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# Gulf of Mexico Program

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **DR. NANCY RABALAIS WINS 1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE GULF GUARDIAN AWARD**

STENNIS SPACE CENTER, Miss. – The Gulf of Mexico Program recently announced that, Dr. Nancy Rabalais of the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium will receive a first place Gulf Guardian Award for 2003 in the Individual Category. The award will be presented to her 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.”

Dr. Rabalais is a well-known spokesperson on the causes, effects and remedies for the “Dead Zone” – the low oxygen bottom waters of the northern Gulf of Mexico. She has become a linch-pin scientist and public policy participant because she has led over 18 years of monitoring and observations, and coordinated many interdisciplinary studies by scientists from a dozen universities. She has also been the lead and co-author of high-quality science and public policy documents on the causes, effects, and remedies for the “Dead Zone.” Dr. Rabalais has engaged the public sector through an incredible number of talks, field trips, and participation in multi-disciplinary panels, multi-agency task forces, and testimony.

“Although this award is given to an individual, the science examining the low oxygen zone in the Gulf of Mexico is truly a collaborative and cooperative effort with many colleagues over the years” said Dr. Rabalais. “I think we are all proud of the quality science basis for decision-making that our studies have generated. Transferring this knowledge to public understanding and action has also been rewarding to me as a scientist citizen.”

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 Dead Zone and Dr. Rabalais, please call Nancy Rabalais at 985-851-2800.*