GulfCorps in Florida

In 2018, GulfCorps launched in Florida with the Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast, operated by Franklin’s Promise. Then, in Year 2 they added Conservation Corps of the Emerald Coast in Escambia County. In Year 3, they added another Emerald Coast Crew from Bay County, FL. The Florida crews partner with Federal and State agencies, as well as local non-profits, to conduct restoration and conservation projects throughout the Florida coast. This work includes locating and removing invasive species; planting native marsh vegetation and restoring pitcher plant bogs and conducting trail and boardwalk maintenance. The two crews in Florida have impacted over 1,300 acres of coastal habitats at 9 different projects during GulfCorps’ first two years.

GulfCorps

Reaching across the Gulf of Mexico, GulfCorps is restoring communities and ecosystems impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The program, with the support of the RESTORE Council and NOAA, is a regional conservation corps that is putting young adults to work restoring and preserving some of the most important places along the Gulf. Working hand-in-hand with local governments, community leaders, and non-profit organizations, GulfCorps crews are committed to broad, positive impact in their communities and across the Gulf of Mexico.
Florida Project Highlights

1 St. Joe Bay State Buffer Preserve
The CCFC crew used chainsaws, brush cutters, and hand tools to clear 434 acres in preparation for prescribed burn and maintenance of fire lines within the Buffer Preserve. The crew also cleared debris from Hurricane Michael along fire lines and performed 84.5 acres of slash pine removal to reduce competition for Longleaf pines. In total, they assisted with the prescribed burning of over 1,000 acres of forest. Lastly, crew members completed 23.55 acres of trail/boardwalk maintenance on a Buffer parcel at Cape San Blas, reestablishing public access to the beach area.

2 Escambia County’s Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve
The CCEC crew members at Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve enhanced their skills at trail maintenance and construction, invasive species management, fire-risk reduction, and native vegetation planting. Working closely with preserve staff, the crew removed invasive species from more than three acres at the preserve, planted more than 33,000 plants, and restored 706 feet of trail.
35K PLANTS PLANTED

24,363 GULFCORPS HOURS

1,367 ACRES IMPACTED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2019

1,093 ACRES OF FOREST/UPLAND CONSERVATION

272 ACRES OF INVASIVE SPECIES TREATED

6 TRAILS/BOARDWALKS CONSTRUCTED OR MAINTAINED

1,052 ACRES OF PRESCRIBED FIRE

26 SHORT-TERM JOBS CREATED IN FIRST 2 YEARS OF GULFCORPS
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 Florida, GulfCorps is working with the Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast (CCFC) and the Conservation Corps of the Emerald Coast (CCEC), both founded by Franklin’s Promise Coalition. Franklin’s Promise Coalition was originally founded in 2014 with a goal of empowering young people to positively impact their lives, their community, and the land that they live on. Young adults in these crews receive job training, leadership skills, academic programming, and other support to help them find careers in the conservation field after their GulfCorps term is completed. In year 3 of GulfCorps, Franklin’s Promise added a third crew – the Conservation Corps of the Emerald Coast in Bay County.
1756.5 hours of work from Corps = $38,028 in match. This also equates to alleviation of some duties allowing staff time to dedicate towards reporting, facility maintenance and monitoring.

—Beth Fugate, Manager, Northwest Florida Aquatic Preserves

Micheal was a CCFC crew member who, after his term, became a Disaster Recover Specialist with Career Source GulfCoast.

Mayson was a CCEC crew member who is returning in Year 3 to serve as a crew leader for the Escambia crew.

**FLORIDA PROJECT PARTNERS**

During the first two seasons of GulfCorps, crews worked on meaningful coastal restoration projects under the direction of a range of federal, state and community partners:

- Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve
- St. Joe Bay State Buffer Preserve
- Tate’s Hell State Forest
- Apalachicola National Forest
- The Nature Conservancy in Florida
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
- Escambia County
- Franklin County
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection

**Potential New Partners for Year 3:**
- Bay County
- Northwest Florida Water Management District
- Florida State Parks
- St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association
- City of Mexico Beach
- City of Panama City Beach

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—Beth Fugate, Manager, Northwest Florida Aquatic Preserves
GulfCorps by the Numbers

- ESTIMATED OVER $190K IN LEVERAGED FUNDING AND MATERIAL COSTS
- 5,728 ACRES IMPACTED
- 965 ACRES OF MARSH/BEACH ENHANCEMENT
- 2,333 ACRES OF UPLAND CONSERVATION
- 47 ACRES OF MARSH/WETLAND PLANTED
- 114K PAID PROJECT AND TRAINING HOURS FOR YEARS 1 AND 2
- 1,871 ACRES OF INVASIVE SPECIES TREATED
- 369 ACRES BEING MONITORED
- 3K+ HOURS OF TIME SAVED BY PROJECT PARTNER STAFF IN YEAR 2

Points on map indicate project locations for all 3 years of GulfCorps.
GulfCorps launched in 2017 when NOAA awarded a $7 million grant to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for the creation of the program, a collaboration of TNC, the Student Conservation Association (SCA), and The Corps Network (TCN).

**The GulfCorps Crews for Year 3:**
- Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast – Franklin County (FL)
- Conservation Corps of the Emerald Coast - Bay County (FL)
- Conservation Corps of the Emerald Coast – Escambia County (FL)
- Student Conservation Association – (AL)
- Climb CDC (MS)
- Limitless Vistas Inc. (LA)
- Louisiana Conservation Corps (LA)
- Texas Conservation Corps (TX)
- American Conservation Experience (TX)

**YEAR 1**
- 2017: GulfCorps mobilized with one crew in each of the five Gulf states in early 2018 that worked for 6 months. The designated RESTORE Representative from each State provided GulfCorps with a list of projects or partners for the program to get started with in Year 1.

**YEAR 2**
- 2018: In Year 2, the program doubled in size to 2 crews per state, each working about 7 months of time.

**YEAR 3**
- 2019: Now in its third year, there are a total of 11 crews that are working for 8-9 months – the biggest year yet. Project Partners include state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, local/municipal agencies, and academic institutions. TNC, SCA and TCN work closely with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to plan and execute sound conservation and restoration projects and to create a restoration workforce that has high-quality training and proven work experience.

"The crew took pride in what was accomplished, and it showed in the work completed."
—Shelley Stiaes, Refuge Manager for Bayou Sauvage, Bayou Teche and Mandalay National Wildlife Refuges, US Fish and Wildlife Service

"Responsible and engaged, this team gave me great confidence for year three."
—Eric Brunden, Stewardship Coordinator, Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
This project is made possible through funding received from the RESTORE Council and NOAA.