

COASTAL AMERICA 2011 AWARDS PROGRAM NOMINATION FORM

Please circle the award type (only one) you are recommending this team for:

Partnership Award - Spirit Award - Special Recognition Award

1. Full Name of Nominated Team: The Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership (GCRP)

2. Nominator Contact Information:

Name: Ryan Fikes

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3. What is the lead Federal Agency (if any) for this project? (or lead organization for Special Recognition Awards): National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center

4. Please provide a brief abstract overview of the project you are nominating (1 page max.)

Include a short abstract (200 words max) describing the project, including its objectives, scope and longevity. Also, address how the project supports Coastal America's mission and goals. Questions to consider are: How does the project demonstrate the "value added" of a partnership effort? (I.e. how did the partners collaborate to accomplish what a single entity could not accomplish alone?) This section should also describe how the partners have worked with the Regional Implementation Team in the development of the project.

The Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership (GCRP) is a regional multi-year partnership that was established in 2001 between the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program (CRP), the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program's Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) Program, and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation (GMF). The purpose of the partnership is to strengthen conservation efforts by supporting on-the-ground projects to restore coastal marine habitats, benefit living marine resources, and foster local stewardship of the sites. The Gulf of Mexico Foundation continues this successful collaboration in order to expand restoration of habitats that are critical to the sustainability the natural resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Basin; and to continue to expand our public education and outreach efforts to broaden participation in restoration activities, further developing a conservation ethic at the community level. To date, the GCRP has funded more than 75 community-based restoration projects. In total more than \$3 million has been funded towards these restoration projects, of which an additional \$5.5 million has been leveraged in matching contributions from project partners. This match includes

nearly 50,000 contributed volunteer hours. In total, more than 15,000 acres of coastal habitat have been restored as part of these partnership projects.

This project/partnership supports the mission and goals of the Coastal America Program in every sense. The partnership seeks to place projects on-the-ground in order to produce measurable results in restoring and conserving habitat. Not only does the partnership address critical environmental issues, but it also strives to include communities and instill a sense of environmental stewardship through hands-on participation in projects. This partnership brings federal, state, and local government, academic institutions, for-profit and non-profit partners, and private citizens together with a unified vision of restoration and preservation of critical coastal habitats their associated natural resources.

5. Project Need and Resource Benefits/Outputs (2 pages max.) Provide a summary of the project background and the expected resource benefits. For restoration projects, describe any long-term monitoring/management program. For education and outreach projects, describe how the project supports the conservation goals of the partnering organizations. If appropriate, include a description of how the project supports existing Federal, State, and local conservation plans, projects and programs.

Coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico have the fastest growing population in the United States. In addition, coastal development in the US Territories of the Caribbean - Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, has increased significantly within the past ten years. With growth come added pressures on natural habitats and living resources. Now is the time to advocate conservation ethics and strategies to ensure critical habitat health, productivity, and sustainability. Built on conservation of "local" living resources and habitats, the GCRP network comprises a regional vision and approach to conservation. As a collaborative initiative to focus federal, state, local, and private efforts on these important sites, the GCRP recognizes the importance of community awareness and involvement in conserving natural resources.

The primary purpose of the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program is to repair, improve, and create coastal aquatic habitats essential to the population sustainability the Gulf of Mexico's living marine resources, such as fisheries, birds, and benthic communities. The EPA's Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) Program is a Gulf-wide network of unique habitat areas that are ecologically significant to the continued production of fish, wildlife, and other natural resources. The primary purpose of the GEMS program is to conserve, restore, enhance, and create Gulf of Mexico habitats. The mission of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation is to promote and facilitate conservation of the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico and its resources through conservation, restoration, education, and training. Through the melding of these three programs and their collective missions the GCRP has provided tremendous value to the Gulf Region and those that live and work on its coast.

The partnership also benefits from the experience and momentum gained from previous GCRP projects. A multi-agency steering committee has been working effectively to guide the partnership in soliciting projects, assisting in project development, reviewing and selecting projects for funding, ensuring required federal, state, and local permits and assurances are acquired, and monitoring project progress and

compliance. Through the work of the steering committee members, project quality and community outreach efforts have increased substantially over the past ten years. There is a broad diversity of groups involved in the partnership projects, including school children and other community volunteers, universities, nonprofit groups, business and industry, and coastal planning organizations, such as the National Estuary Program and National Estuarine Research Reserves. Collaboration between the partners, many of which have their own public outreach programs to link with the GCRP, will result in long-term stewardship of the restored resources and help generate a community conservation ethic. In order for the GCRP to reach its full potential we will continue to bring in additional partners and stakeholders from around the Gulf Region.

The ecologically significant habitats in the Gulf of Mexico and the living resources that depend on them benefit tremendously from the collaboration of the Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership. The Gulf of Mexico Foundation will continue to lead further development of the GCRP in a manner that best addresses a regional approach to restore coastal marine habitats and benefit the natural resources. We will continue to promote the partnership by conducting outreach activities and increasing training opportunities for projects and proposal development, and we will continue to seek additional project partners and funding opportunities to further our conservation and restoration efforts throughout the region. Our goal is to take action towards reversing the downward trend in habitat loss and increase the attention on the growing need to preserve and protect America's Gulf Coast.

6. Partnership Functioning - Funding & Other Support (1 page max.) Provide an overview description of each of the partners involved in the project. Include a breakout of the financial and in-kind support provided by each of the individual partners along with a one sentence summary of each element's contribution(s).

Gulf of Mexico Foundation (In-Kind funding \$50 – 100K/year)

The GMF is currently coordinating the GCRP and administers the overall project funds, including subawards to sponsors of individual restoration projects, coordinate and chair the steering committee, provide staff to facilitate the project identification/selection processes and to monitor implementation of individual projects, offer technical input on restoration activities and monitoring plan development, and promote the partnership by highlighting education and outreach opportunities, training workshops, and media events.

NOAA Restoration Center (Grant & Administrative funding \$350 – 400K/year)

The NOAA RC is an active participant in this partnership and conduct activities including: participating on the steering committee; assisting in evaluating the processes for project identification, review, and selection; providing technical assistance to project partners, such as project and monitoring plan development; monitoring individual projects for overall success; and overseeing the management of NOAA funds contributed to the partnership.

Role of the Gulf of Mexico Program (Grant & Administrative funding \$45 – 180K/year)

The EPA GoMP is an active participant in this partnership and conduct activities including: participating on the steering committee; assisting in evaluating the processes for project identification, review, and

selection; providing technical assistance to project partners, such as those with GEMS locations; monitoring individual projects for overall success; and overseeing the management of EPA funds contributed to the partnership.

Role of the States and Territory Partners (In-Kind Contributions of Time)

The state GEMS managers and Caribbean resource managers play a vital role in the partnership by: participating as members of the steering committee; serving as liaisons to the local communities and sister agencies in their state/territory; soliciting project proposals; assisting in meeting the required non-federal match requirements; and providing technical expertise for projects, including monitoring.

Role of Community Partners (In-Kind/3rd Party Matching Contributions \$350 – 700K/year)

The state and community partners are the foundation of the regional partnership, and over the course of the GCRP the GMF has developed an extensive list of community partners that continue to support the GCRP well beyond their funding period for their project(s), and often continue their work directly through the NOAA RC afterwards or are awarded funding through an alternate CRP program.

Role of the GCRP Steering Committee (In-Kind Contributions of Time)

The steering committee will be tasked with the following: providing guidance for implementation of the partnership; assisting in outreach to identify potential projects; establishing criteria for selecting proposals; participating in review of proposals and selection of projects; and provide technical assistance during monitoring and project implementation.

7. Team Partners: List all partners and identify project/team leads with an asterisk (*). Please provide all contact information using the format as shown in question 2 above.

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IMPORTANT: If approved; only team members identified in this form will be eligible to receive the Coastal America Award. Please ensure that you correctly identify ALL TEAM MEMBERS.

Additional Information: All nominations must be submitted to the Coastal America National Coordinating Office by August 1, 2011. Winners will be selected and awardees will be notified in accordance with the published milestone schedule. Project photos are welcomed as accompaniments to Award Nomination forms. All materials should be sent via email to the Award Program Coordinator Carli Bertrand at: [Carli.Bertrand@usda.gov] 202-401-9922.