

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

Welcome Reception

Standing in the shadow of the Biloxi Lighthouse on U.S. Highway 90, the Biloxi Visitors Center, which opened in July 2011, fuses the city's architectural heritage with state-of-the-art technology and multi-media exhibits to showcase the Biloxi of yesterday and today. The Biloxi Lighthouse, erected in 1848, was one of the first cast-iron lighthouses in the South. It is the city's signature landmark and has become a post-Katrina symbol of the city's resolve and resilience.

Brian Margavich, Biloxi Lighthouse keeper, will be on hand to answer any questions and take small groups (limit 10 per group) to the top of the lighthouse. If you prefer to savor the view from afar, watch live camera feed from the top of the lighthouse on the first floor of the Visitors Center.

GOLDEN NUGGET BUS LOBBY

5:15 p.m. Meet shuttle bus in the lower level bus lobby. The Visitors Center is a short ride from the hotel and the shuttle bus will make two trips.

BILOXI VISTORS CENTER

5:30 - 8:30 p.m. **Welcome Reception**
Emcee: **Steven Dick**, district manager, Mississippi Power

Opening Remarks

Mayor A. J. Holloway, City of Biloxi

Ed Holland, president and CEO, Mississippi Power

Trudy Fisher, executive director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

David O'Neill, vice president, Conservation Programs, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

8:15 p.m. Return shuttle bus service to Golden Nugget begins

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

OPTIONAL: Scenic Bridge Walk/Exercise Opportunity

Enjoy a healthy excursion on your own or join this early morning group bridge walk led by a local Ocean Springs resident. Conveniently starting at the front of the Golden Nugget Casino/Hotel, the Biloxi-Ocean Springs Bridge route is protected from vehicle traffic by concrete barriers and wide enough for four people across. The 3.19-mile round-trip bridge walk offers scenic views of the Mississippi Sound, Back Bay of Biloxi, City of Ocean Springs, City of Biloxi and Deer Island.

Tour Guide: **Courtney Stuart**, environmental specialist, Mississippi Power

BUS LOBBY

6:15 a.m. Meet at the bus lobby entrance to enjoy a scenic walk before breakfast. For the sake of time, this will only be a partial loop (~1.6 miles, 30 minutes).

PRE-FUNCTION AREA

7:30 a.m. **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

GRAND BALLROOM A, B

8:15 a.m. **Greetings and Introductions**

Chris Hobson, senior vice president and chief environmental officer, Southern Company
Amanda Bassow, director, Eastern Partnership Office, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

9 a.m. **Keynote: Mississippi's Natural Heritage**

Enjoy some highlights of the high quality habitats and diverse wildlife the Mississippi Gulf Coast has to offer. These natural resources are one of the key driving forces that support and sustain economic development throughout the region.

Dr. Mark LaSalle, director, Pascagoula River Audubon Center

9:30 a.m. **America's Longleaf – Celebrating 5 Years**

America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative – Accomplishments and Road Ahead

This session will provide an overview of the evolution of the America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, its major accomplishments to date, and the Initiative's future vision to reach its goal of restoring 8 million acres of longleaf pine across its historic range. Two case studies will be highlighted that demonstrate key strategies for large-scale longleaf pine ecosystem restoration: 1) the development of partnerships and strategic plans around Significant Geographic Areas (SGAs); and, 2) engaging commercial timber owners in longleaf restoration.

Moderator: **Clay Ware**, Longleaf Pine Recovery coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Case Study 1: DeSoto National Forest/Camp Shelby SGA

Panelists will discuss what makes the region an SGA, why they are invested in longleaf pine restoration, and how partnering with area stakeholders to develop a strategic plan helps achieve their goals and advance conservation across the landscape.

Panelists: **Becky Stowe**, manager, Terrestrial Program, The Nature Conservancy

Maj. Kenneth Bradley, director, Environmental Programs, MS Army National Guard

Ben Battle, district ranger, DeSoto National Forest

Dr. Glenn Hughes, extension forestry professor, MSU Extension Service

Case Study 2: The Coastal Headwaters Project

Resource Management Service, LLC and The Conservation Fund are partnering to develop a first-of-its-kind opportunity to engage a major commercial timberland owner to convert a commercial slash/loblolly pine forest to a vibrant longleaf pine working forest ecosystem. This presentation will provide an overview of the Coastal Headwaters Project and discuss how it may serve as a model for how large forest landowners can play a significant role in the restoration of longleaf pine ecosystems across their range.

Jimmy Bullock, senior vice president, Forest Sustainability, Resource Management Services, LLC

10:45 a.m. **BREAK**

11:15 a.m.

Protecting our Coastal Birds*Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund Update*

Following consultation with state and federal resource agencies, NFWF announced in November 2013 initial projects to receive funding from the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF). More than \$112 million was obligated for 22 projects designed to protect, restore, and enhance natural and living resources across the Gulf Coast. This presentation will provide an update on the GEBF, including an overview of two recently selected projects that will engage volunteers to help protect beach-nesting birds and their nests along the Florida Panhandle and Mississippi coasts.

Mike Sharp, director, Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Gulf Coastal Bird Conservation: Trends and Needs

This presentation will highlight the importance of the Gulf Coast as a confluence for multiple flyways, trends affecting Gulf coastal bird populations, and specific conservation needs for the region.

Moderator: **Emily Jo Williams**, chief, Migratory Bird Program - Southeast Region,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Coastal Bird Conservation Panel Discussion

Panelists will discuss strategies being implemented and what further efforts are required to address the conservation needs identified to protect and enhance coastal bird populations across the coast.

Panelists: **Julie Wraithmell**, director, Wildlife Conservation, Audubon Florida
Margo Zdravkovic, co-founder and president, Conservian
Kacy Ray, manager, Gulf Conservation Program, American Bird Conservancy
Dr. Mark Woodrey, senior research associate, MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center

GRAND BALLROOM E, F

12:30 p.m.

LUNCH**Special Presentation: Health of the Gulf Three Years after Deepwater Horizon Spill**

Jamie Miller, executive director, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Ben Scaggs, director, U.S. EPA Gulf of Mexico Program

Dr. Homer Wilkes, director, Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Team, NRCS

1:40 p.m.

BREAK

2 - 2:50 p.m.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS**GRAND BALLROOM C**

2 p.m.

Building a Good Map: SGA Planning for Longleaf Restoration and Management

Panelists will share examples of current mapping and data collection efforts that identify where longleaf pine exists and its condition across the landscape. Discussion will focus on how these efforts, and other models, might support the development of a mapping framework that could facilitate longleaf restoration strategic planning and accomplishments tracking across SGAs.

Moderator: **Troy Ettel**, director, forest conservation, The Nature Conservancy

Panelists: **Carl Petrick**, ecosystems staff officer, U.S. Forest Service

Colette DeGarady, senior conservation ecologist, The Nature Conservancy - SC

GRAND BALLROOM D

2 p.m.

Private Landowner Assistance: Networking and Coordination

This session will highlight the development of a range-wide database for longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and management to assist individuals conducting outreach and providing technical assistance to private landowners. Discussion will focus on how this information can best be used to facilitate networking and coordination of private landowner outreach and assistance efforts. One example highlighted will be the Alabama ALERT Team as a potential model for other states and local implementation teams across the range.

Moderator: **Glen Gaines**, regional longleaf restoration coordinator, U.S. Forest Service

Panelists: **Robert Abernethy**, president, Longleaf Alliance

Tim Albritton, Alabama state staff forester, Natural Resource Conservation Service

2:50 p.m.

BREAK

GRAND BALLROOM A, B

3:10 p.m.

Power of Flight Updates

Grantees will highlight their accomplishments and discuss the future direction of their work.

Moderator: **Patrick Chubb**, environmental specialist, Mississippi Power

Panelists: **Claude Jenkins**, wildlife biologist, Alabama Wildlife Federation

Ken Meyer, executive director, Avian Research and Conservation Institute

Joe Duff, CEO and pilot, Operation Migration

3:55 p.m.

Announcements

4 p.m.

ADJOURN

PRE-FUNCTION AREA

4 - 4:30 p.m.

Poster Session

Stop by during breaks or at this afternoon period to learn about various conservation efforts.

GRAND BALLROOM D

4 - 5 p.m.

OPEN SESSION: Longleaf Local Implementation Team Coordinator Meeting

Coordinators from the 16 established Local Implementation Teams across longleaf pine range will convene for an open dialogue on relevant topics and issues affecting partnership efforts to advance longleaf conservation within SGAs.

Chair: **Troy Ettel**, director, forest conservation, The Nature Conservancy

Networking Reception

Join us at South Beach Hotel for heavy hors d'oeuvres in a fun, casual atmosphere to continue one-on-one discussions.

Entertainment by the Blues Rangers

This band of U.S. Forest Service professionals from the National Forests in Mississippi has recorded two nationally-distributed CDs with original blues songs and delighted audiences of all ages across America. Their interpretive program highlights current natural and cultural resource management issues spanning the increasing loss of green space and dangers of unsustainable growth to the need for prescribed burning and importance of being fire-wise. The Blues Rangers received the Mississippi Wildlife Federation's 2008 Conservation Educators of the Year award.

BUS LOBBY

5:15 p.m. Meet shuttle bus in the lower level bus lobby; the shuttle will make 2 trips.

SOUTH BEACH HOTEL

5:30 - 8:30 p.m. **Networking Reception**

Closing Remarks

Mark Loughman, director, Environmental Affairs, Mississippi Power

8:10 p.m. Return service to the Golden Nugget begins; the shuttle will make multiple trips.

THURSDAY, APRIL 10**Optional Networking Tours**

Choose from three excursions to continue peer discussions. Enjoy the true beauty of South Mississippi by touring the free-flowing Pascagoula River, paddling scenic Wolf River, or walking the beach to identify and discuss beach nesting birds along the Coast. **Recommended:** hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, comfortable clothes, shoes that can get wet, camera, and binoculars.

Pascagoula Swamp and River Tour

Experience the beauty of the Pascagoula, one of the last free-flowing river systems in the contiguous U.S. With pristine habitat and 74,000 permanently protected acres, the biodiversity of the river basin boasts a multitude of wildlife, including migratory birds, shore and water birds, American alligators and more. This natural treasure, classified a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area, will be an unforgettable part of your trip to the beautiful Mississippi Gulf Coast. Led by a Master Naturalist, participants will explore hard-to-reach bayous and sloughs of the swamp and marsh aboard McCoy's River Tours. **Limited to 22 participants.**

Tour guide: **Capt. Lynn McCoy** and **Capt. Benny McCoy**

Wolf River Canoe Trip

Designated Mississippi's first Scenic Stewardship Stream, the Wolf River is a typical black water stream with sand and gravel beaches offering opportunities for swimming, relaxation, and access to nearby walking trails. Unaltered in any way, this remarkable river meanders through the piney woods of south Mississippi, and this canoe float offers uninterrupted paddling at a leisurely pace through protected conservation areas. Mississippi Power's leadership has helped to protect this important natural area for citizens and visitors to enjoy.

Limited to 20 participants, self-guided tour.

Host: **Bob Fairbank**, Wolf River Conservation Society, Inc.

Coastline Bird Walk

Experience Mississippi's scenic Gulf Coast on a guided beach walk along the shores of critically important habitat for water birds. The coast line along US Highway 90 is not only picturesque, but also designated as a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area (IBA) for nesting Least Terns and Black Skimmers. **No limit on participation.** Walking tour. Download a birding checklist for the Mississippi Gulf Coast here: http://www.mscoastaudubon.org/files/coastchecklist_09nov10.pdf

Tour guide: **Jay Morris**, Mississippi Coast Audubon Society

Optional Networking Tours**BUS LOBBY**

6:30 - 7:45 a.m. **BREAKFAST "Grab 'n go" (available for tour participants)**

BUS LOBBY

7:15 - 11 a.m. **Pascagoula Swamp and River Tour**

7:15 a.m. Meet in the lower level bus lobby for instructions

7:30 a.m. Shuttle vans depart

8 a.m. Arrive, board pontoon boat at Pascagoula River Audubon Center in Moss Point

10:30 a.m. Shuttle vans depart Pascagoula River Audubon Center

11 a.m. Return to Golden Nugget Hotel

BUS LOBBY

7:15 a.m. - Noon **Wolf River Canoe Trip**

7:15 a.m. Meet in the lower level bus lobby for instructions

7:30 a.m. Shuttle vans depart

8:30 a.m. Arrive and paddle scenic Wolf River in canoes

11 a.m. Shuttle vans depart Wolf River

Noon Return to Golden Nugget Hotel

HOTEL CHECK-IN DESK

8 - 10 a.m. **Coastline Bird Walk**

8 a.m. Meet by hotel check-in desk on second floor for instructions

8:15 a.m. Depart hotel on foot for leisurely beach walk

10 a.m. Return to Golden Nugget Hotel