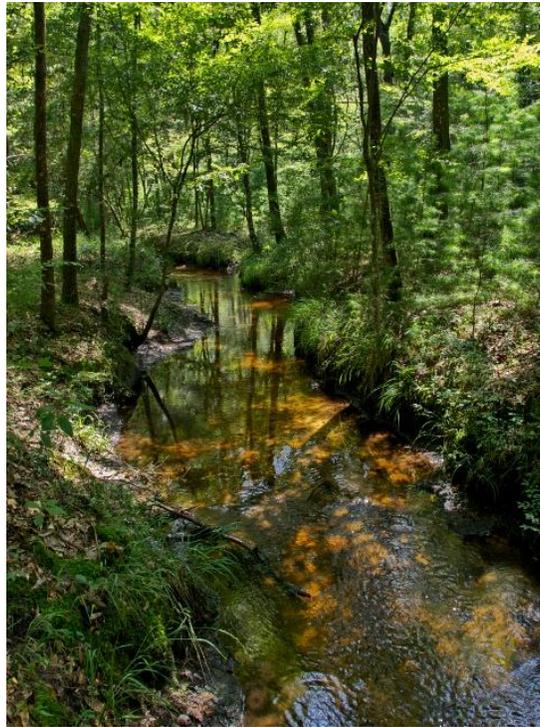
The Mississippi Trustee Implementation Group will host a public webinar on May 13, at 2:00 p.m. CT. Registration is required. Find the registration link [here](#). Public comments will be accepted through May 22, 2020. [Read more...](#)

Alabama Trustee Implementation Group (TIG) completes Gateway to Weeks Bay acquisition.

The Alabama TIG recently announced the acquisition of the East Gateway Tract in Weeks Bay. Located at the mouth of the Bay and adjacent to Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve holdings, the State of Alabama acquired the tract for the purposes of protecting and conserving marine, coastal, estuarine, and riparian habitats injured in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The tract is roughly 175 acres of critically important and diverse land that includes micro-dune habitat, tidal streams, marshland, and forested wetlands. The marsh edge provides valuable nursery habitat for a host of estuarine organisms, including shrimp, crabs, and fish. Hundreds of species of migratory and non-migratory birds use the habitat, while more than a dozen resident species of shorebirds are found at the edges and within the property, along with a representative array of wetland plants and animals.

[Read more about the partnerships that helped make the acquisition a success >>](#)

#MyHappyPlace campaign continues on social media.



#MyHappyPlace

The Gulf Partnership is participating in the Alliance's campaign #MyHappyPlace to raise awareness of land trusts and their important role saving nature for enjoyment and health during this stressful time. We are posting photos of our favorite places with the #MyHappyPlace hashtag through Giving Tuesday Now on May 5. [Read more..](#)

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...](#)

The Rookery Bay Coastal Training Program offers webinar on best practices for virtual meetings on May 4, 2020.

Has your professional world abruptly transitioned to all virtual with little warning or guidance on how to succeed? Do you facilitate meetings with your own staff, external partners, or key stakeholders? In this one hour workshop, we'll discuss and demonstrate some best practices to help you facilitate a successful, safe, and engaging virtual meeting.

The webinar will be held on Monday, May 4 from 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm EST. **There is a \$10 registration fee to attend, and space is limited.** To ensure a safe meeting, registration is required and there will be a virtual waiting room. Only registered participants will be allowed to enter the meeting. For more information call 239-530-5972 or email friends@rookerybay.org

Rookery Bay is part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and is a partnership between NOAA and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

RESTORE Council issues 10-year Deepwater Horizon Commemoration Report.

This report provides an overview of the work of the RESTORE Council and a look at next steps. Section Three includes a discussion of the Council's accomplishments with regard to the Council-Selected Component, the Spill Impact Component, the Coordination of Science and Research, and Gulf Stakeholders. The Appendix provides a list of projects and programs that were selected for funding under the initial Funded Priorities List (FPL). [Read the report...](#)

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) releases *Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Partnership Five-Year Report: Working with Private Landowners to Advance Gulf Restoration Goals*.

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Partnership was launched in 2014 to support voluntary, incentive-based private lands conservation in seven priority Gulf Coast landscapes. NFWF and NRCS have each committed \$50 million, for a planned total impact of more than \$100 million. Under the partnership, NFWF and NRCS are using their respective authorities – NFWF's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, as well as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – to support complementary projects, the synergies of which will leave lasting conservation legacies in priority landscapes across the five Gulf States.

To date, the partnership has invested more than \$73 million in projects that will restore, enhance or protect more than 250,000 acres, over half of which are wetlands. More than 15,000 acres are being enrolled in perpetual conservation easements. Read the full report [here](#).

Governor Ivey Announces National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Projects in Alabama.

Governor Kay Ivey recently announced that NFWF awarded nearly \$24 million from its Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF) to four new projects in the state of Alabama. The Alabama projects address high-priority conservation needs, including the acquisition and protection of important wetland

habitats. The number of awards from the GEBF in the state of Alabama now stands at 34, with a total value of nearly \$215 million. All projects were selected for funding following extensive consultation with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR).

Alabama received funding for two important land acquisitions:

Blackwater River South Tract Acquisition

This project, in partnership the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust, will acquire and permanently protect 2,300 acres of coastal habitat at the confluence of the Blackwater and Perdido rivers. The subject tract includes four miles of frontage along both rivers, more than 1,200 acres of wetlands, and a 90+ acre lake. Wetlands and other diverse habitat types found on the property support a variety of bird species and other wetland-dependent species.

Protection of the subject property will maintain water quality in the Perdido estuary and the living coastal and marine resources it supports. Once acquired, the property will be conveyed to the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust. The project builds upon previous acquisition investments made within the area by the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, ADCNR, and other partners in Florida which are working together to protect this important river corridor. The acquisition was facilitated by The Conservation Fund.

Lower Halls Mill Creek Protection

This \$2,687,000 project, administered by the Mobile County Commission, will acquire and permanently protect approximately 300 acres of wetland habitat in the Dog River Watershed. The target acquisition area in Lower Halls Mill Creek comprises one of the largest contiguous undeveloped areas of bottomland hardwood wetlands remaining in the watershed. Acquisition of this tract will preserve unique tidally influenced marshes in the Dog River Watershed that support many species of shellfish, finfish, birds, and other wildlife of the type directly impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Protection of these natural wetland areas will ensure continued protection of downstream water quality and wetland habitats in the Dog River Watershed.

For more information on coastal restoration projects in Alabama from all Deepwater Horizon funding sources, please visit <https://www.alabamacoastalrestoration.org/>.

Partner Spotlight

National Audubon Society marked the 10 year Deepwater Horizon anniversary with webinar on its Gulf-wide bird stewardship efforts.

The webinar covered the history of Audubon's coastal bird stewardship program on the Gulf Coast, the basics of beach-nesting birds and the threats they face, how Audubon protects birds today, and how the public can share the shore with birds during/after the COVID-19 pandemic, when Audubon staff and volunteers may be unable to conduct stewardship activities. View the webinar [here](#).



Funding Opportunities

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](#).

Upcoming Events

Heirs Property webinar offered by North Carolina State University Extension Forestry.

Family land ownership has always been a significant source of intergenerational wealth across the country. For land trusts, protecting family owned land in their service areas has many conservation and related benefits. Still, family property owned as heirs property, i.e. with multiple owners, outwardly presents obstacles for conservation. Through this session, participants will gain an understanding of the legal structure of heirs property, the values around this ownership model and opportunities for engagement with heirs property owners that support natural resource conservation and community. This engaging workshop will provide a cultural and historical context of why families own property as heirs property, demystify the legal structure of heirs property ownership, consider strategies to stabilize ownership and then look at ways land trusts can engage with heirs property owners to protect natural resources on their land the rough best practices, conservation easements, and acquisitions. Participants will learn about asset mapping as a tool for community level support and engagement with heirs property owners.

Get instructions on how to obtain Continuing Education Credits.

Session Details: May 21, 2020 1:00 pm US/Eastern Duration: 01:00

[Learn more here...](#)

Apply Key Concepts, Science, and Tools in Climate Adaptation to Your Regional Work.

Adapting to a Changing Gulf Region training is a free web-based course for natural resource managers and conservation professionals working along the Gulf Coast. Applications for the course will be accepted beginning in April. The course is being offered from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), and the American Society of Adaptation Professionals (ASAP).

[Download flyer and contact information about the course.](#)

Find out more about the [Climate Community of Practice](#).

The 2020 Gulf Coast Land Conservation Conference is slated for September 14 - 16 in Gulfport, Mississippi.

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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.



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