



For immediate release

September 18, 2018

Contact: Diana Brewer, Development and Communications Coordinator

251-990-5004 / diana@weeksbay.org

NOAA grant and ADCNR to fund marine debris removal project

FAIRHOPE, AL-- If you boat or fish on Weeks Bay, you have probably seen one or more abandoned boats. There is a sailboat on the eastern edge of the bay, a small cruiser just offshore, and several small boats in Turkey Branch.

The Weeks Bay Foundation and the Weeks Bay Reserve are teaming up to address this issue. With funding from the NOAA Marine Debris Removal Program's Community-based Marine Debris Removal Grant and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the grant partners will remove five derelict vessels and at least five pieces of other large marine debris from the bay and its tributaries.

Derelict vessels are an eyesore, but they can also be navigational hazards, dangerous to wildlife and humans, and a source of pollutants and debris for years to come. As the boats weather, pieces of plastic and fiberglass break off, turning into micro-trash that is often eaten by fish or birds. Fluids from the engine and chemical toilets start to leach into the water and sand, contaminating that area.

There will also be an education component to ensure that all boat owners in the area are aware of their responsibility to keep their boats secure.

"Our goal is to increase awareness of the damage that abandoned vessels cause to the natural environment," Angela Underwood, Education Coordinator for the Reserve said. The *Derelict is Dangerous* campaign will use brochures, signage and workshops to inform the community about how to properly moor their boats and what to do if they see an abandoned boat.

The grant team will work with a local contractor to safely remove the vessels, making sure to not cause undue disturbance to the shoreline or water bottoms.

“Abandoned boats pose a real risk to commercial and recreational boaters,” Eric Brunden, Stewardship Coordinator for the Reserve said. “We want to leave the bay better than it was by removing the derelict vessels, and then restoring the areas that have been damaged by them by planting marsh grass.”

The Foundation and Reserve will kick off the project with a Marine Debris and Microplastics 101 workshop on Wednesday, Sept. 26, at the Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center. This free workshop is open to the public, and will include lunch and boat ride. For more information about the workshop, call 251-928-9792, or visit <http://bit.ly/MarineDebrisWorkshop>

The removal and restoration work will continue through the middle of 2019.

If you would like to contribute to this project as an individual or corporate sponsor, please contact Diana Brewer at diana@weeksbay.org. Additional funding would allow the team to continue working beyond the scope of the grant.