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## **Deadline extended for Bays and Bayous call for abstracts**

The 2024 Bays and Bayous Symposium Program Committee has extended the deadline for abstracts submissions until 11:59 p.m., Friday, Sept. 6.

The symposium will be held at the Mississippi Coast Convention Center in Biloxi, Mississippi, on Nov. 19-20, 2024.

The committee welcomes and encourages the participation of scientists, natural resource professionals, students, business people, educators, engagement specialists, policy and decision-makers, consultants, individuals from governmental or non-governmental organizations and other interested parties to submit abstracts related to the following six topical tracks:

- Building Resilience to Challenges and Disruptions
- Conserving and Restoring Critical Habitats
- Enhancing Stewardship and Sustainability
- The Oyster is Your World
- Understanding and Managing Living Resources
- Understanding the Ways of the Water

Full track descriptions can be found on the [event website](#).

Potential presenters are encouraged to submit abstracts involving research results, engagement programming, education efforts, environmental projects, partnerships and more that are relevant to the Gulf of Mexico region.

Student presenters will be eligible for the 2024 [Mike deGruy Bays and Bayous Symposium Student Presentation Awards](#) in both oral and poster presentation categories. Award winners will receive \$300 (first place), \$200 (second place) and \$100 (third place).

## **Track descriptions**

### **Building Resilience to Challenges and Disruptions**

This track will encompass impacts of natural and human-caused disruptions and disasters on coastal communities and industries. Topics in this track may include new research discoveries, management approaches and perspectives related to how coastal challenges and disruptions impact people and the environment. Contributors of this session are encouraged to cover topics through the lens of better understanding coastal challenges and building resilience to them. Sample topics may include land use and land cover changes; land policies; innovative floodplain management strategies; sustainable building design techniques and methodologies; infrastructure development, deterioration and design; community response and adaptation activities; resilience-focused engagement and education programming; urban, rural and agricultural changes; severe storm preparation; and ecosystem responses to stressors. Submissions discussing collaborative partnerships to build socioeconomic and environmental resilience are also encouraged.

Keywords: resilience, natural disasters, human-caused disasters, planning, contamination, mitigation, severe storms, preparedness, recovery

### **Conserving and Restoring Critical Habitats**

Partnership efforts by academia, federal, state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, industry and community groups have contributed to an increased knowledge base on restoration and conservation science. This track highlights research, monitoring, management, policy and educational approaches to coastal and marine conservation and restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico. Managers are encouraged to share their experiences of how they have utilized restoration and conservation science to inform resource planning and management and managers and researchers on how they measure restoration successes.

Keywords: restoration, conservation, shoreline protection, restoration and conservation monitoring, restoration design, habitat-based ecosystem services and valuation

### **Enhancing Stewardship and Sustainability**

While looking to the future, there is much to be learned from the traditional knowledge of communities and the best practices established by scientists and community partners. This track welcomes all parties involved in community engagement, stewardship, environmental justice and sustainability efforts. Speakers implementing novel or innovative ways to engage diverse communities and those celebrating cultural heritage are encouraged. Presentations sharing opportunities for students, and the broader community, to develop job-related STEM skills are also welcome.

Keywords: stewardship, environmental justice, sustainability, traditional knowledge, science education, workforce development

### **The Oyster is Your World**

Oysters play an important role culturally, economically and environmentally in the Gulf of Mexico. This track will include oyster-focused topics on restoration, research, resource management, aquaculture, wild harvesting, tourism, seafood, climate changes, water quality, sea-level rise and coastal resiliency among others. Consumers, farmers, scientists, students, resource managers, chefs, processors, government officials, non-governmental organizations and any others interested in oysters are invited to participate.

Keywords: oysters, wild harvest, oyster aquaculture, oyster restoration, oyster research

### **Understanding and Managing Living Resources**

Ensuring resource sustainability in the Gulf of Mexico often requires a balance between diverse interests and the continued development of data, models and management policies that result in long-term benefits. This track will focus on the applied ecology and management of living resources in the coastal and marine waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Potential presentation topics include research that addresses management questions necessary for Gulf of Mexico sustainability, either at the species or ecosystem level. Presentations for this track will allow the research community, private sector, community action groups, resource managers and NGOs to share knowledge with coastal decision-makers and increase dialogue among these groups.

Keywords: living marine resources, commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, resource management, biodiversity of freshwater, estuarine and marine systems, local ecological knowledge, stakeholder engagement

### **Understanding the Ways of the Water**

Water quality impairment through natural or anthropogenic input alters the livelihoods of people who live and work in estuarine watersheds; maintaining good water quality requires managing recreational,

commercial and industrial interests that all depend on these water bodies. In this track, researchers, resource managers, policymakers and community members are invited to share knowledge on topics related to assessing alterations to water quality and quantity; determining how changes to terrestrial, aquatic and marine activities affect water quality; developing coastal improvements or remediation strategies to address water quality stressors/impairments; addressing water quality and quantity issues in formal and informal education; and fostering behavioral change to protect water quality. Topics related to the interaction between water quality and estuarine benefits/ecosystem services are particularly encouraged.

Keywords: water quality, water quantity, hydrology, watersheds, water-based ecosystem services

### **Program committee membership**

The Bays and Bayous Symposium Program Committee includes representatives from the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, Auburn University, Boat People SOS, Bon Secour Fisheries, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Grand Bay National Estuary Research Reserve, Jackson State University, Magnolia Key Oyster Company, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Mississippi State University, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, The Nature Conservancy, NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, Northern Gulf Institute, The University of Mississippi, The University of Southern Mississippi, University of South Alabama and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of Mexico Division.

### **Symposium sponsors**

Event sponsors include Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of Mexico Division, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, NOAA, Mississippi State University Geosystems Research Institute, Northern Gulf Institute, Dauphin Island Sea Lab Foundation, Neel-Schaffer and Stantec.

For information about sponsorship packages, visit the [event website](#).

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