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Gulf of Mexico Program

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MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION PROJECT WINS 2ND PLACE GULF GUARDIAN AWARD

STENNIS SPACE CENTER, Miss. – The Gulf of Mexico Program recently announced that, the New Orleans District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will receive a second place Gulf Guardian Award for 2003 in the Partnership Category for the Mississippi Delta Region Project. The award will be presented to Corps of Engineers representatives 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 Corps is heavily committed to one of the most challenging engineering projects in the nation’s history, the restoration of the Louisiana coast, which is disappearing before our eyes,” said Col. Peter Rowan, New Orleans district engineer. “Scientists and professionals may disagree on the extent to which we can save the coast, but the ‘do nothing’ scenario is simply unacceptable. With the cooperation of many other parties, inside and outside of government, we are fighting to preserve this great natural treasure, America’s wetlands,” he said.

The Mississippi Delta Region (MDR) Project includes Caernarvon and Davis Pond Freshwater Diversions. Operations began in 1991 and 2002, respectively. The Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources partnered to plan, design, and construct the project. Located in coastal Louisiana, these structures divert freshwater, nutrients, and sediments, from the Mississippi River to bays and marshes of Breton Sound and Barataria Basins for fish and wildlife enhancement. The project restores ecological conditions by controlling salinity and supplementing nutrients and sediments. Partners manage operations, maintenance, and monitoring, incorporating public and interagency involvement to guide decisions.

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 Mississippi Delta Region Project, call Jim Addison at 504-862-2201.