



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
PHIL BRYANT, GOVERNOR

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
GARY C. RIKARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**Mississippi Based RESTORE Act Center of Excellence Selected as the RESTORE
Research Center of Excellence**

(JACKSON, Miss.)—The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) announced today that the Mississippi Based RESTORE Act Center of Excellence (MBRACE) has been selected as the RESTORE Research Center of Excellence. Following the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, Congress passed the RESTORE Act to direct a portion of Clean Water Act civil penalties collected from responsible parties to the states impacted by the oil spill, and it includes a 2.5 percent funding designation to establish Research Centers of Excellence.

MBRACE is a consortium made up of Mississippi's four major research institutions: the University of Southern Mississippi, Jackson State University, the University of Mississippi, and Mississippi State University. The University of Southern Mississippi will serve as the lead institution with the MBRACE program administered within the University's Center for Gulf Studies.

“The Mississippi Based RESTORE Act Center of Excellence will further our understanding of the condition of our natural resources and how to better protect them. It will also be of assistance as we implement restoration projects across the Coast,” said Gary Rikard, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

The Research Centers of Excellence in each Gulf state, including Mississippi, will focus on science, technology, and monitoring in the following disciplines:

- Coastal and deltaic sustainability, restoration and protection, including solutions and technology that allow citizens to live in a safe and sustainable manner in a coastal delta in the Gulf Coast Region;
- Coastal fisheries and wildlife ecosystem research and monitoring;
- Offshore energy development, including research and technology to improve the sustainable and safe development of energy resources in the Gulf of Mexico;
- Sustainable and resilient growth, economic and commercial development in the Gulf of Mexico; and
- Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf of Mexico.

The results of studies conducted by the center will be shared with other scientists, agencies and research groups to enhance coastal resource management and develop practical applications that can drive technology innovation and business development.

“This is a key milestone in the process of repairing the damage done in Mississippi by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, and the best way to find new solutions for preventing future damage to our Coast,” said Dr. Gordon Cannon, USM Vice President for Research.

Dr. Monty Graham added: “The Center for Gulf Studies and MBACE brings together for the first time the state’s highest caliber scientists to use respective institutional capacities to address the most critical issues facing Mississippi’s Gulf Coast and its incredible natural resources.” Dr. Graham is the Chair of the Department of Marine Science and Interim Director of the USM Gulf Coast Research Lab.

Comprehensive information on all aspects of Mississippi’s oil spill restoration efforts can be found at www.restore.ms.

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