

**CITY OF GAUTIER  
MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Samantha Abell, City Manager  
**From:** Patty Huffman, Grants & Projects Manager  
**Through:** Eric Meyer, Economic Development and Planning Director  
**Date:** March 11, 2013  
**Subject:** Mississippi Habitat Stewards Program Partnership

---

**REQUEST:**

The Economic Development & Planning Department requests approval for the City of Gautier to become a conservation partner with the Mississippi Wildlife Federation's Habitat Stewards Program (HSP). The Habitat Stewards Program partners with natural land managers all along the Mississippi Coast to help with land management. Volunteers are trained in a series of classes including how to improve and care for natural resources, protect and observe wildlife, and monitor and manage nature trails. This partnership can provide valuable volunteer resources for work planned for Shepard State Park.

**BACKGROUND:**

Partnership in this organization does not involve any financial cost to the City. The Habitat Stewards Program is funded through grant-writing, fundraising and fee-for-service efforts of the Mississippi Wildlife Federation and Natural Capital Development. Other conservation partners include Mississippi Coastal Preserves (DMR), Sandhill Crane NWR, Grand Bay NWR, and Land Trust for Mississippi Coastal Plain. Volunteers have already made significant investments in Gautier at Indian Point Coastal Preserve, Graveline Bay, and Sandhill Crane NWR.

**DISCUSSION:**

What HSP asks of the City:

- Designate and authorize a primary point of contact to engage with HSP coordinator to plan and implement volunteer management activities at Shepard State Park
- Provide program information to keep them aware of HSP benefits to the City: Mayor, City Council, City Staff and others as needed
- Work in partnership with HSP to assess natural resource management needs at the Park and involve HSP in the master planning process, especially natural area zones within the park

The Habitat Steward Program will provide on behalf of the City:

- Recruit new volunteers and provide one training class each year
- Match volunteer skills and interests with needs at Shepard State Park
- Coordinate work days and individual steward work plans
- Track volunteer hours
- Assist City in identifying grant funding sources to match needs at the Park (primarily natural areas)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

City staff recommends that City Council approve entering into a partnership with the Mississippi Habitat Stewards as described above.

The City Council may:

1. Approve entering into a partnership with the Habitat Stewards Program; or
2. Disapprove entering into a partnership with the Habitat Stewards Program.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Mississippi Habitat Stewards brochure

## Be A Habitat Steward!

Mississippi Wildlife Federation is joining with managers of South Mississippi natural areas to create a team of well-trained and dedicated volunteers to protect nature along the Coast.



### Potential volunteer activities include:

- Plant native grasses, shrubs and trees
- Monitor wildlife
- Help control weeds and animal pests
- Build or repair trails and public access sites in natural areas
- Remove storm debris and litter
- Keep natural areas beautiful, safe and healthy for future generations



The 2012 Mississippi Habitat Stewards Program is sponsored by a grant from BP.

Our natural areas need ongoing care. But too often in our cash-strapped state, funding for the long-term care of our natural areas is limited. These areas require constant care to remain healthy. There are over 60,000 acres of land to monitor and only limited funding and staff resources. The new Habitat Steward Volunteers will be able to work with land managers on our federal, state, and non-profit natural areas to make a real difference for our wildlife and habitats.

With your help, we can look after our wildlife and provide safe, beautiful natural areas for future generations. Habitat Steward Volunteers will be a unique group, trained to care for natural areas and to maintain safe, clean areas for the public to enjoy. After completing 24 hours of free training, volunteers will choose from a variety of locations and activities designed for all skill levels and abilities.

