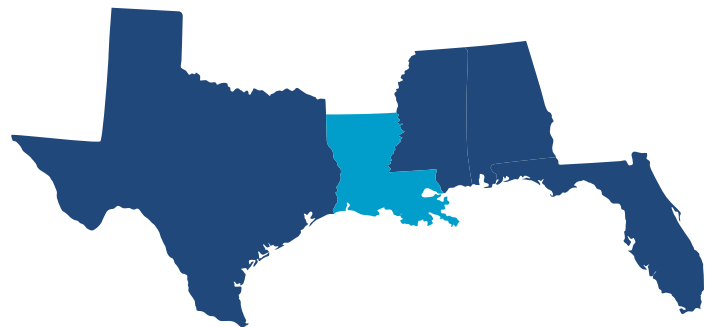




LaCC crew members working with US Fish and Wildlife staff to build a floating recreation platform in Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge on February 2, 2024.
© Bird Davidson/The Nature Conservancy

In 2018, GulfCorps launched in Louisiana with a crew from Limitless Vistas, Inc. (LVI) based in New Orleans. American Youthworks added the Louisiana Conservation Corps (LaCC) based in Baton Rouge in Year 2. Both corps ran crews through the COVID pandemic and continue to run one crew each. The RESTORE Council approved a new award in April 2021 and GulfCorps 2.0 launched in the fall of 2021. These crews partner with federal, state, county and municipal agencies as well as local nonprofits to implement restoration and conservation projects throughout the Louisiana Gulf Coast. The work includes mapping and treating invasive plant species; planting native vegetation; participating in prescribed burns; and building and maintaining trails and boardwalks. Since the GulfCorps Program started, LVI and LaCC crews have impacted over 3,700 acres of coastal habitats on 23 project sites.



LOCATION Louisiana

INVESTMENT \$2.022 million over 8 years

PROGRAM PARTNERS The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Student Conservation Association (SCA), The Corps Network (TCN), The Ember Alliance (TEA)

FUNDING AGENCIES Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

PROJECT DATES 2017 - 2025

This factsheet was prepared by The Nature Conservancy using federal funds under award number IA3CP21CM0001 from the RESTORE Council, and award number NA21NMF4630551 from the NOAA Restoration Center, U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA, the U.S. Department of Commerce, or the RESTORE Council.



Louisiana Project Highlights

① LA1-1a Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge

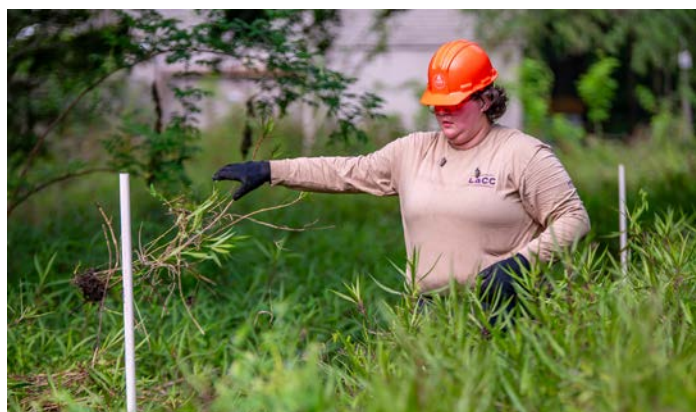
In January of 2018, the LVI crew began partnering with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service at the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. LVI has treated 16 acres of invasive species, maintained and repaired 2 boardwalks, and planted 12 acres of native iris, cypress trees, and hackberry trees. Additionally, LVI and LaCC crews have removed 74 acres of debris from the refuge's wetlands and assisted in creating 12.5 acres of marsh by participating in the annual Christmas tree drop. The Christmas tree drop recycles residents' Christmas trees from the previous year by dropping them along targeted shorelines to create habitat and stop erosion.



LVI crew members assisting USFWS staff installing Christmas trees to create marsh at Bayou Sauvage. Photo Credit Unknown

② LA1-2a Grand Isle

Beginning in the fall of 2020, the LaCC crew began partnering with The Nature Conservancy's Louisiana state chapter at Grand Isle, which aids in restoration efforts across the barrier island. Across Louisiana State University (LSU), TNC, and State Park properties, the crew has treated 11 acres of invasive species and removed 29 acres of storm debris along shorelines. Grand Isle was devastated by several storms during the 2021 hurricane season, shutting down many public access areas. Since then, the LaCC crew has assisted in rebuilding the mile-long trail and boardwalk at TNC's Lafitte Woods Nature Preserve. This trail is a prime location for the public to view hundreds of migratory bird species that visit the island biannually.



LaCC member Alexis Cape removing invasive species at The Nature Conservancy's Grand Isle Preserve. © Michael Dumas Image Arts

Louisiana by the Numbers



GULFCORPS HOURS



ACRES IMPACTED



23

ACTIVE PROJECTS

1,459

ACRES OF UPLAND ENHANCEMENT



3,456

ACRES MONITORED



2,427

ACRES OF PRESCRIBED FIRE



55,280

PLANTS PLANTED



55

ACRES OF WETLAND RESTORATION



43

ACRES OF INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

1,316

ACRES OF WETLAND ENHANCEMENT



As the COVID-19 pandemic began, the GulfCorps Program staff worked to ensure crews remained engaged by developing a virtual curriculum for members that they could use when they were unable to work in the field. Year 3 successfully ended in summer 2020.

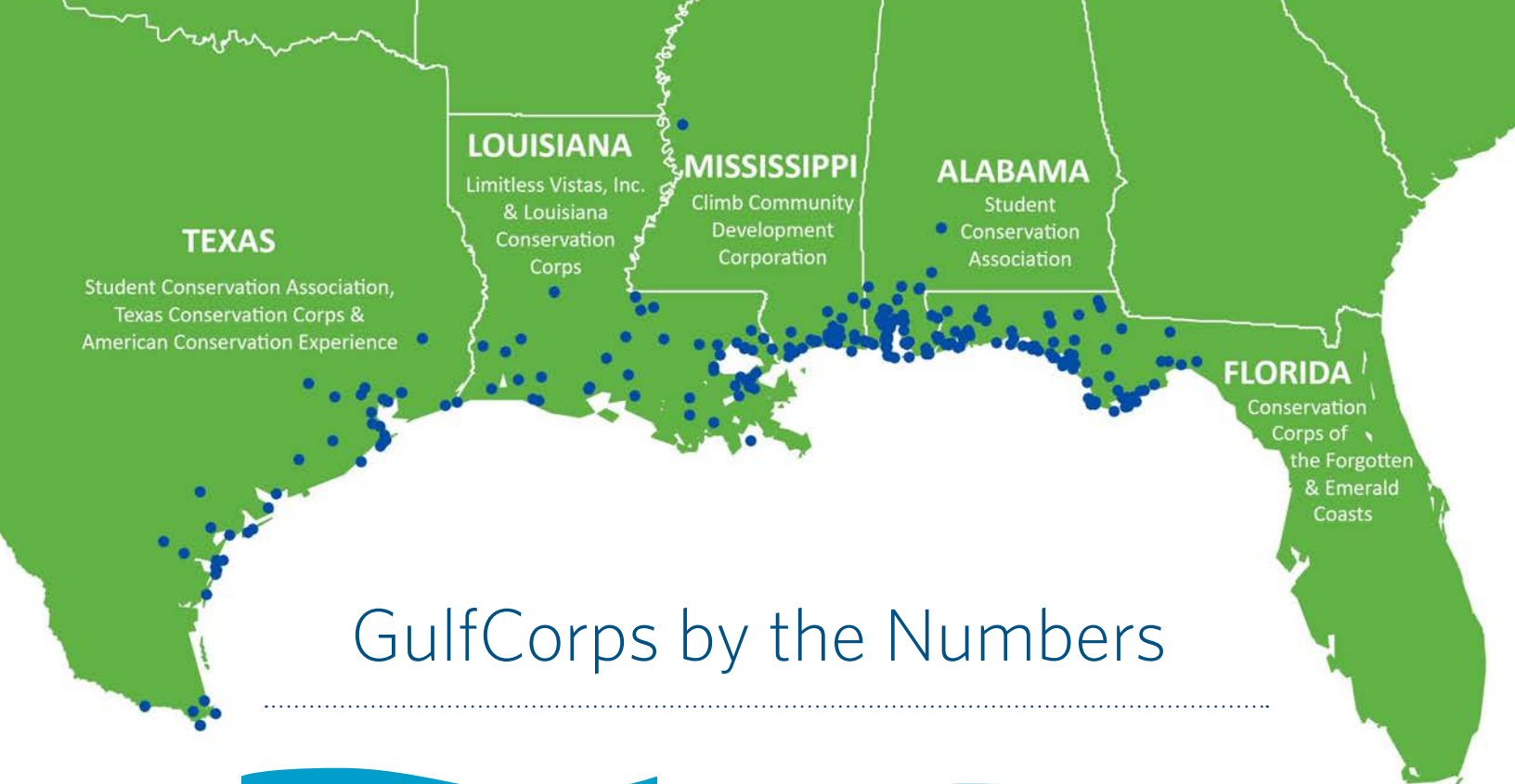
Year 4 launched in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic with a virtual orientation and smaller crews. Despite these obstacles, staff and partners delivered an engaging experience for members via a virtual workforce development curriculum and in-person trainings at the corps level. In April 2021, the RESTORE Council approved a second \$11.9M award for GulfCorps to continue for an additional four years.

The second award for the GulfCorps program (GC2.0) launched in fall 2021. Crews remained smaller as the economy was still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ember Alliance was added as a program partner and SCA created a crew in the Corpus Christi area after American Conservation Experience exited the program. Forty-nine members successfully completed the program during this challenging year.

Year 6 saw the return of in-person orientation with all corps and staff meeting up at Beckwith Camp and Conference Center in Fairhope, Alabama. Additionally, The Ember Alliance delivered a hybrid curriculum (online and in-person) of wildfire and chainsaw training to all crews. This year resulted in 53 standard graduates and the first All-Star graduate!

In Year 7, the program continued to build partnerships with community-based partners and Tribal entities. The crews monitored and/or restored 6,912 acres—the greatest number of acres than any other season. Additionally, TNC secured \$12M from NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience grant program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. This funds 4 more years of GulfCorps work!

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
GulfCorps launched in 2017 when NOAA awarded a \$7 million grant to TNC for the creation of the program.	Year 2 started in September 2018 and doubled in size to two crews per state, each working for about 7 months. Year 2 ended in summer 2019.	In Year 3, 11 crews worked for 8-9 months—the biggest year, yet. Project partners included state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, local/municipal agencies, and academic institutions. TNC, SCA and TCN worked closely with NOAA to plan and execute sound conservation and restoration projects and to create a high-quality restoration workforce that had proven field experience.				



GulfCorps by the Numbers

529,248

TOTAL GULFCORPS HOURS

29,738

TOTAL ACRES IMPACTED



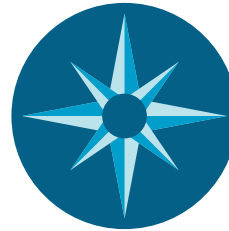
119,142

PAID TRAINING HOURS



188

ACRES OF WETLAND RESTORATION



20,404

ACRES BEING MONITORED



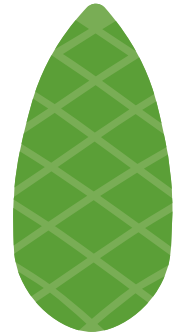
7,397

ACRES OF WETLAND ENHANCEMENT



3,121

ACRES OF INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT



12,759

ACRES OF UPLAND ENHANCEMENT



LaCC crew planting irises at Fountainbleu State Park. © Gary Salathe/Louisiana Iris Conservation Initiative

Louisiana Project Partners

During Years 1 – 7, LVI and LaCC crews worked on meaningful coastal restoration projects under the direction of a range of federal, state, and community partners:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- The Nature Conservancy in Louisiana
- Louisiana Office of State Parks
- National Park Service
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- North Lake Nature Center
- City of New Orleans
- National Forest Service
- Woodlands Conservancy
- Bancker Grotto Memorial Park
- Nicholls University Farm
- Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC)

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.

GulfCorps works with **Limitless Vistas, Inc. (LVI)**, a program established in 2006 with a mission to help young adults obtain the skills and knowledge to become gainfully employed, build a hopeful future, develop civic pride, and establish life-long skills and attitudes.

GulfCorps also works with the **Louisiana Conservation Corps (LaCC)**, part of Austin-based American Youthworks (AYW). Established in 1975, AYW was founded with a mission to provide young people with opportunities to build careers, strengthen communities, and improve the environment through education, on-the-job training, and service to others. LaCC was established in Baton Rouge in 2018 and focuses on state/national disaster response, public land improvements, and habitat restoration.

Member Highlights



© Michael Dumas Image Arts

Owen LeJune

Owen LeJune is a dedicated conservationist who earned a Forest Technology Diploma Certificate from SOWELA Technical Community College. During his time at LaCC, Owen's commitment helped him to excel beyond his boundaries. While in GulfCorps, Owen added to his forestry expertise through training and certifications such as Adult First Aid/CPR, S-212 Wildland Fire Chainsaws, driver's training, and safety risk management. He plans to continue to develop his conservation skills and share his knowledge as a crew leader with the Utah Conservation Corps.



© Michael Dumas Image Arts

Alexis (Lexi) Cape

Alexis (Lexi) Cape is a committed advocate for conservation and her community. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with a minor in Conservation and Wildlife Biology from Freed-Hardeman University. Her term at LaCC allowed her to develop significant conservation experience via hands-on work and training such as S-212 Wildland Fire Chainsaws, driver's training, and safety risk management. Lexi is driven by a passion for education and environmental stewardship, and she is dedicated to making a positive impact locally and in conservation initiatives. Lexi has transitioned to become a Crew Supervisor for LaCC.



LaCC crew group photo during invasive species project work at The Nature Conservancy's Grand Isle Preserve. © Michael Dumas Image Arts

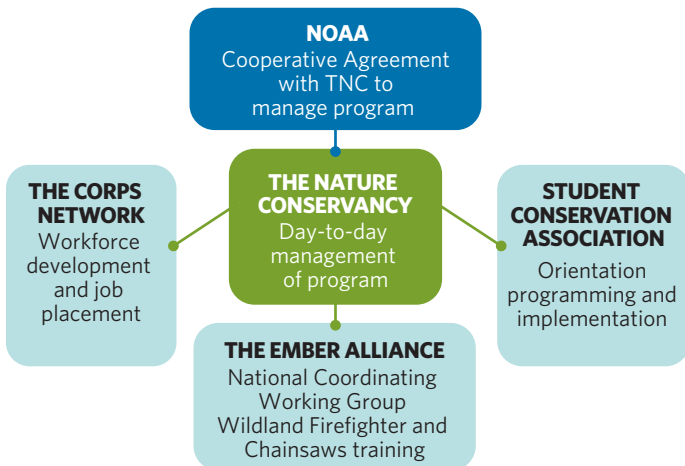
The GulfCorps Program Team

- NOAA Fisheries – Fiscal sponsor, environmental compliance, program advisor
- The Nature Conservancy – Program day-to-day operations, conservation and project planning, monitoring, implementation
- The Corps Network – Workforce development, member preparation to pursue careers in conservation and restoration, job placement, post-program tracking
- Student Conservation Association – Orientation programming and implementation
- The Ember Alliance – National Wildfire Coordinating Group Wildland Fire and Chainsaws training

Through this project, NOAA, TNC and partners are

- Providing support to local conservation corps that recruit young adults from their communities. These young adults want to better their communities through restoration and conservation work. GulfCorps aims to recruit 75% of each crew from Gulf Coast communities.
- Providing young adults with the highest quality training, including project-related training, industry-recognized certifications, and workforce development opportunities. This combination of training, work experience and professional development fuels placements in environmental jobs, internships, externships and post-secondary educational opportunities.
- Working with stakeholders to select restoration projects that address ecological impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and that are consistent with the RESTORE Act's Comprehensive Plan.
- Monitoring progress over the course of the entire program to make certain the work is producing the desired environmental results.

Partner Roles



Sample Project Partners

US Fish and Wildlife Service (FL, AL, LA, MS, TX) National Forest Service (FL, LA, MS), National Park Service (FL, MS, LA, TX), National Estuarine Research Reserves (FL, AL, TX)

Florida – St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve, Escambia County, Northwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Alabama – Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Mobile County Environmental Services, South Alabama Land Trust, Forever Wild

Mississippi – Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, University of Southern Mississippi

Louisiana – City of New Orleans, Louisiana Office of State Parks, Woodlands Conservancy, Recreation & Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC)

Texas – Armand Bayou Nature Center, Galveston Bay Foundation, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Houston Parks Board, Houston Audubon, City of Port Aransas

