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Weeks Bay Reserve
Coastal Section
Alabama State Lands
Division

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



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L.G. ADAMS
RESERVE MANAGER

September 10, 2009

Mr. Matt Menashes
Executive Director, NERRA
444 N Capitol St NW Ste 322
Washington DC 20001

Dear Matt,

The Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (WBNERR) being part of the system of reserves around the nation is focused on the protection and management of a representative estuarine ecosystem to advance conservation, research, and education. Weeks Bay Reserve (WBNERR) in Alabama is known for its pristine water quality, invaluable recreational attributes, ecological integrity, and function as a nursery area for an abundance of seafood organisms. Restoration of damaged or degraded areas is most important to maintain and improve the overall integrity of this system. I strongly support NERRA's proposal to NOAA's Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration National and Regional Partnership Grants. Restoration projects funded within reserve boundaries will improve these vital estuarine areas and continue to provide reference sites for future research.

Restoration at the Reserve includes many projects both large and small. Funding is often a limiting factor on how much can be accomplished. Potential projects are planned to remove invasive exotics, mitigate storm damage, and prepare for the effects of climate change. The opportunity of funds to achieve projects such as these could go a long way to assist the preservation of coastal habitat and promote an increase in biodiversity. They also provide for current and future benefits to inter-jurisdictional fisheries, through the preservation of their wetland spawning, feeding and nursery habitats; provide direct habitat conservation and water quality benefits to Mobile Bay; and are important to the environmental quality of the Gulf of Mexico through its continued production of fish, wildlife or other natural resources, or through its unique habitats. Over 90 percent of the species associated with the commercial and recreational fisheries of Alabama are dependent on coastal wetland habitat for at least a portion of their life history requirements.

Weeks Bay Reserve has in the past established areas for reference sites of restoration science. These are relatively small areas that have pre and post monitoring to restoration activities. Other areas are well positioned to establish larger reference sites with additional funds. Several local partners are interested in participating if these projects can be moved forward. Coastal areas within the Reserve would benefit from such large restoration projects and support a wetland ecosystem (Mobile Bay Estuary) which contributes to a \$130 million annual fishery.

I strongly support the proposal by NERRA seeking funds to make a real difference on the ground in the National Estuarine Research Reserves.

Respectfully,

L.G. Adams
Reserve Manager