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Modified from:

Restore America's Estuaries press release on July 22, 2015 by Stefanie Simpson, Restore America's Estuaries
Modified by: Dana Sjostrom, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, Mission-Aransas Reserve

Launch of Gulf Blue Carbon Workshops to Enhance Coastal Management

*New funding supports Gulf Network to advance local management goals
for enhanced coastal resiliency*

Restore America's Estuaries and the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training Program along with the National Estuarine Research Reserve System have launched a Gulf-wide Blue Carbon workshop series. This series of workshops will increase local knowledge and provide technical assistance for new blue carbon initiatives to increase coastal resiliency. The final workshop of the series will take place here at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute's Mission-Aransas Reserve on November 5, 2015.

What is Blue Carbon? Quite simply, it refers to the ability of coastal wetland habitats to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Locally, these habitats include seagrass, salt marsh, mangroves, and other tidal wetlands, which have the ability to sequester large amounts of carbon, especially underground. This is an important ecosystem service that makes coastal wetlands increasingly valuable, and as a consequence provides great opportunity for restoration and conservation.

Funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program, the US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program, and NOAA's Coastal Training Program supports these four training workshops in the Gulf region. "When you're working with a region as big as the Gulf of Mexico, with over 1,400 miles of coastline from Texas to the southwest tip of Florida, these types of partnerships are key," says Jacqueline Rose, Regional Coordinator for the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training Program.

The workshop series began on July 28 at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve in Eastpoint, FL, and continues September 10 at the Grand Bay Reserve, MS followed by October 22 with the Rookery Bay Reserve in Naples, FL. The final workshop is held here at the Mission-Aransas Reserve in Port Aransas, TX on November 5, 2015.

"The importance of our wetlands cannot be overstated or underestimated," said Jace Tunnell, Director of the Mission-Aransas Reserve. "The more we understand the processes of these complex systems, the more we can relate that information to our stakeholders and resource managers to use in their management decisions. We believe that understanding carbon storage within these systems is essential for sustaining our future generation's natural resources."

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As the Coastal Training Program Coordinator at the Mission-Aransas Reserve, Dana Sjostrom looks forward to working with coastal managers, land owners, and state and local officials, among others, in new Blue Carbon training opportunities and initiatives. “With our coastline attracting greater numbers of people and increased development opportunities, we are in a great position to make positive changes and influence the coastal resource managers and their plans for these valuable ecosystems. Training opportunities such as those we offer are an important component to this process.”

Check back with www.missionaransas.org for registration details for our workshop on November 5, 2015 titled “Blue Carbon: A Management Tool for Conservation and Restoration of Coastal Wetlands.”

Contact Dana Sjostrom with any questions: dana.sjostrom@utexas.edu

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