



2008
Annual Report
United for a healthy gulf



WWW.HEALTHYGULF.ORG

The Gulf Restoration Network

The Gulf Restoration Network (GRN) works to build a unified voice for the health and sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico. Created in 1994, the GRN leads a diverse coalition of public interest, environmental organizations, and individuals. The GRN is committed to uniting and empowering citizens to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf Region. Our vision is that the Gulf of Mexico will continue to be a natural, economic, and recreational resource that is central to the culture and heritage of five U.S. states and three nations.

The GRN achieves effective results through using current scientific research and community organizing to demand responsible action from local, regional, and national decision makers. We believe that the GRN's greatest strength comes from our ability to take on campaigns and issues where the scope is larger than one individual organization and where we can help groups across the region learn from the experience of others.

We provide technical support and mentoring to member groups. We play a pivotal role in providing our members with the Gulf-wide strategic collaboration and campaign support needed to successfully address environmental threats in their community. The staff of the GRN leads campaigns on issues affecting the entire Gulf region including: wetlands, fisheries, water quality, and endangered species.



A Great Natural Resource

The past year has been another very successful period for the Gulf Restoration Network, with many significant victories which are reviewed in this report. I commend the director and the GRN staff for their dedicated service to this organization and to the Gulf of Mexico environment.

I would also like to thank all of the members of GRN's Board of Directors for their help in advising and guiding the mission of GRN. There have been significant changes in the composition of the Board during the past year, with several long-time members going off the Board to make room for six new members and new ideas. My thanks to former Board members Nancy Adams, Page Williams, Juan Parras, and Mark Davis for their many years of volunteer service to GRN. However, Page, Nancy, and Mark will be continuing their service by spear-heading a new endeavor for GRN, the establishment of an Advisory Board made up of individuals with unique knowledge and skills to enhance those of the Board of Directors, including scientific, legal, and environmental expertise. If you

would like to be considered for membership on this Advisory Board or the GRN Board of Directors, please contact me at bhastings@knology.net. Also, feel free to nominate others for either of these Boards who may have an interest in the mission of GRN and/or appropriate expertise in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Gulf of Mexico and its rich coastline is a great natural resource, and GRN is a great conservation organization. Let's all help to support both.



Robert W. Hastings
GRN Board Chair

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Please go to www.healthygulf.org/board for biographies of members of GRN's Board of Directors.

A Banner Year

For the Gulf Restoration Network, 2008 was a banner year... Thanks to support from our individual, corporate, and foundation donors, we have been able to continue our work throughout the Gulf to protect the natural resources of the region. In fact, as 2008 came to a close we were planning our expansion of staff into Texas in 2009. With this progress, we move closer to realizing the Board of Directors' vision of having GRN staff working with our members in each of the Gulf states.

In 2008, we also saw the successful end to a battle that the GRN and our partners have waged throughout the fourteen year history of the organization: plans for the Yazoo Backwater Pumps Project have ended. This U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project would have destroyed 200,000 acres of bottomland hardwood wetlands in Mississippi at a cost of \$220 million to taxpayers. It was a veto from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that stopped the pumps plan and only the twelfth veto that the EPA has ever exercised to stop environmentally destructive projects. From this long struggle, we have learned that perseverance does pay off.

We are equally happy to report that in 2008 we saw the end to the threat that fish-killing liquefied natural gas terminals (LNG) posed for the Gulf. TORP announced the abandonment of its project off the Alabama coast, after Alabama's Governor Bob Riley threatened to veto it. Our battle to end this threat to our fishery resources extended across several states and over many years.

Our quest to get the federal government to address another serious threat to the Gulf—the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico—has not yet had the

success we desire. As a result, GRN collaborated with organizations throughout the Mississippi River Basin to petition the EPA to take action to reduce pollution that causes the Dead Zone. GRN also gathered thousands of signatures from citizens throughout the Gulf South, asking the EPA to take action immediately. We are hopeful that the petition will sufficiently pressure the EPA to actively address this serious environmental threat.

These are just a sampling of GRN victories in 2008. During the first fourteen years of its history, the GRN has worked tirelessly to protect the incredible resources of the Gulf that have too often been overlooked. Sadly, it seems that for every success in protecting and restoring our incredible natural resources, another threat arises. It was through the recognition of the growing number of threats to the Gulf that the GRN was formed, and why our work remains so vital.

The GRN Board and staff recognize that we could not have achieved these successes without the moral and financial support of our members, individual and corporate donors, and foundation supporters. With your continued support in 2009 and beyond, the GRN will be able to continue to demand responsible action to restore and protect the natural resources of our Gulf—our home.

United for a Healthy Gulf,

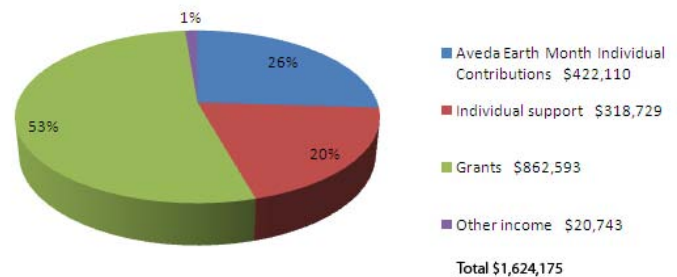


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Executive Director

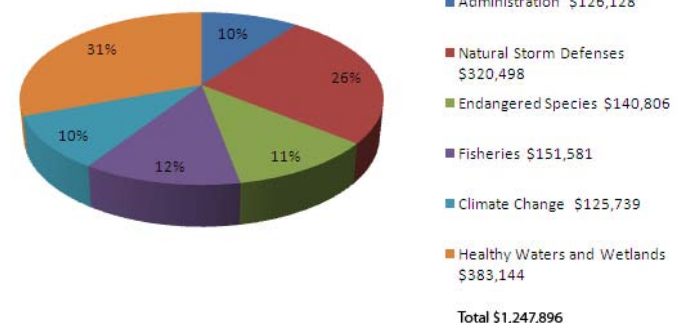


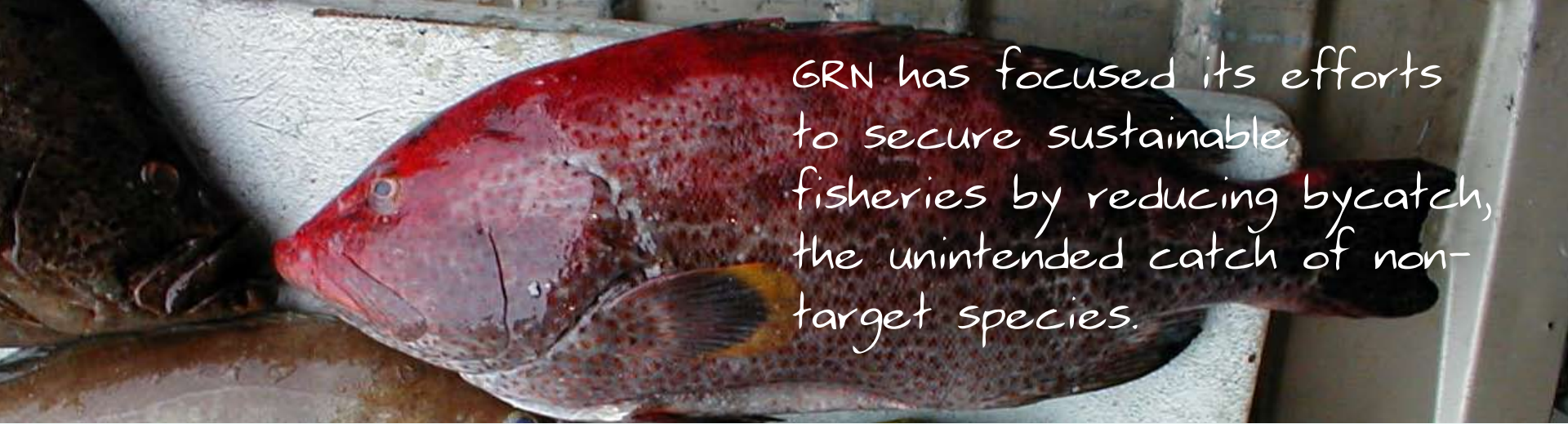
2008 FINANCIALS

revenue



expenses





GRN has focused its efforts to secure sustainable fisheries by reducing bycatch, the unintended catch of non-target species.

Climate Change

The Gulf of Mexico is ground zero for the impacts of climate change. Rising sea-levels, more powerful hurricanes, and invasive species are all serious threats to the natural resources of the Gulf, our homes, and our communities. Coastal erosion and the myriad of problems the Gulf of Mexico is facing are inextricably connected to climate change. The GRN has taken a stand against inaction on this issue, perhaps the most important environmental issue of our time.

In 2008, the GRN worked with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance to establish a regional plan for adaptation to climate change and increase collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies to confront this issue. Through our efforts, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance joined the Storm Smart Coasts Network, a place for coastal decision-makers to find and share the latest information on protecting communities from storms, floods, sea-level rise, and climate change.

Also in 2008, the GRN partnered with the 1Sky campaign to advocate for bold federal climate policy. The GRN advocates for:

- Reducing global warming pollution by investing in clean, renewable energy
- The creation of millions of new green jobs
- A national moratorium on new coal-fired power plants.

The GRN has organized a broad base of grassroots support around this policy platform and demonstrated this support to our elected officials and candidates. The GRN employed a variety of tactics in getting this message across, including organizing and hosting a congressional candidates' forum as part of a National Day of Action. The GRN will continue to educate the public about the threats that climate change poses to the Gulf of Mexico.

Sustainable Fisheries

The Gulf—with half of all the wetlands in the United States, spectacular coral reefs, and miles of sea-grass beds—is legendary for productive fisheries. But, our fisheries are in trouble due to overexploitation and mismanagement. An example is the red snapper, one of the Gulf's hallmark species, which has been fished to just 3% of its historic levels, jeopardizing future fishing opportunities and the red snapper's important role in the Gulf's ecosystem.

GRN has focused its efforts to secure sustainable fisheries by reducing bycatch, the unintended catch of non-target species. This is a significant factor threatening the Gulf's fisheries. In most instances, bycatch is either dead or dying when it is thrown back into the water. Unfortunately, the Gulf's shrimp fishery has some of the largest bycatch numbers in the nation. For every pound of shrimp that makes it to market, four pounds of other marine life are thrown overboard. The Gulf is also home to a majority of menhaden fisheries. This fishery has few restrictions on it and is poised to explode if an expected boom in fish farming develops. Concerns about the menhaden fishery include the accidental capture of millions of pounds of sea life, such as sharks and marine mammals, and a significant reduction of food sources. Menhaden provide a crucial ecosystem link between the primary producers of energy—plants—and the upper levels of the food chain including red drum, sharks, dolphins, pelicans, and many other sea life.



Save Our Cypress

In 2008, the grassroots efforts to save the Gulf's cypress forests began to pay off. GRN and our allies in the Save Our Cypress Coalition saved tens of thousands of acres of cypress forests in Louisiana from being shredded into garden mulch. Home Depot and Lowe's committed to no longer sell cypress mulch from coastal Louisiana. Wal-Mart went a step further by ceasing to sell mulch from cypress forests growing anywhere in Louisiana.

However, all three companies must do more to uphold their corporate environmental policies when it comes to protecting cypress forests. Throughout 2008, GRN pressured these companies to save our cypress across the entire Gulf region with postcards, phone campaigns from constituents and members, and local rallies. To highlight the importance of cypress forests to the coastal economy and local culture, in the spring of 2008, GRN organized a Louisiana crawfish boil during a cypress

mulch demonstration at the Lowe's corporate headquarters in Mooresville, North Carolina. And in December, GRN hosted a crab boil at the Home Depot headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia.

GRN also continued to circulate educational Mulch Matters Kits among garden clubs showing concerned citizens the various sustainable alternatives to cypress mulch. Media coverage ranging from *The Charlotte Observer* in North Carolina to *Ft. Myers News-Press* in Florida kept the public informed and engaged with the issue.

Gulf Restoration Network and the Save Our Cypress Coalition continue to call on Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart to stop selling unsustainable cypress mulch, no matter where it is harvested.

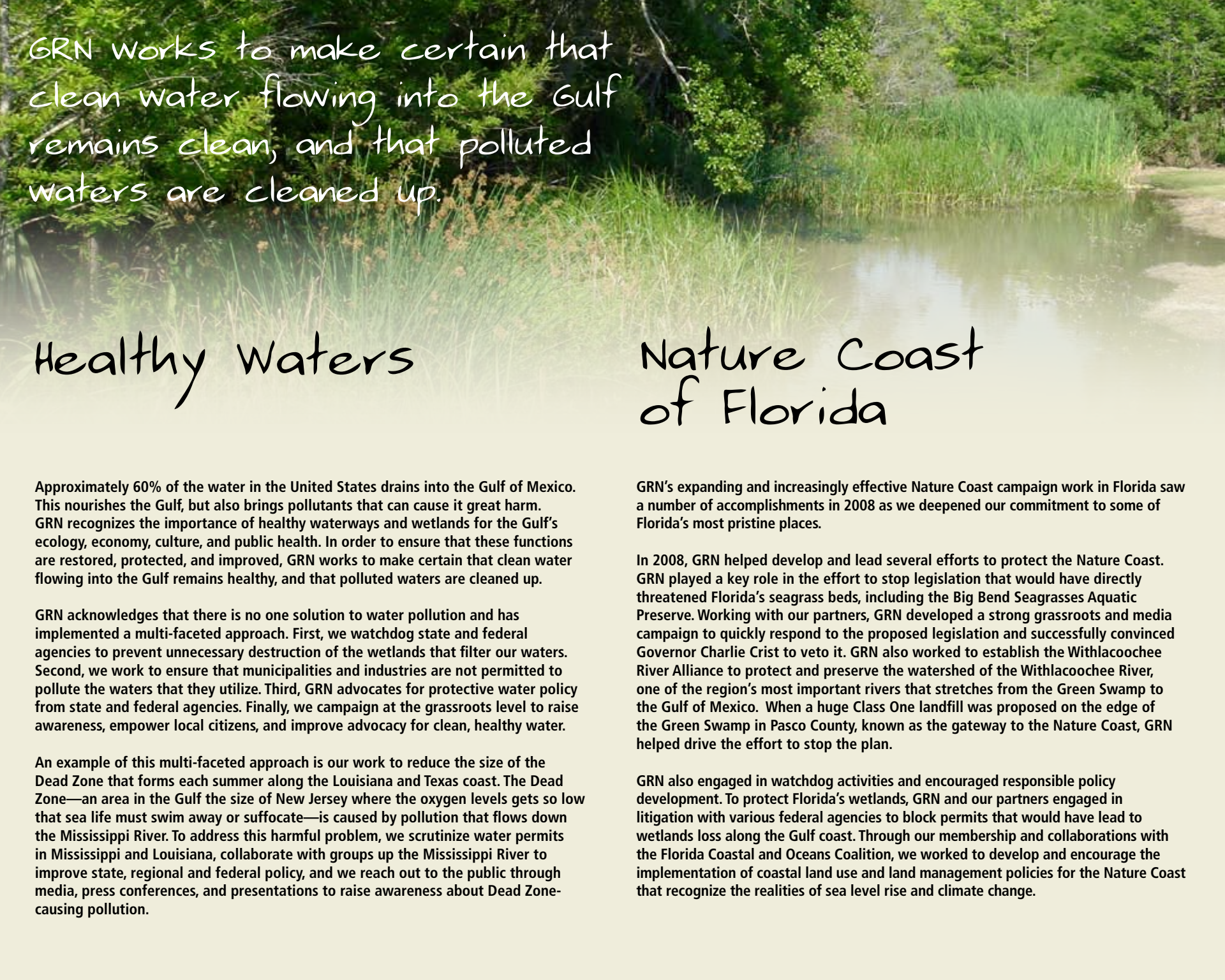
Natural Storm Defense

Post-Katrina, GRN has worked tirelessly to educate the public about the importance of our natural coastal lines of defense—such as barrier islands, marshes, and swamps—that reduce the impacts of storms. These coastal regions are also vital as homes to wildlife and have the ability to prevent localized flooding by soaking up rain water. Despite these values, developers are allowed to fill in thousands of acres of wetlands throughout the Gulf, deteriorating our vital protection from catastrophic storms. GRN is working hard to fight this needless destruction of our natural defenses.

In 2008 GRN marked the anniversary of Katrina's landfall by organizing across the United States more than 50 home screenings of the film *New Orleans: Past, Present, Future?*, a series of short documentaries about Louisiana's coastal catastrophe created by filmmaker and GRN collaborator Walter Williams.

Through the work of GRN and other community and environmental groups, Congress voted to shut down a massive navigation canal, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) which destroyed more than 27,000 acres of coastal wetlands and acted as a hurricane highway into New Orleans for Katrina's storm surge. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would begin wetlands restoration to mitigate MRGO's impacts. Louisiana Governor Jindal committed one billion dollars to coastal restoration projects—the single largest commitment so far to the coast. However, with current estimates to rebuild the coast and protect our communities ranging from \$30 to \$50 billion dollars, it's going to take much more work to save Louisiana.





GRN works to make certain that clean water flowing into the Gulf remains clean, and that polluted waters are cleaned up.

Healthy Waters

Approximately 60% of the water in the United States drains into the Gulf of Mexico. This nourishes the Gulf, but also brings pollutants that can cause it great harm. GRN recognizes the importance of healthy waterways and wetlands for the Gulf's ecology, economy, culture, and public health. In order to ensure that these functions are restored, protected, and improved, GRN works to make certain that clean water flowing into the Gulf remains healthy, and that polluted waters are cleaned up.

GRN acknowledges that there is no one solution to water pollution and has implemented a multi-faceted approach. First, we watchdog state and federal agencies to prevent unnecessary destruction of the wetlands that filter our waters. Second, we work to ensure that municipalities and industries are not permitted to pollute the waters that they utilize. Third, GRN advocates for protective water policy from state and federal agencies. Finally, we campaign at the grassroots level to raise awareness, empower local citizens, and improve advocacy for clean, healthy water.

An example of this multi-faceted approach is our work to reduce the size of the Dead Zone that forms each summer along the Louisiana and Texas coast. The Dead Zone—an area in the Gulf the size of New Jersey where the oxygen levels get so low that sea life must swim away or suffocate—is caused by pollution that flows down the Mississippi River. To address this harmful problem, we scrutinize water permits in Mississippi and Louisiana, collaborate with groups up the Mississippi River to improve state, regional and federal policy, and we reach out to the public through media, press conferences, and presentations to raise awareness about Dead Zone-causing pollution.

Nature Coast of Florida

GRN's expanding and increasingly effective Nature Coast campaign work in Florida saw a number of accomplishments in 2008 as we deepened our commitment to some of Florida's most pristine places.

In 2008, GRN helped develop and lead several efforts to protect the Nature Coast. GRN played a key role in the effort to stop legislation that would have directly threatened Florida's seagrass beds, including the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve. Working with our partners, GRN developed a strong grassroots and media campaign to quickly respond to the proposed legislation and successfully convinced Governor Charlie Crist to veto it. GRN also worked to establish the Withlacoochee River Alliance to protect and preserve the watershed of the Withlacoochee River, one of the region's most important rivers that stretches from the Green Swamp to the Gulf of Mexico. When a huge Class One landfill was proposed on the edge of the Green Swamp in Pasco County, known as the gateway to the Nature Coast, GRN helped drive the effort to stop the plan.

GRN also engaged in watchdog activities and encouraged responsible policy development. To protect Florida's wetlands, GRN and our partners engaged in litigation with various federal agencies to block permits that would have led to wetlands loss along the Gulf coast. Through our membership and collaborations with the Florida Coastal and Oceans Coalition, we worked to develop and encourage the implementation of coastal land use and land management policies for the Nature Coast that recognize the realities of sea level rise and climate change.

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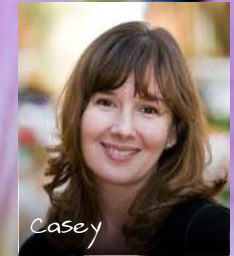
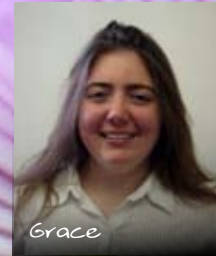
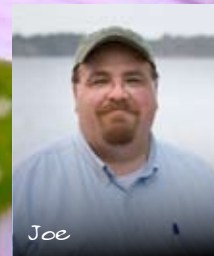
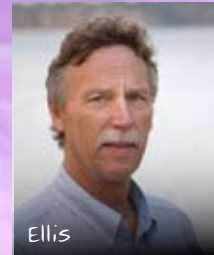
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Eir Danielson, Development Director

Casey DeMoss Roberts, Water Resources Assistant Director

Irene Dowling, Office Manager

Dan Favre, Campaign Organizer

Jonathan Henderson, Louisiana Global Warming Organizer

Raleigh Hoke, Mississippi Organizer

Briana Kerstein, Special Projects Coordinator

Grace Morris, Campaign Assistant

Joe Murphy, Florida Program Director

Ellis Pickett, Texas Campaign Organizer

Matt Rota, Water Resources Director

Collin Fox Thomas, Campus Organizer

Aaron Viles, Campaign Director