

Coastal Mississippi Master Naturalist Program Syllabus

2019

Mississippi State University
Coastal Research and Extension Center

September 5th – October 11th

Purpose

To provide an intensive short-course for citizens who are interested in learning more about natural resources. Upon completion of the course and the final requirement for certification, participants empowered with their newly attained knowledge will be able to better serve their communities by providing technical assistance regarding natural resources through education, outreach, and service.

Course Objectives

1. Expose participants to the fundamental principles of natural resource ecology and management through classroom instruction, field activities, readings, team exercises, and volunteerism.
2. Provide participants with long-term technical resources for life-long learning.
3. To expand the educational capabilities of Extension by the dissemination of natural resource management information to individuals and groups in the community by providing developing a supply of dedicated and informed volunteers to assist in the delivery of this information.

Requirements

The *minimum* training requirements include 40 hours of combined classroom and field experiences. These educational sessions were designed to expose students to a wide variety of natural resources disciplines, providing them with a high-quality learning experience. The sessions have not only been designed to teach the students, but also to provide them with access to the resources that they need in order to teach this information to others in an interesting, useful and meaningful way.

To become a Certified Mississippi Master Naturalist, a trainee must complete the basic training course (minimum of 40 hours). To maintain their certification, each Master Naturalist must complete the following in each calendar year following basic training course completion:

- Obtain a *minimum* of 8 contact hours of approved advanced training.
- Complete a *minimum* of 40 hours of approved volunteer service.

Class Attendance

The participant is responsible to attend all classes to earn certification or is required to make up the course through attending an advanced training class to count as make-up. The advanced training class must be approved by the Mississippi Master Naturalist Program Committee or the class taken during the next training cycle. If an advanced training class is used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as advanced training. If a participant must miss more classes than the standards allow an exception to the rule in special circumstances, such as medical problems, family illness, accidents, etc. accommodations can be made. However this should be the exception not the rule. Until these classes are made up, a volunteer cannot become a Certified Mississippi Master Naturalist, but may earn volunteer service hours or advanced training hours towards certification. Upon completion of all the requirements within the first year, a Mississippi Master Naturalist volunteer becomes certified and is awarded a state certificate.

Group Project

During the second meeting of the course, participants will be assigned to work in teams. The group will select a specific topic (e.g., invasive species, restoration, etc.) and be responsible for developing and presenting a lecture on that topic (15 min). Additionally, the group will be responsible for developing an educational tool idea, related to the chosen topic (e.g., signage, activity, brochure, etc.). The tool idea will be presented immediately following the lecture on that topic during the final class meeting.

The groups must inform the instructor by the end of the fourth week of class what topic they have selected for their course project.

Class Meetings and Field Tours

See the tentative schedule below in the *Detailed Class Schedule* section. Plans are still being finalized and participants will be informed of the final plans two weeks prior. Participants will be required to provide their own transportation, food, and drink to all classes and field trips. Carpooling will be discussed during class.

Most class meetings will involve classroom instruction and hands-on activities which will require participants to wear outdoor clothing. This includes:

- Boots (water activities may require rubber boots)
- Long sleeves and long pants
- Rain wear
- Sunblock and insect spray

Food

All participants are expected to pack their own food and drinks for each meeting. During extended class meetings some light snacks and drink may be provided.

Continuing Education Units (CEU)

Completion of this course qualifies you to receive 4 CEU credits through the Mississippi State University Extension Service Center for Continuing Education. If interested in getting CEU credits, an online application and \$40 payment is due within 2 weeks of course completion. Contact class organizer for more information.

Detailed Class Schedule

September 5, 2019 (Thursday)

Location: Coastal Research and Extension Center

Address: 1815 Popp's Ferry Rd., Biloxi, MS 39532

- 5:30 p.m. *Introduction, Master Naturalist Program*
Dr. Eric Sparks, Assistant Extension Professor of Estuarine and
Wetland Ecology, Mississippi State University
- 6:00 p.m. *Pre-Test*
- 6:45 p.m. *An Introduction to Ecology*
Dr. Eric Sparks

September 6, 2019 (Friday)

Location: De Soto National Forest, Wiggins, MS

Address: 654 Frontage Dr., Wiggins, MS 39577

- 9:00 a.m. *Forest Ecology Field Trip*
Tate Thriffiley, Ecologist, De Soto National Forest Service

September 10, 2019 (Tuesday)

Location: Coastal Research and Extension Center

Address: 1815 Popp's Ferry Rd., Biloxi, MS 39532

- 5:30 p.m. *Entomology*
Dr. Blake Layton, Extension Professor of Urban Entomology,
Mississippi State University

September 14, 2019 (Saturday)

Location: Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Address: 6005 Bayou Heron Rd., Moss Point, MS 39562

- 9:00 a.m. *Coastal Habitats, Native Plants, and Resource Conservation*
Dr. Jonathan Pitchford, Stewardship Coordinator for the Grand
Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
- 10:30 a.m. *Human Impacts on the Coast (Invasive Species, Eutrophication,
Hardened Shorelines, Microplastics, etc.)*
Dr. Eric Sparks, Assistant Extension Professor of Estuarine and
Wetland Ecology, Mississippi State University
- 12:00 p.m. *Lunch*
- 1:00 p.m. *Field Tour*
Drs. Jonathan Pitchford and Eric Sparks

September 21, 2019 (Saturday)

Location: Gulf Coast Research Lab

Address: 703 E Beach Dr., Ocean Springs, MS 39564

9:00 a.m. *Coastal and Estuarine Ecology Field Trip*
Drs. Marcus Drymon and Eric Sparks, Assistant Extension
Professors, Mississippi State University

September 24, 2019 (Tuesday)

Location: Coastal Research and Extension Center

Address: 1815 Popp's Ferry Rd., Biloxi, MS 39532

5:30 p.m. *Introduction to Fish and Fisheries Management*
Amanda Jefferson, Extension Associate, Mississippi State
University

7:30 p.m. *Fish Identification Activity*
Amanda Jefferson

September 28, 2019 (Saturday)

Location: Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge & Pascagoula River Audubon
Center

Address: 7200 Crane Ln., Gautier, MS 39533 & 5107 Arthur St., Moss Point, MS 39563

8:00 a.m. *Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge Tour (Sandhill
Crane Biology/Ecology, History of the Refuge, Dusky Gopher Frog
Translocation Project, Volunteer Opportunities at the Refuge)*
Angela Dedrickson, Wildlife Biologist, US Fish and Wildlife
Service

12:00 p.m. *Lunch*

1:00 p.m. *Pascagoula River Audubon Center Informational Session and Tour*
Susan Stachowski, Center Manager, Pascagoula River Audubon
Center

1:30 p.m. *Pascagoula River Audubon Center Field Trip*
Benny McCoy, McCoy's River & Marsh Tours

October 5, 2019 (Saturday)

Location: Coastal Research and Extension Center & Jones Park

Address: 1815 Popp's Ferry Rd., Biloxi, MS 39532 & US-90, Gulfport, MS 39501

8:00 a.m. *An Introduction to Ornithology*
Dr. Mark Woodrey, Assistant Research Professor of Avian
Ecology for Mississippi State University and Research
Coordinator for Grand Bay NERR

- 10:30 a.m. *Field Tour*
 Dr. Mark Woodrey
- 1:00 p.m. *Lunch*
- 1:30 p.m. *Microplastics Lab*
 Amanda Sartain, Marine Debris Specialist, Mississippi-Alabama
 Sea Grant

October 11, 2019 (Friday)

Location: Coastal Research and Extension Center

Address: 1815 Popps Ferry Rd., Biloxi, MS 39532

- 5:30 p.m. *Post-Test*
- 6:00 p.m. *Volunteering*
 Dr. Eric Sparks, Assistant Extension Professor of Estuarine and
 Wetland Ecology, Mississippi State University
- 6:30 p.m. *Class Project Presentations*
- 9 p.m. *Class Evaluations*
- 9:30 p.m. *Awarding of Master Naturalist Certificates*

Advanced Training Requirements

The purpose of advanced training is to provide Mississippi Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Also, advanced training on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Master Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts. Although the Mississippi Master Naturalist program may occasionally provide statewide or regional advanced training opportunities, it is generally the responsibility of the chapter to insure that there are sufficient advanced training opportunities offered so that members can attain their 8-hour minimum requirement.

The Advanced Training opportunity should promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills, provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts, direct trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services, provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts, take advantage of local partnerships, provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics, build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local chapter, provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Mississippi.

At the conclusion of the course, participants will be provided a list of approved advanced training opportunities.

Volunteer Service Requirements and Guidelines

In order to attain certification, the trainee must complete a minimum of 40 volunteer service hours on pre-approved projects within one year of the initial training series. In order to retain the title of Certified Mississippi Master Naturalist, a volunteer must complete another 40 service hours on pre-approved projects in every subsequent year. Volunteer service hours are those direct contact hours spent on Mississippi Master Naturalist projects approved by the Mississippi State University Extension Service Master Naturalist Committee. Service activities relating to the development and management of a local chapter, such as serving as a board member, should receive volunteer service credit hours (See Volunteer Service Examples Table below for more information).

Similar to the advanced training requirements participants will be provided a list of partnering organizations that can provide approved volunteer opportunities. Also several representatives of these organizations will be present during the final course meeting to interact with the course participants.

Certification

A volunteer shall be presented with a Mississippi Master Naturalist certificate when that volunteer has completed all of the required 40 hours of Mississippi Master Naturalist training; the minimum 40 hours of service; and the minimum 8 hours of advanced training. Each of the above requirements must be completed within the first year of that volunteer's involvement in the Mississippi Master Naturalist program. However, volunteers are encouraged to begin service and training at the same time.

Volunteer Service Examples

Bad/Unacceptable	Better	Best
Planting exotic plants at a local school.	Planting native plants or a Wildscape at a local school.	Leading 5th graders and staff in implementing a native plant garden/Wildscape at a local school.
Cleaning cage at Museum or zoo.	Assisting staff in maintenance of a specific exhibit through design, educational material, etc.	Leading interpretive programs at local museums, zoos, and nature centers that is in partnership with the local chapter.
Maintenance at a private native plant nursery.	Maintenance of a demonstration garden at a park/nature center or being part of a native plant propagation team.	Holding a workshop on how to install and maintain a wildscape or other similar type of native habitat.
Conducting wildlife management activities on your own land.	Conducting wildlife management practices/activities on public land (e.g., assisting in biological surveys, removal of invasive species).	Teaching/assisting landowners to develop their own wildlife management plans that the landowner would carry out.
A teacher receiving service credit for natural resource education activities he/she conducts in their classroom.	A teacher receiving service credit for natural resource education activities he/she conducts as an unpaid after school Environmental Club leader.	A teacher /volunteer who organizes and conducts a natural resource education workshop for other Master Naturalists or the general public.
Stream clean-up by a volunteer.	Volunteering for a stream clean-up activity such as Adopt-A-Stream.	In coordination with Adopt-A-Stream program or other non-profit organization host a stream clean-up or restoration activity.
Receiving service credit for time spent serving as a Board or Committee member for another natural resource/environmental organization NOT in partnership with your local Mississippi Master Naturalist Chapter.	Receiving up to a set limit of service credit (e.g. 10 hours per year as set by your local chapter) for serving as a Board or Committee member for another natural resource/environmental organization that is ALSO a partner with your local chapter, providing the chapter with resources such as meeting space at little or no cost.	Receiving service credit for time spent serving as a Board or Committee member for a natural resource/environmental organization in partnership with your local chapter and because the organization invited you to serve and represent your local Master Naturalist Chapter in this capacity.
	Conducting endangered species surveys; developing nature trails or habitat brush piles at a local park/nature center which is in a	Maintaining a nature classroom/training area for that same partner who also allows the chapter to keep an office and/or

	partnership with your local chapter.	hold chapter meetings in this same space.
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