

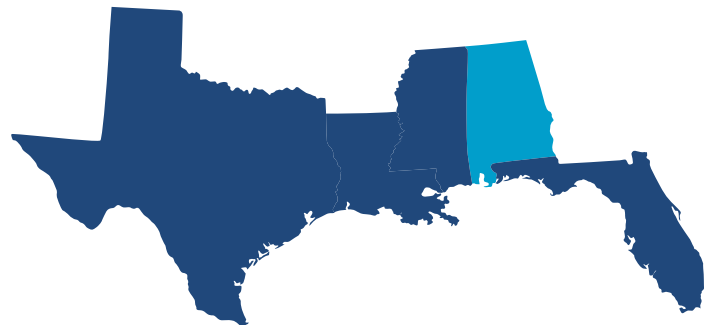
ALABAMA

Restoring People and Nature



SCA-AL crew conducting invasive species management at The City of Fairhope Nature Center, Fairhope, Alabama on February 26, 2024. © Michael Dumas Image Arts

In 2018, GulfCorps launched one crew in Mobile with Student Conservation Association (SCA). In Years 2 and 3, SCA managed two crews per season and down-sized to one crew again in Year 4 during the COVID-19 pandemic surge. The RESTORE Council approved a new award in April 2021 and GulfCorps 2.0 launched in the fall of 2021. SCA is currently managing two smaller crews serving Mobile and Baldwin Counties. The crews partner with federal, state, county and municipal agencies as well as local nonprofits to implement restoration and conservation projects throughout the Alabama Gulf Coast. The work includes mapping and treating invasive plant species; planting native marsh vegetation; restoring pitcher plant bogs; participating in prescribed burns; and building and maintaining trails and boardwalks. Crews also locate and remove invasive apple snails and apple snail egg masses along waterways. Since the GulfCorps Program started, SCA crews have impacted over 7,400 acres of coastal habitats on 36 project sites.



LOCATION Alabama

INVESTMENT \$2.274 million over 8 years

PROGRAM PARTNERS The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Student Conservation Association (SCA), The Corps Network (TCN), The Ember Alliance (TEA)

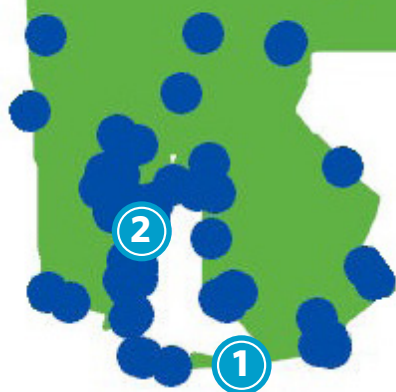
FUNDING AGENCIES Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

PROJECT DATES 2017 - 2025

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ALABAMA

Student Conservation Association



Alabama Project Highlights

① AL1-4a-b Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and Little Lagoon Shoreline

Beginning in 2018, SCA crews began partnering with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service at Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. Crews have assisted in removing storm debris from over 290 acres of refuge beaches and wetlands, mapped over 900 acres of invasive species, and planted 829 juncus stalks along the Little Lagoon shoreline. Because the refuge has many visitors all throughout the year, crews also spend a lot of time helping maintain public access features. They have helped to maintain 10 miles of trails and access roads, repaired 3 boardwalks, and installed fencing and signage for nesting shorebirds and sea turtles.



SCA-AL crew member Alec Tran removing Coral Ardisia, an invasive plant species at the City of Fairhope Nature Center, Fairhope, Alabama, February 26, 2024 © Michael Dumas Image Arts

② AL1-6a Perch Creek Preserve

In 2021, SCA crews expanded their partnership with the City of Mobile by conducting an 86-acre site survey on one of the properties soon to be included in the Perch Creek Nature Trail and Preserve. This survey assessed habitat types, native and invasive species, and debris sites. The crew has since treated 22 acres of invasive species and assisted with 40 acres of wetland debris removal. This newly restored habitat will eventually provide both land- and water-based passive recreation activities including bicycle paths, hiking trails, kayaking and canoeing. This work has also been partially funded through contracting with the City. Contract work like this is important for the future sustainability of each corps and a goal of the GulfCorps Program.



SCA-AL crew leader Emily Johnson sharpening hand tools for the service project day at Beckwith Camp and Conference Center in Fairhope, Alabama. © Michael Dumas Image Arts

Alabama By the Numbers

85,955

GULFCORPS HOURS



5,408

ACRES MONITORED

7,406

ACRES IMPACTED



1,207

ACRES OF INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT



36

ACTIVE PROJECTS



25,272

PLANTS PLANTED



2,312

ACRES OF WETLAND ENHANCEMENT



504

ACRES OF UPLAND ENHANCEMENT



19

ACRES OF WETLAND RESTORATION



As the COVID-19 pandemic began, the GulfCorps Program staff worked to ensure crews remained engaged by developing a virtual curriculum for members that they could use when they were unable to work in the field. Year 3 successfully ended in summer 2020.

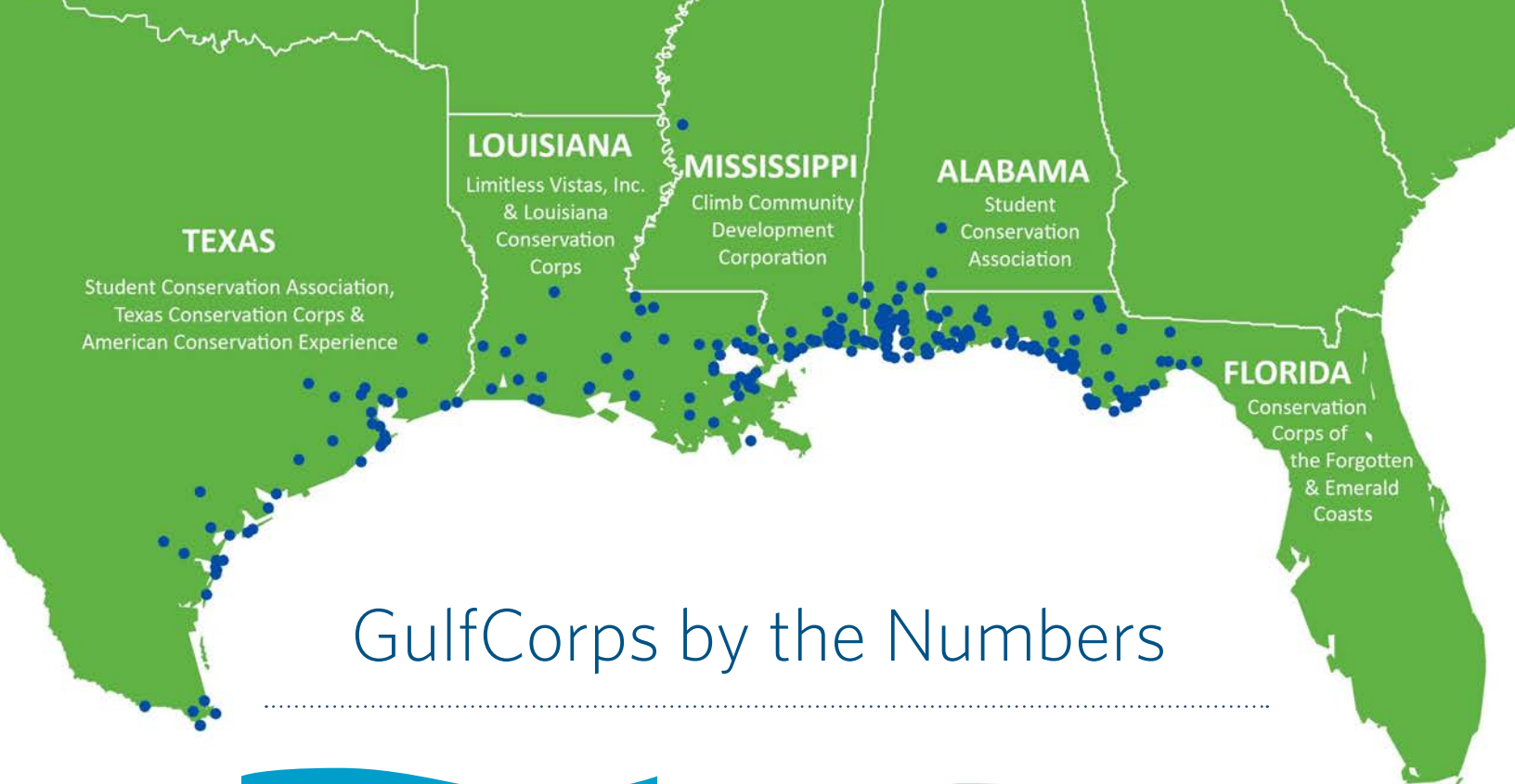
Year 4 launched in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic with a virtual orientation and smaller crews. Despite these obstacles, staff and partners delivered an engaging experience for members via a virtual workforce development curriculum and in-person trainings at the corps level. In April 2021, the RESTORE Council approved a second \$11.9M award for GulfCorps to continue for an additional four years.

The second award for the GulfCorps program (GC2.0) launched in fall 2021. Crews remained smaller as the economy was still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ember Alliance was added as a program partner and SCA created a crew in the Corpus Christi area after American Conservation Experience exited the program. Forty-nine members successfully completed the program during this challenging year.

Year 6 saw the return of in-person orientation with all corps and staff meeting up at Beckwith Camp and Conference Center in Fairhope, Alabama. Additionally, The Ember Alliance delivered a hybrid curriculum (online and in-person) of wildfire and chainsaw training to all crews. This year resulted in 53 standard graduates and the first All-Star graduate!

In Year 7, the program continued to build partnerships with community-based partners and Tribal entities. The crews monitored and/or restored 6,912 acres—the greatest number of acres than any other season. Additionally, TNC secured \$12M from NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience grant program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. This funds 4 more years of GulfCorps work!

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
GulfCorps launched in 2017 when NOAA awarded a \$7 million grant to TNC for the creation of the program.	Year 2 started in September 2018 and doubled in size to two crews per state, each working for about 7 months. Year 2 ended in summer 2019.	In Year 3, 11 crews worked for 8-9 months —the biggest year, yet. Project partners included state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, local/municipal agencies, and academic institutions. TNC, SCA and TCN worked closely with NOAA to plan and execute sound conservation and restoration projects and to create a high-quality restoration workforce that had proven field experience.				



GulfCorps by the Numbers

529,248

TOTAL GULFCORPS HOURS

29,738

TOTAL ACRES IMPACTED



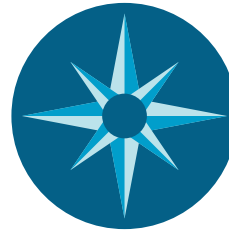
119,142

PAID TRAINING HOURS



188

ACRES OF WETLAND RESTORATION



20,404

ACRES BEING MONITORED



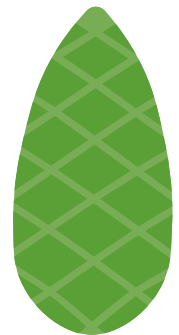
7,397

ACRES OF WETLAND ENHANCEMENT



3,121

ACRES OF INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT



12,759

ACRES OF UPLAND ENHANCEMENT



SCA-AL crew returning from service project day at Beckwith Camp and Conference Center during orientation in Fairhope, Alabama. © Michael Dumas Image Arts

Alabama Project Partners

During Years 1 – 7, SCA AL crews worked on meaningful coastal restoration projects under the direction of a range of federal, state, and community partners:

- Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
- South Alabama Land Trust (formerly Weeks Bay Foundation)
- Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Forever Wild
- Alabama State Parks
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Dog River Clearwater Revival
- City of Mobile
- Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
- The Peninsula of Mobile
- Town of Dauphin Island
- Mobile County Environmental Services
- City of Orange Beach
- The Nature Conservancy in Alabama and Florida
- Beckwith Camp and Conference Center
- Mobile County

Local Crews, Local Communities

At its heart, GulfCorps is about rebuilding the environment and local communities. This means working with and relying on organizations that know and are deeply rooted in the local communities GulfCorps is helping.

In Alabama, GulfCorps partners with **Student Conservation Association (SCA)**, which was founded in 1957 with a mission to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of the environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land. Nationwide, 7 out of 10 SCA alumni go on to careers or studies that make the planet more sustainable. SCA efforts in the Gulf of Mexico have included everglades restoration after Hurricane Andrew in 1992, sea turtle protection, and, more recently, helping the Gulf states recover from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in Alabama and Texas.

Member Highlights



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Ainsley Stevens

Ainsley Stevens said that during her GulfCorps term, she really enjoyed working with people who were like-minded. She also shared she was excited for all the opportunities in conservation she experienced, such as training in Wilderness First Aid, S-212 Wildland Fire Chainsaws, and qualifying as a Wildland Firefighter Type 2 (FFT2). Ainsley remained enrolled in Coastal Alabama Community College with a focus on biology during her service term. After GulfCorps, Ainsley moved on to be a crew member with Oregon Northwest Pacific Youth Corps.



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Shanell Dock

Shanell Dock said she liked that she was able to get certifications and trainings that will be useful in her future career, such as Wilderness First aid and S-212 Wildland Fire Chainsaws. She added that GulfCorps had been a great place to network and participate in different types of conservation projects. Shanell has a bachelor's degree in environmental science and continued her work with the Alabama Audubon Society as a seasonal Coastal Biologist.



SCA-AL crew group photo during orientation at Beckwith Camp and Conference Center, Fairhope, Alabama, on September 18, 2023. © Michael Dumas Image Arts

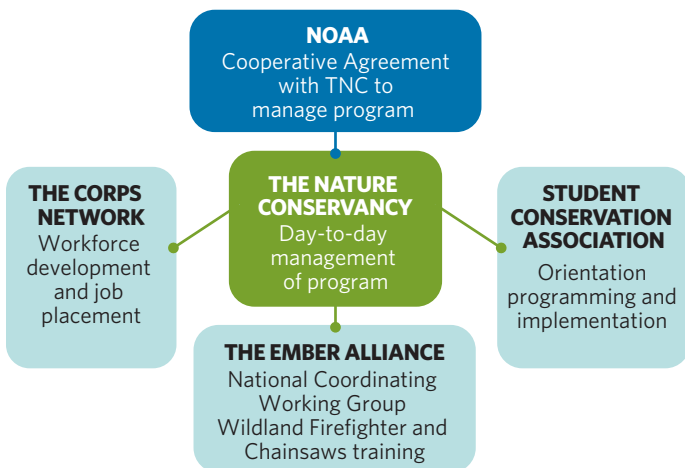
The GulfCorps Program Team

- NOAA Fisheries – Fiscal sponsor, environmental compliance, program advisor
- The Nature Conservancy – Program day-to-day operations, conservation and project planning, monitoring, implementation
- The Corps Network – Workforce development, member preparation to pursue careers in conservation and restoration, job placement, post-program tracking
- Student Conservation Association – Orientation programming and implementation
- The Ember Alliance – National Wildfire Coordinating Group Wildland Fire and Chainsaws training

Through this project, NOAA, TNC and partners are

- Providing support to local conservation corps that recruit young adults from their communities. These young adults want to better their communities through restoration and conservation work. GulfCorps aims to recruit 75% of each crew from Gulf Coast communities.
- Providing young adults with the highest quality training, including project-related training, industry-recognized certifications, and workforce development opportunities. This combination of training, work experience and professional development fuels placements in environmental jobs, internships, externships and post-secondary educational opportunities.
- Working with stakeholders to select restoration projects that address ecological impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and that are consistent with the RESTORE Act’s Comprehensive Plan.
- Monitoring progress over the course of the entire program to make certain the work is producing the desired environmental results.

Partner Roles



Sample Project Partners

US Fish and Wildlife Service (FL, AL, LA, MS, TX) National Forest Service (FL, LA, MS), National Park Service (FL, MS, LA, TX), National Estuarine Research Reserves (FL, AL, TX)

Florida – St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve, Escambia County, Northwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Alabama – Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Mobile County Environmental Services, South Alabama Land Trust, Forever Wild

Mississippi – Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, University of Southern Mississippi

Louisiana – City of New Orleans, Louisiana Office of State Parks, Woodlands Conservancy, Recreation & Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC)

Texas – Armand Bayou Nature Center, Galveston Bay Foundation, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Houston Parks Board, Houston Audubon, City of Port Aransas