



## **Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) Receives Second Place Gulf Guardian Award in the Partnership Category**

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**DALLAS** – (July 30, 2015) The Gulf of Mexico Program recently announced Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) will receive a Second Place 2015 Gulf Guardian Award in the Partnerships Category. The awards ceremony will be held on July 30, 2015, at the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi, Texas.

“The Gulf of Mexico is a precious natural resource not only to the communities that thrive on its shores but to communities far away that rely on its bounty,” said Ron Curry, EPA regional administrator. “Gulf Guardians play an important role in reminding all of us about our shared responsibility in protecting our Gulf.”

“This is the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the Gulf Guardian Awards Program, and I am proud to say that each year the winners in all categories have represented the very best of environmental accomplishments in the Gulf of Mexico,” said Diane Altsman, Chief of Staff of the Gulf of Mexico Program. “The Gulf of Mexico Program partnership works to improve the environmental health of the Gulf, and the Gulf Guardian Awards is an important way for us to recognize these valuable efforts.”

For the past three years, BTNEP has hosted the Bayou Lafourche Cleanup in Thibodaux, LA. More than 3100 volunteers have collected about 58 tons of trash along 106 miles of Bayou Lafourche. Under the direction of Alma Robichaux, BTNEP Education/Outreach Coordinator, this increasingly popular event raises awareness about litter and EPA’s Trash Free Waters goals. The project aims to change citizens’ behavior by recording the volume and types of materials retrieved from water annually to assess likely sources of litter. Reducing the amount of trash and litter entering waterways helps improve and protect people’s health and the health and productivity of the Gulf itself.

Through Bayou Lafourche Cleanup, local citizens have been inspired to keep trash out of bayous year-round. Nicholls State University students also help by assessing the type and quantity of trash collected, and work to educate bayous communities on reducing litter. BTNEP engages businesses, municipalities, researchers, and many others in the cleanup effort, partnering with the Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District, Shell, Port Fourchon, Walmart, and other local sponsors. By bringing together diverse support to help create “Trash Free Waters,” the Bayou Lafourche Clean Up project inspires other people to make the right choice by becoming better Gulf stewards.

The Gulf of Mexico Program initiated the Gulf Guardian awards in 2000 as a way to recognize and honor the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. First, second and third place awards are given in seven categories: individual, business/industry, youth environmental education, civic/nonprofit organizations, cultural diversity/environmental justice, partnership and bi-national efforts.

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. 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

For more information about EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program: <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo>.

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