

USM Marine Education Center offering summer camps, teacher professional development workshops

News Release

With considerable progress being made in the fight against COVID-19, The University of Southern Mississippi's Marine Education Center (MEC) is delighted to announce the return of in-person summer camps and teacher professional development workshops for 2021.

The MEC works across USM's Coastal Operations to engage members of the public in ocean sciences, promoting careers and fostering community involvement through formal and informal education programs that provide participants with a better understanding of the Gulf.

"All of us at the MEC have missed having people on campus while everyone has been working remotely," said MEC Director Dr. Jessica Kastler. "After a great deal of planning we really are thrilled to welcome people to the MEC, and excited to be starting off with summer camps for kids. Campers will have so many opportunities to learn while they spend time outdoors fishing and working with researchers."

These five-day camps offered by the MEC are rich in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) activities. During these camps, children are exposed to hands-on, immersive learning activities in a unique coastal setting. The center is located at the University's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs, Miss.

In-person camps include:

Shaggy's Angler Camp

June 14-18 for students in grades 6-12. Fishing, fishing, fishing and even more fishing are the focus at the week-long summer camp. Young anglers fish everyday with an expert saltwater fishing

educational team. Campers interact with marine educators and learn a lifetime of saltwater fishing techniques. Participants explore fish biology and behavior and how weather, wind, moon and tides affect fishing. During the week, anglers will learn how to throw a net to catch bait and how to target speckled trout, redfish and flounder. Participants will fish a variety of saltwater habitats aboard vessels and at the islands.

Sharkheads Shark Fest

June 21-28 and June 28-July 2 for students in grades 6-12. Participants will spend a week learning all about one of the ocean's apex predators. Shark Fest participants may encounter Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, blacktip, spinner, hammerhead and bull sharks. Board vessels to long line for sharks and participate in shark research with our USM scientists by catching, tagging and releasing sharks.

The center also will host an Art of Marine Science Virtual Camp on July 26-30 for students in grades 6-12. In this camp, the gulf oyster opens up a week of discovery about the scientific and cultural importance of coastal ecosystems, aquaculture, and biology. Middle and high school students take virtual journeys to a Deer Island oyster farm, an aquaculture lab, and through the galleries of one of the South's treasured museums.

Teacher Professional Development Workshops include the following:

Bayous to Beaches, June 9-11. This workshop adds pathogenic bacteria to the watershed concepts being taught at the MEC. Selected 7-12th grade teachers explore coastal watershed habitats and consider changes in water quality along an estuarine gradient during an educational cruise aboard the Miss Peetsy B.

Service-Learning in Community Resilience, July 7-9. This workshop for 7-12th grade teachers focuses on promoting community resilience to coastal hazards, especially coastal flooding and rising sea levels. Using problem-based learning, teams of students explore historic flooding in their neighborhoods and consider factors that increase community re-

silience to flooding.

Changing Coastlines, July 21-23. Teachers learn about how coastal ecosystems change in response to various processes, including storms and sea level rise. Teachers explore transitions among beach, marsh, upland subtidal habitats. The bulk of the workshop will focus on the history and ecology of Deer Island with a field excursion to collect elevation profile data.

To learn more about the Marine Education Center, and to register for camps and workshops, call 228.818.8095 or visit: <https://www.usm.edu/marine-education-center/index.php>

About The University of Southern Mississippi

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) is a comprehensive public research institution delivering transformative programs on campuses in Hattiesburg and Long Beach, at teaching and research sites across the Mississippi Gulf Coast, as well as online. Founded in 1910, USM is one of only 131 universities in the nation to earn the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education's "R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity" designation, and its robust research enterprise includes experts in ocean science and engineering, polymer science and engineering, and large event venue safety and security, among others. USM is also one of only 37 institutions in the nation accredited in theatre, art and design, dance and music. As an economic driver, USM generates an annual economic impact of more than \$600 million across the state. USM welcomes a diverse student body of more than 14,000, representing 71 countries, all 50 states, and every county in Mississippi. USM students have collected four Truman Scholarships and 37 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships, while also leading Mississippi with 27 Goldwater Scholarships, an honor that recognizes the next generation of great research scientists. Home to the Golden Eagles, USM competes in 17 Division I sports sponsored by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). For more information, visit usm.edu.

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