



MISSISSIPPI MASTER NATURALIST VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Challenges

- Declining resources at the federal, state, and local levels result in lower agency capacity to manage communities' natural resources, particularly at the local level.
- Residents who desire to care for and promote the natural environment need a fundamental knowledge base to maintain and protect the environment.
- Rural communities lack the resources to develop this knowledge base to support the local assets that are an economic driver for many communities.

EXTENSION RESPONSE

The Mississippi Master Naturalist Program began in the late-1990s to teach volunteers to promote conservation and management of the state's natural resources through education, outreach, and service in their communities.

- Mississippi Master Naturalists educate, train, and perform applied research on issues related to coastal and marine environments, as well as promote environmental stewardship across the state.
- Mississippi Master Naturalists work to identify cost-effective habitat restoration techniques and solutions to related issues faced by environmental managers.
- The program has a network of partners including the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant program to support research, education, and outreach for various agencies.
- In 2024, Mississippi Master Naturalists contributed **4,468 volunteer hours** to educate **9,749 individuals**. Their work improved **557 acres** of natural habitat; the estimated value of this work is **\$1.2 million**.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Mississippi Master Naturalists are not paid, but their time has an economic value, and they are likely to expend substantial funds to fulfill their roles. In 2024, the direct value of Mississippi Master Naturalist volunteer activity was valued at an estimated **\$120,681**.
- Master Naturalist volunteer expenditures could support an estimated **19 jobs** earning **\$215,309**.
- These expenditures also could support **\$423,695** in value-added to the state's economy and an estimated **\$1.1 million** in total state output.
- These expenditures could support the generation of an estimated **\$5,822** in municipal taxes, **\$14,514** in local special district (e.g., school district) taxes, and **\$11,775** in county government taxes, for a total of **\$32,111** in local taxes.
- In addition, these activities could generate estimated state taxes of **\$189,068** and federal taxes of **\$295,060**.



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TAKING CARE OF WHAT MATTERS