



2025

MISSISSIPPI COASTAL CLEANUP

ANNUAL PROGRAM SUMMARY



MISSISSIPPI SOUND
ESTUARY PROGRAM





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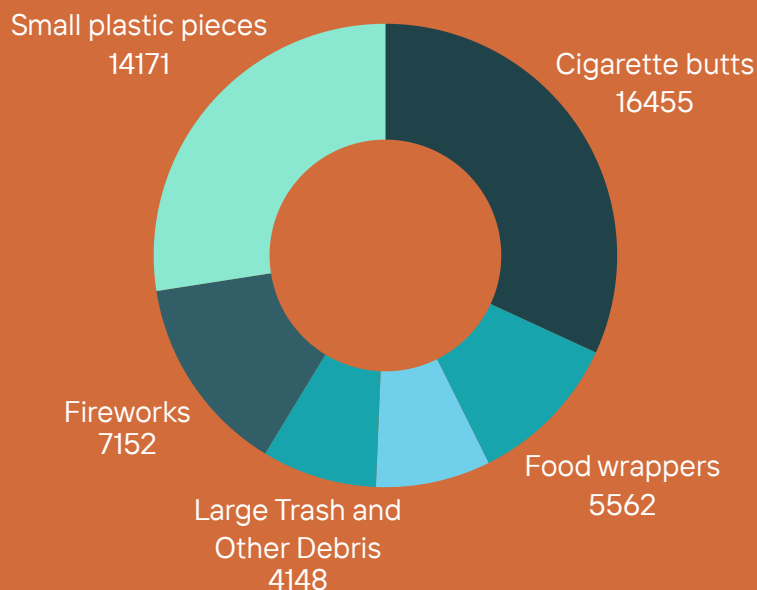


ABOUT MISSISSIPPI COASTAL CLEANUP PROGRAM

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Program (MSCCP) is a non-profit educational program that promotes the conservation of the local marine environment by facilitating active stewardship within coastal Mississippi. This program is administratively housed under the Mississippi State University Coastal and Marine Extension Program and co-run through the Mississippi Sound Estuary Program and Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. The MSCCP mission is to prevent and remove litter from the coastal environment through education, outreach, research, and cleanup events. The MSCCP organizes beach cleanups, provides in-class presentations, and hosts outreach booths at multiple public events throughout the year. By integrating the latest research, the MSCCP supports the prevention and removal of litter through promoting active stewardship that empowers communities to make more sustainable decisions regarding litter and marine debris. This program promotes active stewardship, enables long-lasting education and outreach, and provides other toolkits that empower communities to make environmentally and economically sound decisions regarding litter and marine debris.

Litter can be defined as trash that is left lying in an open or public place while marine debris is defined as any manmade material that is intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly disposed of or abandoned into our marine environment, according to the NOAA Marine Debris Program. Marine debris includes everyday items we toss in the trash as well as litter on sidewalks, parking lots, and streets that is washed or blown away by gulf winds. Even larger objects, such as fishing nets, construction materials, and derelict boats, are also considered marine debris. These items persist in the environment where they can be extremely harmful to wildlife on land, in the air, and in water.





TOP ITEMS

Single-use plastic was by far the most common material collected during cleanup events. Check out these top items!

PROGRAM STATS

In 2025, the MSCCP hosted and facilitated **34 cleanup events**. During MSCCP events, volunteers are required to collect data on the different types and how much trash is collected. Unsurprisingly, **single-use plastic items are the most common materials collected on the beaches**. Some of the commonly found plastic trash items include cigarette butts, food wrappers, small plastic pieces, bottle caps, and beverage bottles. Plastic is a manmade material that our earth cannot naturally break down. Plastic items persist in the environment and eventually break up into smaller and smaller pieces becoming what we know as microplastics. Microplastics are plastic fiber, fragment, foam, bead, and film pieces smaller than 5mm that wreak havoc on the environment as they are commonly mistaken for food by marine life and are therefore ingested. Toxins and pollutants in the water can bind to microplastics, impacting the animals ingesting the pieces on a physiological level. Studies have shown that microplastics have entered our food chain posing not just detrimental impacts to animal health, but possibly to human health as well.

We know litter, especially plastic, pollution is a problem and providing actionable opportunities for the public to get involved with reducing plastic pollution is key. **The MSCCP has many sister programs** that focus on prevention, removal, and research pertaining to marine debris and litter. The Mississippi Inland Cleanup Program (MSICP) is an expansion program of the MSCCP to extend litter awareness efforts beyond the three coastal counties. The Barrier Island Cleanup Initiative is another expansion program, this one in partnership with the National Park Service to extend south to our barrier islands. The Derelict Trap Reward Program focuses on how abandoned crab traps impact local shrimpers in the water of the Mississippi Sound. The Derelict Vessel program locates and coordinates removal of abandoned and derelict vessels. SWAPS is a no-cost-to-you program that provides litter and waste prevention solutions and materials so the community can take an active part in preventing waste!

Keep reading to see what these amazing programs and others were up to in 2025!

PROGRAM STATS

Check out the different types & amounts of debris removed during 2025
by the volunteers of the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Program and sister programs!

COMMONLY FOUND ITEMS:

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|-------|
| Cigarette butts | 16,824 | Beverage bottles (glass) | 897 |
| Food wrappers | 7,180 | Beverage cans | 1,643 |
| Take out containers (plastic) | 914 | Grocery bags (plastic) | 1,316 |
| Take out containers (foam) | 550 | Other plastic bags | 1,505 |
| Bottle caps (plastic) | 5,093 | Paper bags | 585 |
| Bottle caps (metal) | 1,617 | Cups & plates (paper) | 1,118 |
| Lids (plastic) | 1,320 | Cups & plates (plastic) | 718 |
| Straws/stirrers | 2,185 | Cups & plates (foam) | 1,062 |
| Forks, knives, spoons | 645 | Beverage Sachets/Pouches | 94 |
| Beverage bottles (plastic) | 3,894 | | |

FISHING GEAR:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Fishing buoys, pots, and traps | 162 |
| Fishing nets & pieces | 331 |
| Fishing line (1 yard = 1 piece) | 468 |
| Rope (1 yard = 1 piece) | 455.5 |
| Foam Dock Pieces | 146 |

PACKAGING MATERIALS:

| | |
|---|-------|
| 6-pack holders | 62 |
| Other plastic/foam packaging | 1,728 |
| Other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.) | 588 |
| Strapping bands | 279 |
| Tobacco packaging/wrap | 667 |

PERSONAL HYGIENE:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Condoms | 62 |
| Diapers | 90 |
| Syringes | 29 |
| Tampons/tampon applicators | 55 |
| Gloves & masks (PPE) | 184 |
| Cotton Swabs | 63 |
| Band-aids | 88 |
| Wipes | 289 |

OTHER TRASH:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Appliances (fridge, washer, etc.) | 19 |
| Balloons | 442 |
| Cigar Tips | 1,601 |
| E-Cigarette waste/Vapes | 93 |
| Cigarette lighters | 173 |
| Construction materials | 968 |
| Fireworks | 7,153 |
| Tires | 52 |
| Electronic Waste | 103 |
| Clothes & Shoes | 747 |
| Toys | 424 |
| Other Plastic waste | 4,249 |
| Metal | 661 |
| Rubber | 519 |
| Paper | 2,820 |
| Cardboard | 606 |

TINY TRASH:

| | |
|----------------|--------|
| Foam pieces | 3,427 |
| Glass pieces | 4,354 |
| Plastic pieces | 18,191 |

2025 CLEANUP SUMMARY:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Number of bags filled | 913 |
| Weight of trash collected (pounds) | 10,187.63 |
| Number of volunteers | 2,164 |



BARRIER ISLAND CLEANUP INITIATIVE

In late 2023, the National Park Service awarded Mississippi State University Extension Service a 3-year award to support volunteer-based efforts to remove marine debris along the Gulf Islands National Seashore. The aptly named Barrier Island Cleanup Initiative is a sub-chapter of the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Program. Our main duties are to promote environmental stewardship within the volunteer and for-hire charter communities through outreach, education, and participation in this new, one-of-a-kind initiative. Cleanups occur on the 2nd Saturday of each month, from April to October. Be sure to check out our website to sign up for April 2026 and other events!



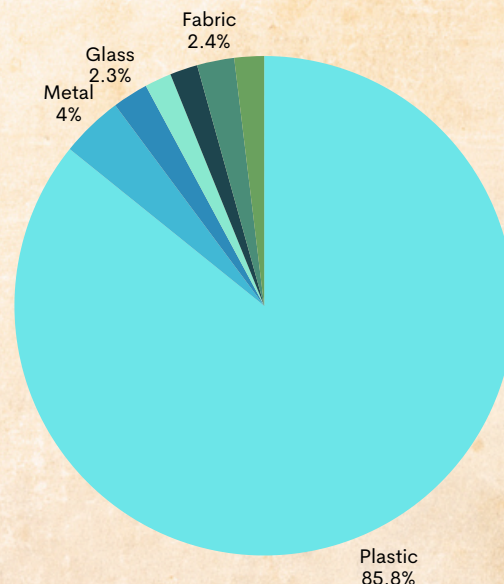
[MSUCOASTAL.COM/ISLAND-CLEANUP](https://msucoastal.com/island-cleanup)



IN 2025,

We hosted **5 volunteer-based cleanups across Cat, Petit Bois, and Horn Islands**. The program received help from **100 participants, 9 for-hire charter captains, and the NPS team**. Captains shuttled volunteers to cleanup locations and took an extra step to help consolidate collected trash. During 2025, volunteers **removed 8,961 pieces of marine debris** with an estimated total weight of over **3,552 pounds!**

With data, we can look for accumulation trends, categorize by marine debris type, and accurate data helps us justify the need for supplemental funding through federal and state grants to fund programs just like this! This year, **85.8% of debris collected was made of plastic!**





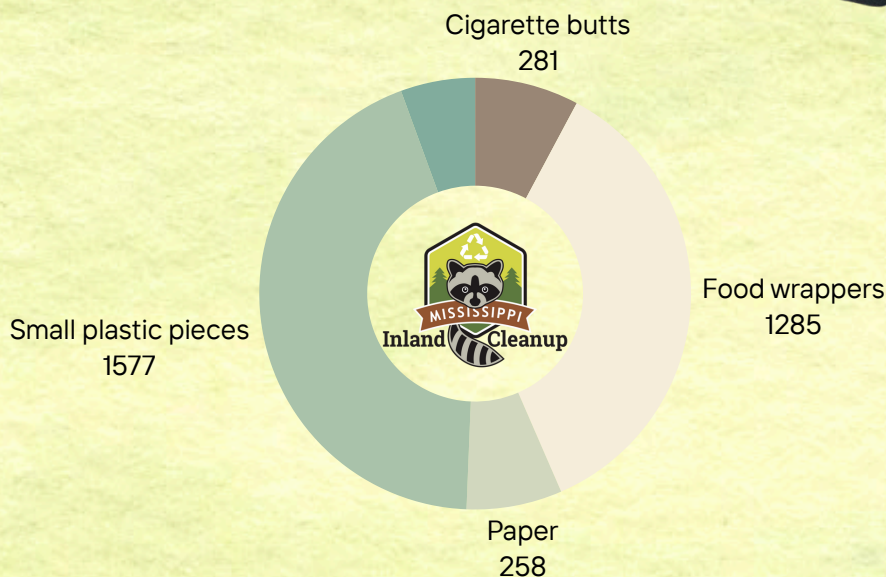
MISSISSIPPI INLAND CLEANUP PROGRAM

Litter is an issue that impairs the environment, stormwater infrastructure, tourism, and industry along inland waterways, which eventually lead to coastal waters.




The Mississippi Inland Cleanup Program was formed with the mission of preventing and removing litter from the inland environment through education, outreach, research, and cleanup events.

In 2025, the program partnered with the Sustainability with Awareness and Prevention Solutions (SWAPS) program which organized or facilitated a total of **9 cleanup events** which attracted **249 volunteers** from schools who contributed **498 volunteer hours to remove 207 lbs. of litter** from the inland roads, waterways, wetlands, and metropolitan areas of southeastern Mississippi. Top litter items removed included small plastic pieces (1,577), food wrappers (1,285), cigarette butts (281), paper (258), and glass pieces (201). During these events, volunteers also collected data on the specific types of litter removed, to identify sources and design targeted prevention methods.

We are working directly with MSCCP in 2026 to bring our shared mission beyond the three coastal counties.



CONNECT WITH US

-  mississippiinlandcleanup
-  msinlandcleanup
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DERELICT VESSELS

Our Gulf-wide project focusing on the assessment and removal of large marine debris has been well underway, with a major emphasis on Abandoned and Derelict Vessels (also known as ADVs). This project is led by the Gulf of America Alliance and made possible with funding from NOAA's Marine Debris Program.

Follow the Coastal Conservation and Restoration socials for updates on the project!

Throughout 2025, the team worked with state agencies (MS Department of Marine Resources, Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, and TX General Land Office) and marine contractors in Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas to remove 57 vessels, which pose as navigational and environmental hazards in our coastal and marine waters. Additionally, our team carried out assessments of ADVs with assistance from the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, covering over 80 miles of shoreline to collect imagery, updated coordinates, and environmental data that supports the removal of vessels. The project has recently entered Phase II, where the team will be working with agencies in all 5 Gulf states to remove dozens of additional vessels.

 CoastalConservationandRestoration

 msu_coastalconservation

 <http://ccrlab.org/derelictvessels>

For more information you can contact the project lead Megan Chevis at megan.chevis@msstate.edu



Introducing MONOFILAMENT RECYCLING PROJECT



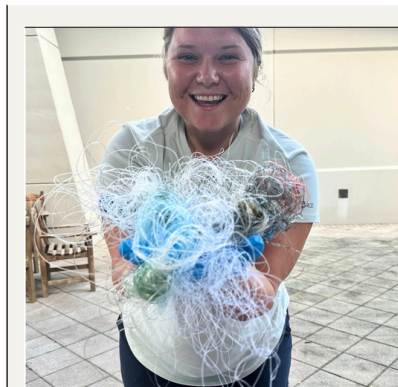
DID YOU KNOW THAT
IMPROPERLY DISCARDED
FISHING LINE CAN HARM
MARINE LIFE, DAMAGE BOAT
PROPELLERS, AND EVEN
ENTANGLE DIVERS?

That is why the Mississippi Monofilament Recycling Program was launched by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) in 2008- to reduce fishing line waste along the Gulf Coast. Recently, our team joined forces with MDMR to help empty all 28 monofilament recycling receptacles each month. We bring the contents back to the Coastal Research and Extension Center, where we analyze the waste using the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP) to better understand what is being thrown into these receptacles- everything from chip bags to clothing and cigarette butts.

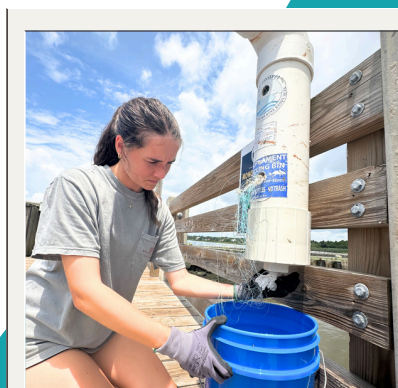
In 2025, new end caps with varying sized holes have been deployed to study the best way to reduce the amount of waste being placed inside the monofilament tubes. Keep an eye out along the coast for some of our new designs and please refrain from placing anything except monofilament into the receptacles.



REMOVED
82.63
LBS OF TRASH
FROM TUBES



8.82 LBS
OF MONOFILAMENT



12.08 LBS
OTHER FISHING DEBRIS

THE MAJORITY OF TRASH COLLECTED IS PLASTIC!

For more information, contact
Keely Colinger
kmc1217@msstate.edu



LITTER GITTERS

A Litter Gitter is a tactical in-stream litter collection device used to intercept floating litter from storm-water runoff. They are cleaned out by the Osprey crew a minimum of twice a month and after major rain events.

In 2025, the four coastal Mississippi Litter Gitters collected **750.15 lbs. of trash** and debris, with **55 lbs. recycled**. Since the program began in 2021, **1,510 lbs. of trash** and debris has been collected with **180.5 lbs. recycled**. This project is currently funded by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

For more information you can contact the project lead, Evelyn McQueen:

✉ evelyn.mcqueen@msstate.edu



IN THE CLASSROOM

Reducing litter and marine debris starts long before a beach cleanup. While cleanups are important to collect data as well as the types and possible sources of that debris, the cycle will never end if we do not stop it at its source. A critical step toward this end is education.

MSCCP visits classrooms in K-12 schools as well as community organizations to teach students about the hazards associated with marine debris and ways to reduce the amount of waste we produce in our daily lives. Students then filter water samples for microplastics and observe them using a microscope.





K-12





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 <http://mscoastalcleanup.org>



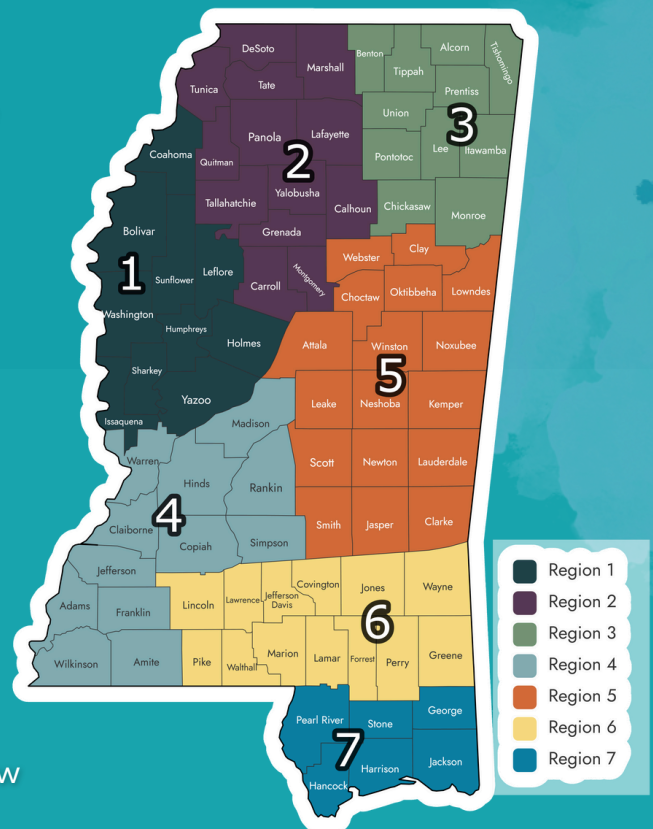
INTRODUCING art doing its part

As part of the EPA Trash Free Waters Art and Slogan Competition campaign, this new project aims to connect Mississippi high school students with the importance of trash free waters in their watersheds through a statewide competition.

The state has been divided into 7 regions with regional hubs to host this competition, and all high schools are eligible to participate. A winner will be chosen from each region to be showcased in a traveling exhibit, with one overall winner being showcased in MSCCP outreach materials and swag items for no less than 2 years. The winning student's school will also receive up to 10 water refill stations to be placed throughout the campus.

We are excited to see student entries and how the students connect with their local watersheds.

For more information and contest rules, click the link below or visit msucoastal.com/artdoingitspart



[MORE INFO](#)



The Sustainability With Awareness and Prevention Solutions team entered its 4th year of teaching plastic and food waste reduction practices focused on inland escaped trash and marine debris prevention. In 2025 SWAPS was part of a large variety of educational endeavors and reached over **1,865 people**. SWAPS worked hard to reach a broad demographic and build connections resulting in over **223 hours of direct classroom education**, **40 hours of Train the Educator courses**, and over **30 hours of field day and hands on learning experiences**.



A few highlights:



SWAPS worked directly with 9 Coastal Mississippi Public Schools and reached over 304 students in their classrooms.



Hosted workshops and classes including 6 official Train the Educator events for MSU Extension agents, teachers, Master Gardeners, and Environmental Education organizations. We provided the necessary equipment for the agents, teachers, and organizations to teach SWAPS in their communities.



Got over 1,500 reusable water bottles, tote bags, to-go cutlery, and beeswax wraps into the hands of participants and teachers.



Built connections with Extensions statewide to bring SWAPS to their programing and collaboration on field days and learning opportunities for Extension/4H agents and students throughout Mississippi.



Built, expanded, and maintained SWAPS to be able to secure a second, larger grant, to continue this work through Train the Educator opportunities and disseminate the program farther through MSU Extensions, Soil and Water Commission, and classrooms in 2026.

SWAPS serves the state of Mississippi and its neighboring regions along the Gulf of Mexico. In 2026 SWAPS is transitioning from classroom based learning to a Train the Educator structure. Train the Educator events are full day trainings for educators and are provided at no-cost to any community, school district, or organization that wants to incorporate low-waste education into their programing.

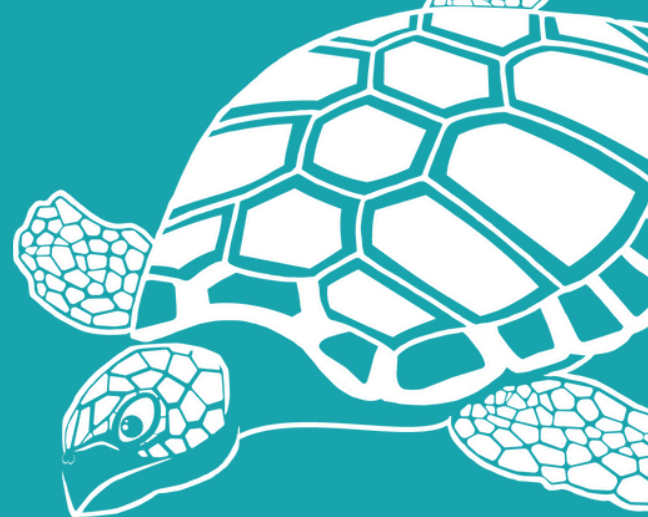
For more information, please visit our website at www.msucoastal.com/swaps for our coordinators' contact information on how to sign-up or if you have any questions!



Vermicomposting our
Fall Pumpkins



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN 2026:



Stay tuned for new partnerships and exciting new initiatives to further the mission of the MSCCP and MSICP programs!

STORM DRAIN PROJECT

Storm drains can be found on every major road, in every parking lot, and in every neighborhood. Many of these drains do not enter the sewer systems, bypassing wastewater treatment and instead heading straight into water bodies, including the Mississippi Sound. Unfiltered storm drains offer a direct path for litter and other pollutants to enter marine environments.

Starting in 2026, the MSCCP will be implementing targeted stormwater filters to assess the impacts of major events on litter loads entering the Sound. This project is currently funded by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.



15
SAVE
THE
DATE
21

2026 EVENTS:



SAND JAM CLEANUP

May 30th, 2026
Pascagoula Beach Park



STAR-SPANGLED CLEANUP


July 11th, 2026
@ multiple sites



ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI COASTAL CLEANUP

October 17th, 2026
@ multiple sites

*Please visit our website for
event details.*

 <http://mscoastalcleanup.org>

MEET *the* TEAM



Dr. Eric Sparks
MSCCP Lead



Evelyn McQueen
MSCCP & MSICP Coordinator



Kristi Gay
Barrier Island Initiative
Coordinator



Elizabeth Englebretson
SWAPS Coordinator



Keely Collinger
SWAPS Coordinator



Keith Chenier
SWAPS Coordinator



Alyssa Rodolfich
Aerial Mapping Coordinator



Megan Chevis
DV Coordinator



Erin Wallace
Communications Coordinator



Tia Gaskin
Program Assistant



Kaylin Bruening
Program Assistant



Maddy Mader
Program Assistant

THANK YOU 2026 SPONSORS



& PARTNERS



We cannot undertake these activities without donations from our great sponsors.

If you would like to support the MSCCP events and its associated educational programming, please consider donating to our cause.

For more information please visit the MSCCP website and click the "[Donate](#)" tab.

mscoastalcleanup.org

Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution.



MISSISSIPPI SOUND
ESTUARY PROGRAM



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