

Tide Bits, July/August 2010

CCA Alabama Responds to Gulf Oil Spill

CCA Alabama, coordinating with other CCA Gulf states chapters, began implementing its plan for addressing the tragic rig explosion and subsequent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico as soon as news of the spill reached the state. The first element of the plan involved establishing four chapter teams: two in Baldwin County and two in Mobile County. The teams were prepared to assist Alabama's Marine Resources Division of the Department of Conservation where needed. Secondly, the State office launched a program to provide assistance in the form of cleanup supplies to individuals, associations, and other organizations with waterfront exposure to spilled oil.

The State office has been overwhelmed with offers of assistance from CCA members and other conservationists from across the US, Canada, and England. Hundreds of people have volunteered to help with cleanup and habitat restoration.

As progress continues in the cleanup effort, CCA Alabama is moving toward the major element of its plan: habitat restoration. According to CCA Alabama's marine science Bob Shipp, PhD, "Marine species are resilient, habitat is not." Restoring lost habitat will be an ongoing challenge for years to come. Offshore habitat consists of sargassum mats that harbor thousands of larval and juvenile finfish and crustaceans. Inshore habitat consists of oyster beds and grass beds that are vital to inshore species.

Going forward, CCA's Building Conservation habitat program will be an important tool in the long-term recovery of Alabama's coastal fishery.