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Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Nets 1,433 Bags of Trash

More than 1,900 volunteers scoured Mississippi's bays, bayous and rivers picking up marine debris at 55 designated cleanup sites during the 22nd annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, part of the International Coastal Cleanup—the world's largest volunteer effort to clean up the marine environment. During this year's Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, **1,983** volunteers picked up **1,433** bags of trash, including **66** bags of recyclables, along **144** miles of Coastal waterways in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties as well as one site in Pearl River County. The cleanup is organized by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force. The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup refocused its efforts this year to clean inland areas and waterways instead of beaches and barrier islands and expanded its reach through its partnership with Mississippi Power's Renew Our Rivers program, cleaning three sites on the days leading up to the cleanup and two additional sites on cleanup day.

All told, 1,983 volunteers collected 140,163 pounds of trash including 544 tires—that's 70 tons of marine debris. This included items too large to fit in trash bags such as household appliances and remnants of homes and piers washed away during Katrina. More than 31 tons of Katrina debris was removed from the Hancock County marshlands alone using heavy equipment as part of the Renew Our Rivers program. Other items found were: IV bag, parking barricade, car door, shotgun shells, cigarette filters, beer bottles, weight lifting equipment, construction material, gun range target, couch, rolls of carpet and padding, cooler, vacuum cleaners, toilet, part of a boat, mattress, propane tanks, pressure washer, bicycle, baseball bat, boat motor, TV set, desks and artifacts from St. Clare's Church and school lost in Katrina, and a portable meth lab, which was dismantled by the Hancock County Sheriff's Department. There were four animal entanglements reported in Harrison County and three in Jackson County. As part of a coastal cleanup pilot project, volunteers collecting trash at four sites in Harrison County separated out and filled **66** bags with recyclable items.

During the ICC, hundreds of thousands of people across the world spend three hours combing the beaches and waterways to pick up trash that pollutes our waters, harms marine life, hampers tourism and poses health risks to beach-goers. During last year's ICC about 500,000 volunteers worldwide removed debris from more than 14,800 miles of shoreline spanning 108 different nations. They collected 7.4 million pounds of debris.

"Mississippians value their coastal resources now more than ever before," said Lauren Thompson, state coordinator of the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and public relations director for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. "Our coastal shoreline and waterways are cleaner and safer for all to enjoy thanks to the good stewardship of more than 1,900 volunteers who devoted their free time to picking up debris."

The mission of the International Coastal Cleanup is to remove debris from shorelines, bayous, bays, rivers, waterways and beaches; collect valuable information on the amount and types of debris collected; educate people on the issue of marine debris; and use the data collected to effect positive change. Volunteers clean beaches and collect information on what they find, using the International Coastal Cleanup Data Card, so that sources of marine debris can be targeted for education or pollution prevention campaigns. State coordinators mail the data cards to the Ocean Conservancy in Washington, D.C. where the data is tabulated. Over the years, data from the cleanups have been used to enact local, state, national, and even international legislation and agreements.

After the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, Bob Taylor, owner of the High Cotton Grill, Half Shell Oyster House, and Southern Flavor Events, treated 400 volunteers to a free lunch of hotdogs, hamburgers, chips, fruit and cold drinks served by their staff from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Ken Combs Pier parking area at Courthouse Road and Hwy. 90 in Gulfport. Sysco, Gulf Coast Produce, Sara Lee, Cabot Cheese and Coast Coca-Cola Bottling Co. also provided food and drink for the event. All volunteers filling out a data card identifying the types of debris collected received a meal ticket for the free lunch at the pier and a re-usable fold-up tote from Chevron Pascagoula Refinery.

In Hancock County, the Office of Congressman Gene Taylor and the Bay St. Louis Rotary Club treated volunteers to hotdogs at a cookout held at the Depot District in Bay St. Louis while Brooks BB's Snowballs provided snowballs. In Jackson County, more than 700 volunteers received a free barbecue lunch of pulled pork and beef brisket, chips and drinks at the Estuarine Education Center at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gautier courtesy of The Shed Barbeque & Blues Joint and Chevron Pascagoula Refinery. Volunteers who cleaned the beach and filled out data cards, documenting what litters our shores and waterways, received a re-usable fold-up tote, compliments of Chevron Pascagoula Refinery.

"Without our partners, sponsors and volunteers this event wouldn't happen," Thompson said. "The Department of Marine Resources would like to thank the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force, our sponsors, and the cleanup coordinators, zone captains, and volunteers who came out in full force to participate in this educational and prevention effort on behalf of our marine environment."

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup is made possible by the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force, which includes representatives from Ashman & Son, LLC Contractors; Chevron Pascagoula Refinery; City of Biloxi; City of Gulfport; City of Moss Point; City of Ocean Springs; City of Pascagoula; Coastal Rivers; Delbert Hosemann Secretary of State; DMR Marine Patrol; Eco-Tours of South Mississippi; Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; Gulf Islands National Seashore; Hancock County Beautification Committee; Hancock County Board of Supervisors; Hancock County Chamber of Commerce; Hancock County Solid Waste; Harrison County Beautification Commission; Harrison County Board of Supervisors; Harrison County Sand Beach Department; Harrison County Sheriff's Department; Harrison County Utility Authority; Heritage Trails Partnership; Jackson County Board of Supervisors; Jackson County Chamber of Commerce; Jackson County Solid Waste Department; Jackson County 4-H Club; Keep Mississippi Beautiful; Keesler Air Force Base; Mississippi Air National Guard CRTC-Gulfport; Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium; Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service; Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality; Mississippi Department of Marine Resources; Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; Mississippi Power; Mississippi State University Coastal Research & Extension Center; Naval Construction Battalion Center; North Gulfport Community Land Trust; Office of Congressman Gene Taylor; Renew Our Rivers; Rotary International District 6840; Sea Coast Echo; University of Southern Mississippi-Gulf Coast Research Laboratory; Waste Management.

Coastal Cleanup Nets 1,433 Bags of Trash – page 3 of 4

This year's sponsors are as follows:

SEA TURTLE: BP; Chevron Pascagoula Refinery; High Cotton Grill; Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality; Mississippi Department of Marine Resources; Mississippi Power

SHARK: Beverage Association of Mississippi; Cable One Advertising; Delta Sanitation of Mississippi, LLC; Mississippi Media; Ocean Conservancy; The Shed Barbeque & Blues Joint; The Sun Herald; Waste Management

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COBIA: Biloxi-D'Iberville Press; K99FM, Magic 93.7, 92.5 The Beat and News Radio 104.9; Keep Mississippi Beautiful; Knight Abbey Printing & Direct Mail; Ocean Springs Gazette; Sea Coast Echo; WLOX-TV 13

MULLET: Academy Sports + Outdoors; Ashman & Son, LLC Contractors; BB's Bar-B-Que & Snak Shak; Cabot Cheese; Coast Electric; The Dive Shop; Fayard & Sons

The preliminary cleanup site statistics for Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties are as follows:

Hancock County: 17 sites, 323 volunteers collected 355 bags of trash

•Hancock County-3 rd Marsh Area	56 volunteers and 63 bags
•Hancock County-Jourdan River (McLeod Park to Bayou LaCroix)	9 volunteers and 3 bags
•Hancock County-Jourdan River Shores	2 volunteers and 1 bags
•Ansley-Hancock County marshlands and Herron Bay Estates (cleaned Oct. 13; Renew Our Rivers project)	47 volunteers and 31 tons
•Bay St. Louis-Bay Waveland Yacht Club	20 volunteers and 27 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Bayou LaCroix (both sides of Hwy 603)	4 volunteers and 6 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Blue Meadow Road Bayou back to Paradise Lane Bridge	2 volunteers and 2 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Breath's and Watts Bayous (Lazy River Estates)	4 volunteers and 5 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Cedar Point Launch	12 volunteers and 16 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Jourdan River Estates (4 canals)	18 volunteers and 25 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Bay Marina	4 volunteers and 7 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Sycamore Street Marsh	26 volunteers and 30 bags
•Bay St. Louis-Garden Isles	5 volunteers and 15 bags
•Diamondhead-Diamondhead Marina and Canal/Rotten Bayou	30 volunteers and 30 bags
•Waveland-St. Clare's Church	20 volunteers and 20 bags
•Lakeshore-Bayou Caddy	60 volunteers and 100 bags
•Old Lazy River	4 volunteers and 5 bags

Harrison County: 16 sites, 740 volunteers collected 536 bags of trash

•Biloxi-Deer Island (cleaned Oct. 14; Renew Our Rivers project)	94 volunteers and 6 tons
•Biloxi-Forrest Avenue Pier	10 volunteers and 15 bags
•Biloxi-Hiller Park	66 volunteers and 62 bags
•Biloxi-Keegan Bayou (military assigned)	21 volunteers and 26 bags
•Biloxi-Popps Ferry Bridge Boat Launch	55 volunteers and 58 bags
•D'Iberville-D'Iberville Boat Launch	114 volunteers and 51 bags
•D'Iberville-Fountain Pier	24 volunteers and 24 bags
•D'Iberville-Tuxachanie Waterway	8 volunteers and 28 bags
•Gulfport-Dedeaux Park (off Three Rivers Road)	80 volunteers and 65 bags
•Gulfport-Gulfport Lake (military assigned)	15 volunteers and 29 bags

•Gulfport-James Hill Park	54 volunteers and 28 bags
•Gulfport-Kremer Landing	49 volunteers and 79 bags
•Gulfport-Lower Turkey Creek	36 volunteers and 50 bags
•Long Beach-Red Creek	14 volunteers and 10 bags
•Pass Christian-Hwy 90	7 volunteers and 11 bags
•Turkey Creek Waterways, East (closed to public; Renew Our Rivers project)	93 volunteers and 11 tons

Jackson County: 21 sites, 805 volunteers collected 542 bags of trash

•Jackson County-Bluff Creek	20 volunteers and 25 bags
•Jackson County-Grand Bay NERR (Bayou Heron)	16 volunteers and 20 bags
•Escatawpa-Pascagoula River (cleaned Oct. 15; Renew Our Rivers project)	61 volunteers and 4.65 tons
•Gautier-Gautier City Park	20 volunteers and 9 bags
•Gautier-Graveline Road/Shepard State Park	91 volunteers and 65 bags
•Gautier-Indian Point/Sioux Bayou (closed to public)	10 volunteers and 15 bags
•Gautier-Mary Walker waterways	12 volunteers and 16 bags
•Gautier-Pine Island/West Pascagoula River (closed to public)	8 volunteers and 12 bags
•Gautier-West Pascagoula River Bridge (closed to public)	51 volunteers and 41 bags
•Moss Point-Bellview St. Boat Launch & Park	28 volunteers and 8 bags
•Moss Point-Hwy 63 Boat Launch	24 volunteers and 13 bags
•Moss Point-I-10 Boat Launch	31 volunteers and 18 bags
•Ocean Springs-Graveline Bayou Boat Launch & Pier	82 volunteers and 52 bags
•Ocean Springs-Davis Bayou (GINS)	153 volunteers and 69 bags
•Ocean Springs-Fort Bayou Boat Launch and Waterway	34 volunteers and 8 bags
•Ocean Springs-Twelve Oaks	18 volunteers and 11 bags
•Pascagoula-I.G. Levy Park, North	46 volunteers and 27 bags
•Pascagoula-Lower Pascagoula River Islands (closed to public)	10 volunteers and 14 bags
•Pascagoula-Old Spanish Fort	19 volunteers and 11 bags
•Pascagoula-The Point (closed to public)	20 volunteers and 20 bags
•Pascagoula-Pascagoula Causeway and River Park	51 volunteers and 88 bags

Pearl River County: 115 volunteers collected 2 tons of trash

•Picayune-Boley Creek (closed to public; Renew Our Rivers project)	115 volunteers and 2 tons
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PHOTO CAPTIONS

#1 Members of the U.S. Navy pull tires from the woods during the Renew Our Rivers cleanup at Turkey Creek in Gulfport as a partnered effort with the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup. Volunteers found more than 400 tires dumped in the woods off Rippy Road.

(Photo courtesy of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources)

#2 Sung Kwon of Biloxi fills out her data card as her husband collects debris at Keegan Bayou in Biloxi.

(Photo courtesy of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources)

#3 Erica Painter, left, places trash into a bag held by Jordan Sikkema near Bayou Caddy in Lakeshore.

(Photo courtesy of Sarah Underwood)

#4 Students of Our Lady Academy Honor Society and Pass Christian High School Jaynie Keorgoesien, Sarah Anderson, Erin Gibson, Renee Hotard, Ali Goscinski, Hannah Wikoff, Courtney Geroux, Kendell Ritten, Holly Raymond clean the Sycamore Street marsh area in Bay St. Louis.

(Photo courtesy of Sarah Underwood)

#5 Members of the Shiloh Baptist Church display debris they collected while cleaning up at the Hwy 63 boat launch in Moss Point. (Photo courtesy of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources)