

Strategic Plan Summary

The Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GNDNERR) management (strategic) plan 2022-2026 update is currently in process with NOAA's Office for Coastal Management and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. The updated plan includes a new vision, mission, goals and objectives for the next five years for the reserve and encompasses ongoing work outside of the reserve boundary as well. The updated plan will be approved in Spring 2022. The final, official document will be available ASAP at www.grandbaynerr.org. The GNDNERR staff worked together to determine five goals as a framework for addressing the priority issues at the reserve. All reserve program sectors will work within this strategic planning framework. Each sector will identify specific actions associated with each goal, which will guide our pursuits. The sectors are identified as follows: A, Administration; R, Research and Monitoring; S, Stewardships; E, Education; and, CTP, Coastal Training Program.

Reserve Vision

Our vision is to inspire our community to value, support, and practice ecosystem conservation.

Reserve Mission

The GNDNERR is a leader in science and outreach, in service to our community.

Reserve Priority Coastal Management Issues (page 5)

The GNDNERR priority coastal management issues outlined in our Strategic Plan include: wetland conservation, ecosystem restoration, water quality protection, understanding ecosystem function, understanding contamination, improved coastal management, and outreach and education. The reserve goals, objectives, and actions outlined in our Strategic Plan that relate to the proposed project are as follows:

Goal 1: Systematically collect quality data and answer relevant questions that inform management.

We will systematically collect social science data to improve our understanding of GNDNERR resource uses, users, and human values over time (Objective 1.2; accomplished by R, E, CTP). To do this, we will determine social science indicators to track over time, develop periodic summaries and communications of data for target audiences, and use data to enhance the reserve's existing activities, products, and services. We will aim to have reserve-specific data and scientific knowledge comprise 50% of the reserve's outreach programming (Objective 1.6; accomplished by E, CTP). To do this, we will develop new reserve science-based outreach programs focused on GNDNERR management priorities (listed above) and develop visual aids for target audiences using reserve data and knowledge.

Goal 2: Conserve and manage natural resources to improve ecosystem function

We aim for coastal managers and researchers to be knowledgeable about GNDNERR's natural resource management actions and changes to ecosystem function due to restoration (Objective 2.4; accomplished by all sectors). To do this, we will coordinate and share natural resource management activities and results about changes in ecosystem functions of restored coastal ecosystems to partners. Staff will actively participate in the broader scientific conversation through society memberships, stakeholder meetings, workshops, and/or conferences where they share protocols, data, and knowledge with peers.

Goal 3: Build community connections and relationships to share understanding of coastal ecosystems and inspire people to protect them

This goal is most relevant to the proposed project. Our objective is for Coastal Mississippi and Alabama citizens to know more about the GNDNERR and its work (Objective 3.1; accomplished by all sectors). To do this, we will implement GNDNERR-specific and general estuarine science programming to targeted audiences and

communities, plan and conduct K-12 and adult classroom and/or field-based programs on relevant coastal resources and resource management, conduct science-based community events to promote conservation of GNDNERR resources, and collaborate with Friends of the Grand Bay NERR to increase volunteer participation.

Our next objective under this goal is for reserve visitors to broaden their knowledge of Grand Bay ecosystems (Objective 3.2; accomplished by all sectors). To do this, we will engage visitors through dynamic interpretive center displays and kiosk surveys to gain feedback on experience, implement citizen science programming to involve the local community in reserve activities, create new visitor experiences such as new trails and pollinator garden with interpretive signs and materials, and develop interpretive materials for distribution.

Goal 4: Communicate efficiently and effectively

In addition to the proposed project advancing visitor learning, it will help staff be better communicators. We aim for staff to demonstrate their ability to effectively communicate using established platforms (Objective 4.1; accomplished by all sectors). To do this, we will update and maintain reserve signage, promotional materials, and field guides.

Effective communication is a two-way process, and we gain valuable insight and learn from our community as well. We will work with reserve audiences to promote awareness and stewardship of coastal resources (Objective 4.2; accomplished by all sectors). To do this, we will ensure two-way communication between the community and the reserve by establishing pathways to hear from community (e.g., surveys, feedback forms, solicitations, etc.), and we will use a variety of communication platforms to reach external audiences (e.g., signage, promotional materials, field guides, newsletters, website, social media).

Goal 5: Streamline administrative functions

Finally, to address our last goal, we will work to make sure facilities are managed and maintained in optimal conditions (Objective 5.3; accomplished by A). To do this, reserve administration staff will identify ways to improve how infrastructure is managed and maintained, and take action to maintain, repair, and upgrade facilities and infrastructure as needed.

Facility Development and Improvement Plan (page 64)

Purpose of Facilities and Construction Principles

The Grand Bay Coastal Resources Center (CRC) is the main facility for the reserve and its overall purpose is to support our programs, our partners' research and conservation efforts, and to provide a place for community. The facility is a key part of our programming both through allowing visitors to be immersed in the habitats being restored and protected.

Improving the GNDNERR Interpretive Center exhibits

In 2016, a terrapin live display was added, and in 2017, a large viewing tank was built. This one live display greatly improved the quality of our outreach in the center. While our other displays are beautiful and tell an interesting story about the reserve and the refuge, they are aging and suffering from wear and tear. Many aspects of the displays are also outdated and unworking. There is a need to improve the displays at the GNDNERR, to update them, and add more live displays. Interactive live displays would greatly enhance the experience in the Grand Bay CRC Interpretive Center.