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Gulf of Mexico Program

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COASTAL KIDS QUIZ WINS 1ST PLACE GULF GUARDIAN AWARD

STENNIS SPACE CENTER, Miss. – The Gulf of Mexico Program recently announced that, the Alabama Coastal Foundation will receive a first place Gulf Guardian Award for 2003 in the Civic and Nonprofit Organization Category for the Alabama Coastal Kids Quiz. The award will be presented to Neil C. Johnston, foundation president, and Dr. Brenda Litchfield, project chairperson, 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.”

The Coastal Kids Quiz competition provides an outlet for promoting dialogue between social, economic and environmental interests while consolidating Alabama’s coastal educational resources. Fifth grade students in Alabama’s coastal area have been introduced to conservation principles and now have the opportunity to express their knowledge and understanding through this exciting and interactive program. The Coastal Kids Quiz is an innovative way to encourage learning and conservation by challenging teachers and students to prepare for a conservation scholarship competition.

The Coastal Kids Quiz involves schools in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, the students, their siblings, their parents and teachers. Teams of students study from September through April when the Quiz is held. Volunteers are also involved in the hands-on training process and competition. In essence, the coastal community becomes involved.

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 the Coastal Kids Quiz, call Cathy Barnette at 251-990-6002.