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# Gulf of Mexico Program

Office of Public Affairs ♦ Bldg. 1100, Rm. 220F ♦ Stennis Space Center, Miss. 39529-6000  
(228) 688-1159 ♦ Fax: (228) 688-2709 ♦ E-Mail: hines-smith.terry@epa.gov ♦ www.epa.gov/gmpo

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE EVENT WINS FIRST PLACE GULF GUARDIAN AWARD**

STENNIS SPACE CENTER, Miss. – The Gulf of Mexico Program recently announced that the Harrison County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, sponsored by Mississippi Power Company's Plant Jack Watson, will receive a first place Gulf Guardian Award for 2003 in the Business Category. The award will be presented to representatives of Mississippi Power Company at the Southern States Environmental Conference and Exhibition scheduled Sept. 23-25, in Biloxi.

Four years ago the Gulf of Mexico Program developed the Gulf Guardian awards as a method of recognizing and honoring the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. The Gulf of Mexico Program began in 1988 to protect, restore, and maintain the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem in economically sustainable ways. Award entries were received from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. A first, second, and third place award are given each year in six categories – individual, business, youth and education, nonprofit organizations, government, and partnership efforts.

"Our oceans and coasts are precious resources," said Jimmy Palmer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator in Atlanta. "Coastal and marine waters provide some of the most diverse and biologically productive habitats on the planet," he added. "This year's Gulf Guardian Award winners are doing their part to keep these valuable resources healthy and productive."

For the 2002 Harrison County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, more than 150 community volunteers and 60 Mississippi Power employees worked as a team to set up a line of collection stations for paint, batteries, oil, tires, and household chemicals at the Gulfport plant. Then, community residents drove through the area where the waste is unloaded, documented, and prepared for proper disposal. By the end of the day, approximately 650 vehicles had dropped off 1,625 gallons of motor oil; 309 car batteries; nearly 1,000 tires; 116 refrigerators; 24,000 gallons of paint and about 5,000 pounds of other hazardous materials, including chemicals, pesticides and poisons.

"This event is a wonderful example of how numerous groups and individuals can work together to do something meaningful for our community," said Kurt Brautigam, Mississippi Power spokesman. "Keeping these items out of the environment is essential. This was the eighth year in a row we've hosted the event and each year more material is collected and disposed of safely. We're indebted to Harrison County and our other partners for all their support and to all the volunteers who show up each year to make the day a success."

Gulf of Mexico Program Office Acting Director Bryon O. Griffith said, "Our 2003 Gulf Guardian Award winners are to be commended for taking action to preserve and restore the Gulf of

Mexico.” “One out of every six jobs in the United States is marine-related, generating \$54 billion in goods and services annually. Protecting these waters makes sense economically, aesthetically, and environmentally. Acting as one community to protect our one and only Gulf of Mexico is essential to our way of life and our standard of living.”

For a list of all the Gulf Guardian Award winners for 2003, visit the Gulf of Mexico Program web site at <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo> and click on the Gulf Guardian Award button on the left.

The Gulf of Mexico Program is underwritten by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is a non-regulatory, inclusive consortium of state and federal government agencies and representatives of the business and agricultural community, fishing industry, scientists, environmentalists, and community leaders from all five Gulf States. The Gulf Program seeks to improve the environmental health of the Gulf in concert with economic development.

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*Editor's Note: For more information about the Gulf Guardian Awards and the Gulf of Mexico Program, call Terry Hines Smith at 228-688-1159. For more information about Mississippi Power and the Household Hazardous Waste program, call Kurt Brautigam at 228-865-5543.*