

USM Home / News / 2020 / MBRACE to Award \$2.75M in Funding for Research Projects

# MBRACE to Award \$2.75M in Funding for Research Projects

Mon, 05/18/2020 - 10:39am | By: **Jill Eure**

The Mississippi Based RESTORE Act Center of Excellence (MBRACE) is awarding \$2.75M for research on water quality and oyster reef sustainability in Mississippi. Four different projects will receive funding through 2022, with The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) being the lead institution on two of the projects.

MBRACE is one of six Centers of Excellence Research Grants Programs (CERGP) established in the Gulf of Mexico following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and is designated as the Center of Excellence for Mississippi. The CERGP program allocates \$26M in funds from the RESTORE Act Trust Fund managed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, through the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), to MBRACE to support science, technology, and monitoring within the Gulf of Mexico region.

MBRACE is a consortium of Mississippi's four research universities (Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, The University of Mississippi, and USM, the latter serving as lead institution). The mission of MBRACE is to seek sound, comprehensive science-and technology-based understanding of the chronic and acute stressors, both anthropogenic and natural, on the dynamic and productive waters and ecosystems of the northern Gulf of Mexico and to facilitate sustainable use of the Gulf's important resources.

"The scientific research being conducted by the Mississippi Based RESTORE Act Center of Excellence (MBRACE) is a key component of Mississippi's holistic approach to ecological restoration," said Chris Wells, interim executive director of MDEQ. "These research proposals will continue the effort to understand the conditions and dynamics of the northern Gulf of Mexico, thus helping inform the state's restoration priorities and decisions. We are pleased to partner with MBRACE and look forward to the results of these new projects."

MBRACE is guided by an executive steering committee comprised of members from the four consortium universities, MDEQ, and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. MBRACE recently funded three projects through the Competitive Research Program and one project through the Core Research Program focused on water quality and oyster reefs and their sustainability. The projects are two years in duration (2020 – 2022).

"Funding of these projects represents the next step in the growth of MBRACE to provide the State and region with innovative research to guide successful restoration activities

and inform management actions," said Dr. Read Hendon, associate director for the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory at USM and chair of the MBRACE Executive Steering Committee. "Although four separate awards, we will work with each of the principal investigators to ensure that the individual research components are integrated and leverage efforts to provide the best information to resource managers and decision makers."

Details of the funded projects are as follows:

## Competitive Research Program-funded projects

### **Impacts of water quality on oyster development to inform oyster reef restoration and sustainability on the Mississippi Gulf Coast**

Lead University: University of Mississippi, Lead Investigator: Dr. Deborah Gochfeld

Award Amount: \$442,942

### **The distribution of submarine groundwater discharge and its effect on coastal water quality in Mississippi**

Lead University: Mississippi State University, Lead Investigator: Dr. Adam Skarke

Award Amount: \$450,052

### **Optical observation for oyster larvae**

Lead University: The University of Southern Mississippi, Lead Investigator: Dr. Xiaodong Zhang

Award Amount: \$449,907

## Core Research Program-funded project

### **MBRACE 2 - Core Research Program**

Lead University: The University of Southern Mississippi, Lead Investigator: Dr. Jerry Wiggert

Award Amount: \$1,383,658

The projects were selected following a rigorous review process coordinated by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. "Close partnerships with our state resource managers and the expertise of researchers from the MBRACE consortium universities enable us to achieve our mission of better understanding the dynamic coastal ecosystems in Mississippi, as well as the wider Gulf of Mexico region," said Dr. Kelly Darnell, MBRACE director and assistant research professor at USM. "The projects selected for funding exemplify the goal of MBRACE to fund sound science that increases the state of knowledge and addresses management needs."

This project was paid for with federal funding from the Department of the Treasury under the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act). The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Treasury.

**Categories:** [Research](#)

## Recent News Articles

1.29.2021

**USM Researchers Date Timbers from North Mississippi Structure to 1734**

1.29.2021

**Hagans Support USM School of Social Work with \$1.1 Million Planned Gift**

1.28.2021

**USM Alumna's Novel Included on Best Fiction for Young Adults List**

## Hattiesburg Campus

118 College Drive  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

601.266.1000

[Contact Us](#)

[Hattiesburg Campus Map](#)

## Gulf Park Campus

730 East Beach Boulevard  
Long Beach, MS 39560

228.865.4500

[Contact Us](#)

[Gulf Park Campus Map](#)

GIVE TO USM



[A-Z Index](#)

[Accreditation](#)

[Campus Safety](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[EEO Statement](#)

[Employment](#)

[Ethics Line](#)

[Legislative Updates](#)

[Notice of Nondiscrimination](#)

[Online Directory](#)

[Privacy and Legal](#)

[Professional Licensure Disclosures](#)

[Report a Student Concern](#)

[SARA](#)

[Sexual Assault/Title IX](#)

[Web Accessibility Statement](#)