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GOVERNOR BARBOUR ANNOUNCES MISSISSIPPI MARINE DEBRIS TASK FORCE IS RECIPIENT OF 2004 GOVERNOR'S TAKE PRIDE APPRECIATION AWARD

(Biloxi, Miss.) – Governor Haley Barbour today honored the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force with a 2004 Governor's Take Pride Appreciation Award. Robbie Wilbur, State Director of Take Pride in America, presented the plaque to the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force during the Oct. 19 Commission on Marine Resources meeting in the auditorium of the Bolton State Office Building in Biloxi.

"Mississippians are known for their generosity and their volunteer efforts on behalf of others. I am proud of the work the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force has accomplished in cleaning up our coast. Their hard work and their spirit of cooperation deserve being recognized by receiving the 2004 Governor's Take Pride Appreciation Award," said Governor Barbour.

Take Pride in America® honors outstanding volunteer efforts through a variety of awards, including recognition by elected officials. The Governor's Take Pride Appreciation Award is presented by Governors to the group or individual volunteer in their state that best promotes the mission of Take Pride in America.

"The cornerstone of Take Pride is the belief that individuals need to be engaged to take responsibility for improving their community environment," said Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton. "One by one, exemplary individuals, like recipients of the Governor's Take Pride Appreciation Awards, are turning this philosophy of cooperative conservation into action."

A partnership of 25 government agencies, military, academic and environmental organizations and businesses, the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force sponsors the annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup in Jackson, Harrison and Hancock counties. Through its coordination of this event, the task force raises awareness and educates the public on the detrimental effects of marine debris on marine and coastal wildlife. Held in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy, the annual event draws more than 4,000 volunteers. Last year, Mississippi ranked sixth in the nation in number of volunteers participating in this worldwide cleanup effort on behalf of the marine environment.

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The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources chairs the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force, which is made up of representatives from BFI; Cellular South, Chevron Pascagoula Refinery; Disposall Inc.; Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; Gulf Islands National Seashore; Hancock County Chamber of Commerce; Hancock Insurance; Harrison County Beautification; Harrison County Sand Beach Department; Home Depot; Jackson County Solid Waste; Keesler Air Force Base; Mississippi Air National Guard CRTC - Gulfport; Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium; Mississippi Department of Marine Resources; Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; Mississippi State University Coastal Research & Extension Center; National Marine Fisheries Service; Naval Construction Battalion Center; Naval Station Pascagoula; Office of Congressman Gene Taylor; Office of the Mississippi Secretary of State; Outback Steakhouse; and Sea Coast Echo.

“Volunteers across the country are taking the Take Pride message to heart,” said Marti Allbright, Take Pride in America executive director. “I’m delighted to join Governor Barbour in applauding the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force’s service to our public lands.”

Take Pride in America is a national partnership that recruits, supports and recognizes volunteers who work to improve our public parks, forests, grasslands, reservoirs, wildlife refuges, cultural and historic sites, beaches and shorelines, and other recreation areas. With 100 Charter Partners, Take Pride involves federal, state and local governments; conservation, youth and recreation groups; and top national corporations and organizations. For more information visit: www.TakePride.gov or for more information on the Mississippi effort, access: www.TakePrideinMS.org.

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