

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### *Brief Description of the selected COE*

In 2015 the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC) selected the Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC) at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) to be the home for Alabama's Center of Excellence (ALCOE). The Alabama MESC is comprised of 23 public and private colleges and universities located throughout Alabama from the mountains to the coast: Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, Athens State University, Auburn University, Auburn University at Montgomery, Birmingham-Southern College, Huntingdon College, Jacksonville State University, Judson College, Samford University, Spring Hill College, Stillman College, Talladega College, Troy University, Tuskegee University, The University of Alabama, University of Mobile, the University of Montevallo, the Universities of North Alabama, South Alabama, and West Alabama. The MESC was founded to focus resources and reduce redundancy in Marine Sciences in higher education while serving as a vehicle for collaborative coastal studies. Dauphin Island Sea Lab was founded in 1972, a former Air Force Base. Please see <https://www.disl.edu/about/our-history> for a history of DISL's facilities, science, and personnel. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab's mission is to become a center for transformative U.S. oceanic and coastal research and education.

### *Overview of focus of the COE*

The ALCOE is focused on RESTORE Act Priority Disciplines 1,2,4, and 5, highlighted below.

- (1) Coastal and deltaic sustainability, restoration and protection, including solutions and technology that allow citizens to live in a safe and sustainable manner in a coastal delta in the Gulf Coast Region;
- (2) Coastal fisheries and wildlife ecosystem research and monitoring in the Gulf Coast Region;
- (4) Sustainable and resilient growth, economic and commercial development in the Gulf of Mexico;
- (5) Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf of Mexico.

### *Summary of the annual performance of the COE*

Of the 15 milestones outlined in the amended Alabama Center of Excellence Federal Award issued in September 2022, three (3) were completed in FY2023: Milestone 8: RFP1 Subcontract generation; Milestone 9: Host one innovative Science Communications training workshop; and Milestone 10: Develop, advertise, and receive proposals related to RFP2.

Work continued on the following components of the Center of Excellence:

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
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Grant Number 1 RCEGR010006-01-00

**Wet lab:** Work continued to complete the final build out of the aquariums in the wetlab. Both oyster projects funded under RFP1 (Lead PIs Krause and Hoadley) will be utilizing the system during the next reporting period.

**ARCOS:** Maintenance of the ARCOS network continued throughout the reporting period.

- a. The Battleship station is now reporting on the website.
- b. Cedar Point is back online after lightning strike in June 2023.
- c. Meaher Park is also back in the real-time network
- d. Website is also now reporting data being collected from the NEERS network at Week's Bay.
- e. New ARCOS display in the aquarium has been updated to include the proper attribution statement in the display slideshow

**RFP1:** Monthly RFP1 project check in calls have been held, and all groups are making progress toward their milestones. Annual reports from the PIs were due September 15.

**RFP2:** RFP2 was released April 10, 2023 with a proposal deadline of June 15, 2023. The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant panel review was held September 25, and identified 7 out of the 11 received proposals as fundable. Two additional proposals need further review. During the next reporting period, the RFP2 panel will submit summaries to Alabama-Mississippi Sea Grant Consortium, award selections will be made, and contracts will be executed.

**Monitoring:**

- a. In September 2023, ALCoE participated in the annual MarineGeo marsh and seagrass sampling. Permanent monitoring sites are located in Mobile (Point aux Pins and West Fowl River) and Baldwin (Robinson and Rabbit Island) County
- b. Work continued to process the samples taken during 2022. Preliminary results are being evaluated, as is the workflow for sample processing. Some inefficiencies have been identified and are being corrected so that processing will be effective and move faster.
- c. Analysis of eDNA continued through the reporting period.

**Scientific Communication:** Workshops were held May 9, 2023, and May 16, 2023. The milestone is complete, but DISL does anticipate hosting future virtual workshops as a result of their success and the cost-savings of hosting them virtually.

## Programmatic Elements

### Award Recipient

**Treasury – ADCNR:** Treasury issued an amendment to the federal award to ADCNR on September 14, 2022. The amendment extended the period of performance to September 30, 2025. ADCNR executed the sub-award amendment extending the period of performance with MESC on November 7, 2022, and conducted routine monitoring and reporting, and participated in routine meetings with the Center of Excellence. Additionally, ADCNR holds a monthly monitoring call with Treasury and MESC.

### Award Sub-recipient/Consortium Lead

#### **ADCNR – Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium:**

During the reporting period, ADCNR and MESC conducted routine monitoring and reporting activities, including monthly reporting submittal and monthly status calls, and participated in routine meetings.

During the next reporting period, MESC will work to finalize scopes of work and fully execute subawards with each of the investigators from successful RFP#2 proposals.

## Financial Elements

### Award Recipient

Recipient:	Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Award Amount:	\$8,454,643.00
Expenditures to Date:	\$1,421,017.35
Funds Leveraged:	\$0.00

### Award Sub-recipient/Consortium Lead

Sub-recipient:	Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium
Sub-award Amount:	\$8,368,353.00
Expenditures to Date:	\$1,365,793.78
Funds Leveraged:	\$0.00

## Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Elements

### *Relevant Synergies/Collaboration with other RESTORE funding streams*

Alabama’s Center of Excellence (ALCoE) participates in bimonthly calls with the Gulf Restoration and Science Programs Coordination Forum. This forum is lead by the NOAA RESTORE Science Program and works to facilitate collaboration between the different RESTORE funding streams. ALCoE joined one of the working groups examining the metrics used for program success and transfer of research to various stakeholders including State resource managers.

### *Relevant Synergies/Collaboration with other DWH funding mechanisms*

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Currently, ALCoE does not have any synergies/collaborations with other DWH funding mechanisms to report.

*Opportunities*

Currently, ALCoE does not see any need for modifications to existing laws or program rules to improve the COE grant program.