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

May 15, 2020

The Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation (Gulf Partnership) reaches milestone, receives 501c3 status.

The Gulf Partnership has been working to increase the pace, quality and permanence of land conservation across the Gulf of Mexico region for the past 10 years but until now it has operated under another nonprofit organization. This month the organization received its own 501c3 designation as part of a long-planned transition process.

"We are indebted to the Land Trust Alliance, The Galveston Bay Foundation, and the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain for allowing us to operate under their umbrellas during different times of our growth. They provided much needed support until we could stand on our own. We are grateful for everything they did to stand up the Partnership," said Christine Johnson, Board Chair and President of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast.

In April the Gulf Partnership announced the hiring of Becky Prado as its first Executive Director. Ms. Prado will lead the organization through its next phase, with plans to increase land conservation in the region to address critical issues such as water quality and flood protection.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and partners celebrate American wetlands month throughout May.

The celebration will feature Storytelling, web events and first-ever national wetlands podcast to highlight a natural resource vital to communities, economies and wildlife from coast to coast. There will also be a webinar on May 29, 2020 by the [Association of State Wetlands Managers](#) on the importance of wetlands to functioning floodplains in America.

Throughout the month of May the Service and conservation partners will tell stories of the importance and history of wetlands, and the people, collaborations and cutting-edge tools involved in conserving them to meet growing 21st century challenges. These stories will include:

- The Service's [Wetlands Mapper](#) as one of most important wetland resources in the country, accessed daily by thousands of businesses, local governments, states, federal agencies and organizations. Why are they visiting this page and what are they doing with this information?
 - The Service's [Status and Trends Reports](#), detailed reports on America's wetlands issued about every ten years.
- [Read more...](#)

Nominees sought for Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize Advisory Council to promote technology innovation in wildlife and habitat conservation.

The U.S. Department of the Interior seeks experts and leaders in wildlife and habitat conservation technology to advise the Secretary of the Interior as part of the newly formed Theodore Roosevelt Genius Prize Advisory Council. The Council will administer \$500,000 in prizes and advise competition winners on opportunities to pilot and implement their nascent technologies, helping them develop partnerships with conservation organizations, federal or state agencies, federally recognized tribes, private entities and research institutions with relevant expertise or interest.

The Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt will appoint 12 to 18 Council members who have expertise in one or more of the following areas: biology, economics, engineering, endangered species, invasive species, technology development, business development and management, international wildlife trafficking and trade, wildlife conservation and management, nonlethal wildlife management, social aspects of human-wildlife conflict management, or any other discipline the Secretary determines to be necessary to achieve the purposes of the Council. [Read more...](#)

Environmental Law Institute (ELI) releases overview of Deepwater Horizon restoration spending.

Thanks to our colleagues at ELI, we don't have to pore through dozens of reports and restorations plans to track restoration spending. ELI recently released a set of fact sheets that shows how much of the restoration money has been spent and how much still remains. As of March 1, 2020, around \$4.658 billion of this money has now been spent on, or designated for, specific restoration projects, programs, and planning. That means approximately \$12.015 billion remains to be spent.

Visit the [ELI website](#) to view the factsheets. Learn how the funds are being allocated across states and restoration types.

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.

"The East Gateway tract is the front porch of Weeks Bay. The acreage provides incredible habitat for fish and wildlife and invites people into the Bay. The water surrounding East Gateway is a prime fishing location with a prevalence of redfish and speckled trout," said Yael Girard, [Weeks Bay Foundation](#) Land Consultant. "The Foundation and East Gateway owners worked for years to find a way to protect the land from development. This acquisition is a tremendous achievement for conservation, recreation, and future research."

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

New studies provide evidence of effectiveness of USDA conservation practices.

Conservation practices are working to reduce runoff, improve soil quality, and mitigate contaminants in small watersheds across the country, according to USDA's scientific findings published yesterday in the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) collaborated with universities and other agencies and organizations to complete the water-quality studies featured in the journal through USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP).

The issue includes 15 peer-reviewed research papers and two feature articles, one analyzing results from watershed studies spanning 15 years of CEAP assessments in watersheds. The impacts measured include reduction of sediment and nutrients lost in runoff, improvement in soil quality and improved understanding of conservation practices to mitigate contaminant losses. Practices were assessed at plot, field, edge-of-field and watershed scales and included drainage management, conservation tillage, cover crops, buffers, irrigation, nutrient management, water management and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices. [Read more...](#)

Partner Spotlight

Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy and North Florida Land Trust receive Regional Conservation Partnership Program awards.

USDA's Natural Resources Service (NRCS) has announced 48 conservation projects across 29 states through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS will award \$206 million for these 48 RCPP projects while leveraging nearly \$300 million in partner contributions.

North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) plans to combine resources from four State and Federal programs to permanently protect 8,500 acres, restore terrestrial habitat for imperiled species on 6,000 acres and protect military training near Camp Blanding in North Central Florida. Project activities will enhance habitat for longleaf pine-specialists like gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker.

Tall Timbers' vision for the St. Marks River and Aucilla River watersheds is a pair of adjoining watersheds that contain conserved, well-managed natural habitats that allow for an increase in populations for listed wildlife species, improved water quality for residents, and economic benefits to surrounding communities. A diverse set of partners intends to enroll at least 5,000 acres in conservation easements and provide technical and financial assistance covering 15,000 acres. [Read more...](#)

Job Announcement

Judy Steckler, founding Executive Director of the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain (LTMCP), announces plans to retire. LTMCP seeks new leader.

Our friend and colleague Judy Steckler has announced her upcoming retirement from LTMCP. Judy has led LTMCP since its formation and has worked with communities, landowners, and other stakeholders to protect more than 10,000 acres across the Mississippi coastal region. In addition to growing a successful land trust, Judy has been a tireless, effective, passionate voice for land conservation in South Mississippi.

The Gulf Partnership has relied on Judy's leadership and advice throughout its 10 year history. Judy served as the chair of the Executive Committee for several years, and the LTMCP has served as the Gulf Partnership's fiscal sponsor for the past four years.

Please join us in thanking Judy for everything she has done to protect the open spaces and green places of ecological, cultural, or scenic significance in the counties of the Mississippi Coastal Plain. You can send well-wishes to judyltmcp@aol.com. Also, please see and share the job announcement for her successor below.

Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain Seeks New Executive Director

The Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain seeks an experienced Executive Director, to be based in Biloxi, MS, to lead an established 20-year Land Trust with staff of three and over 10,000 acres. Guided by the mission and strategic plan, the Executive Director organizes and leads the operational, public relations and administrative functions of the organization and ensures that the Land Trust creates and maintains financial self-sufficiency via different initiatives. As the public face of the Land Trust, the applicant must demonstrate the ability to be accepted in the community and by local officials as knowledgeable and a good partner and must be able to articulate the synergy between economic development and conservation. A successful candidate will also have knowledge of the science of conservation, land transactions and the use of conservation easements.

Please see the complete job description at <http://ltmcp.org/executivedirector/> and email your resume to jparker@harvesttrends.com. Resumes will be accepted until May 15, 2020 or until the position is filled.



In Memoriam

Mary Flint Porter, Treasurer of the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc.

Mary Flint Porter, 80, passed away peacefully in her sleep on November 18, 2019. She graduated with honors from the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she earned a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts degrees. She then went on to retire from the United Way of Central Alabama as the Assistant Vice President of Planning and Agency Relations.

Mary met her late husband, Dr. John F. Porter, Jr., through her love of birding. They married in 2006 and lived on Dauphin Island, where they enjoyed the most beautiful sunsets on their back deck and of course, the birds along the marsh. Mary served as treasurer for the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc, the nonprofit started by her husband.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc. (DIBS), St Francis Episcopal Church on Dauphin Island or the charitable organization of your choice. DIBS is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the continuing protection of important migratory bird habitat on the island. Donations there may be submitted by mail to P.O. Box 1295, Dauphin Island, AL 36528.

Funding Opportunities

***New!* National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation Program invites proposals.**

The ConocoPhillips SPIRIT of Conservation program is inviting applications for competitive grant funding to be awarded through the 2020 funding cycle. Pre-proposals are due on June 18, 2020.

The purpose of this funding is to restore grassland, wetland, sage-steppe, and coastal habitats for birds; protect key habitats for birds; and provide technical assistance to improve bird habitat conservation practices on working lands, with an emphasis in focal geographies. The program is a partnership among ConocoPhillips, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Approximately \$1,300,000 is expected to be available for grant awards in 2020.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects must occur in a major migratory route ranging from the northern slope of Alaska to the north-south axis of the central United States, including the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast. Priority states include Alaska, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. [Read more...](#)

***New!* NFWF's Bring Back the Natives program announces 2020 Request for Proposals.**

Pre-Proposal Due Date: June 4, 2020 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time

Full Proposal Due Date: July 30, 2020 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is requesting proposals to restore, protect and enhance native fish species of conservation concern, especially in areas on or adjacent to federal agency lands. Up to \$510,000 in funding is available through support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

In 2020, the Bring Back the Natives program will provide funding to projects that produce measureable outcomes for native fish species of conservation concern. Priority projects will address the leading factors in native fish species decline such as habitat alteration, environmental change and invasive species. Projects benefiting one or more of the following native fish species and focal geographies are priorities for funding. Activities referenced in a NFWF business plan or a well-developed, comprehensive conservation strategy targeting these geographies/species will be most competitive.

- Pacific lamprey, Chinook salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River Basin.
- Salmon in the Central and Northern California coasts.
- Intermountain West native trout and char including Yellowstone/Snake River, Colorado River, San Juan, and Greenback cutthroat trout, bull trout, Apache trout, and Gila trout.
- Native desert fishes in the arid southwest, including sucker, dace, pupfish, and other species, especially those with overlapping distributions with other native fish species of conservation priority.
- Great Lakes native fishes, including lake sturgeon, northern pike and eastern brook trout.
- Southern and southeastern native fish, especially endemic species of concern in the Cumberland, Tennessee and Mobile (Alabama/Coosa) River drainages.
- Native fish of eastern U.S. rivers, especially river herring and American shad in the Chesapeake and Delaware watersheds.
- National Scope – See Innovation within the Priority Activities on our website

Read the full announcement [here](#).

***New!* United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announces Conservation Innovation Grants funding cycle.**

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are competitive grants that drive public and private sector innovation in resource conservation. CIG projects inspire creative problem solving that boosts production

on farms, ranches, and private forests - ultimately, they improve water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat.

CIG is a competitive grants program that supports development, testing and research of conservation technologies, practices, systems and approaches on private lands. Grantees must match the CIG investment at least one to one.

All U.S.-based non-Federal entities and individuals are eligible to apply. Complete funding announcement information can be accessed through the [Conservation Innovation Grants webpage](#).

***New!* Restore America's Estuaries seeks proposals for the NEP Coastal Watersheds Grant Program.**

This grant program funds projects within the geographic areas shown [here](#) and supports the following Congressionally-set priorities:

- Loss of key habitats resulting in significant impacts on fisheries and water quality such as seagrass, mangroves, tidal and freshwater wetlands, forested wetlands, kelp beds, shellfish beds, and coral reefs;
- Recurring harmful algae blooms;
- Unusual or unexplained marine mammal mortalities;
- Proliferation or invasion of species that limit recreational uses, threaten wastewater systems, or cause other ecosystem damage;
- Flooding and coastal erosion that may be related to sea level rise, changing precipitation, or salt marsh, seagrass, or wetland degradation or loss;
- Impacts of nutrients and warmer water temperatures on aquatic life and coastal ecosystems, including low dissolved oxygen conditions in estuarine waters; and
- Contaminants of emerging concern found in coastal and estuarine waters such as pharmaceuticals, personal care products, and microplastics.

Project Selection and Subaward Process:

RAE will conduct an annual solicitation with approximately \$1 million awarded each year. Each subaward will range between \$75,000 and \$250,000, resulting in roughly three to ten total subawards per funding year depending on Congressional appropriations.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to participate in an informational webinar, which will occur on Wednesday, June 3, 1:00-3:00 pm ET/noon – 2:00 pm CT/11:00 am – 1:00 pm MT/10:00 am – noon PT. The webinar will be recorded for those unable to participate. To participate, please register [here](#). *Letters of Intent are due August 7, 2020.* [Read more...](#)

***New!* Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is accepting proposals for Gulf of Mexico Energy Securities Act (GOMESA) funding.**

Projects must take place within Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties. Projects must meet one or more of the following criteria: projects and activities for the purposes of coastal protection, including conservation, coastal restoration, hurricane protection and infrastructure directly affected by coastal wetland losses; mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife or natural resources; implementation of a federally-approved marine, coastal or comprehensive conservation management plan; mitigation of the impact of Outer Continental Shelf activities through the funding of onshore infrastructure projects; and planning assistance and the administrative costs of compliance.

The deadline for proposals to be submitted is 5 p.m. on June 30, 2020. Visit the [DMR website](#) for more information on the proposal format and submission guidelines.

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. [Read more...](#)

Upcoming Events

Coastal Training Program Presents: How to Talk About Climate Change (even during a pandemic)

May 19, 2020 from 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm EDT

Join this one hour Zoom webinar to learn about strategic framing.

Strategic framing is a research-based approach to communication that engages audiences in thinking productively about how they can participate in creating or supporting climate change solutions. Although focused on climate change, the approach may be applied to any type of science communication. We'll also touch on preliminary expert guidance on how to communicate about climate change during the height of the COVID-19 crisis.

To ensure a safe webinar, registration is required. Only registered participants will be allowed to enter the meeting. **To register, call 239-530-5972 or email friends@rookerybay.org**

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.

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.

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...](#)

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 [www.gulfcoastlandconservation.com](#)

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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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