Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station

Institutional Effectiveness Report: Calendar Year 2017:

Special (Annual) Report Section Highlights (1/1-17 – 12/31/117)



OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM RESOURCES and I.E. TIME-FRAME

The Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station (ERS) had one of its most productive years of use and self-generated funding activities in Calendar Year 2017--its 32nd year of operation--as a program supporting environmental research, university education and public outreach activities for Southeastern Louisiana University and the surrounding regional community it serves. The station is the university’s primary means of access to the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Estuarine System via two primary sites: (1) the Boatshed/Classroom/Parking Lot Facility on Galva Canal in Manchac (built by Southeastern in May of 2005), and (2) the main Guest House Field Station/Boardwalk/Caretaker Residence site on the south-shore of Pass Manchac on the Manchac Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which is accessible only by boat via a 20-minute boat ride from the Galva Boatshed. The historic guest house was originally built in 1908 by Mr. Edward Schlieder, a businessman from New Orleans. The guest house, bulkhead, wharfs, boardwalk and Caretaker Residence all underwent a $6 million FEMA-funded restoration after extensive damages from Hurricane’s Katrina and Rita in 2005, and is in the 36th year of a 99-year lease with a 25-year option between Southeastern and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). Station activities began in earnest in FY 1985-86 and just completed the 32nd year.

Turtle Cove “resources” for purposes of annual Institutional Effectiveness (I.E.) reporting includes: the two facility sites and related infrastructure; staff (2 full-time positions and two part-time GA positions); fleet of boats and motors (including 10 skiffs and mud-boats of all sizes, and a 40-ft pontoon boat that can transport 35 passengers), and other equipment and supplies (i.e., 20 canoes/pirogues, trailers, water quality probes/kits/dip-nets/field-guides/microscopes, computers, satellite-internet service at both sites, and other tangible field research and educational items), all of which supports the stakeholders and users of Turtle Cove.

HIGHLIGHTS OF USE DATA

Use of Turtle Cove resources for **research** in Calendar Year 2017 was the fifth highest in the history of the station post-Katrina, with 528 user-days of activity (an 8% increase over the previous year), continuing an important and desirable upward trend over the past five years in this category. **University education** use (895 user-days) for CY 2017 increased 8% over the previous year and is now the highest of the entire 32-year period of Turtle Cove as an active Southeastern program. The **public outreach** component increased 7% over the previous year to 1,272 user-days of activity, the fourth highest in the history of the station. Overall **total** user-days of activity for all categories totaled 2,695, an overall 7% increase over the previous year, making CY 2017 the most productive year in the post-Katrina era and second highest in the 32-year history of the station. A series of extreme weather events (rainfall and flooding) in October in-part hampered 2017 from being perhaps our most productive year ever overall.

In summary for CY 2017, Turtle Cove resources supported 107 different and distinct groups of users totaling 2,323 different individuals and 2,695 user-days of activity. The n*umber of different groups*, *number of* *different individuals*, and *number of user-days*, respectively, were as follows: RESEARCH (*24, 282, 528*); UNIVERSITY EDUCATION *(33, 785, 895*); and PUBLIC OUTREACH (*50, 1256, 1272*). The history of use of Turtle Cove, starting in FY 1984/85, as Southeastern’s primary environmental research station is presented in Figure 1 below. Figure 2 that follows represents the breakdown of use among categories over this same time period.

Note: Hurricane’s Katrina/Rita (2005), Gustav/Ike (2008) and Isaac (2012) resulted in long term closures of the station while under repair, although activities with boats continued as available.

SATISFACTION SURVEY

Our annual year-end “satisfaction survey” was again overwhelmingly positive in that 21 out of 24 respondents gave us a score of 5 out of 5 possible points (scale of 1-5, with 5 being VERY SATISFIED) for “overall satisfaction with Turtle Cove resources” (one answered “4” and two were “N/A”). These figures are comparable to all prior year’s results from the annual survey.

SELF-GENERATING FUNDS and MANCHAC/TURTLE COVE ARTIFACTS EXHIBIT

More than ever, Turtle Cove continues to emphasize generating funds from sources external to the university’s annual operating budget, and CY 2017 produced the largest self-generated funding in the history of the station at $30,154.32. This was due in large part to our third ever formal Fundraiser on October 28th which generated net revenues of $14,550 (gross of $33,000) after subtracting out in-kind contributions, direct fundraiser expenses, and $4,000 of donations dedicated by Mr. Michael Sharp towards the creation of the new Manchac/Turtle Cove Artifacts Exhibit, which is now housed at two sites: 3rd Floor of Sims Memorial Library on campus and on the second floor at Turtle Cove. The exhibit is the vision of Mr. Sharp, and was the primary theme of the 2017 fundraiser, and is expected to reap long-term benefits as it provides another “permanent” education platform at the station (in addition to the self-guided boardwalk tour) on the history of the region and Turtle Cove itself. The exhibit consists of photographs, artifacts, documents and maps of the region, as well as over 30 different species of taxidermy-style wildlife and fisheries mounts (with captions) that are native to the area. The majority of taxidermy specimens were donated by the LDWF, with others coming from the Dr. Kyle Piller Biology Lab (Southeastern), Middendorf’s Restaurant, Mr. Charles Elliott (Instructor in Southeastern’s History Department), Turtle Cove Caretaker Hayden Reno, and Turtle Cove Station Manager Robert Moreau. Research and design assistance was provided by Dr. Sam Hyde, Director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at Southeastern, and affiliated Southeastern graduate students including former and current graduate students Chase Tomlin and Christian “Alex” White (History Department) and Shelby Barrett and Carl Maiese (Dept. of Biological Sciences).

Non-fundraiser activities that allow for on-going self-generation of funds continue to be an ever-increasingly important pillar of support to the total Turtle Cove funding structure. Amounts of funds generated in 2017 include: gas and facility-use donations for researcher use of Turtle Cove equipment and facilities ($6,825); donations received from field trip activities for university education ($1,435) and K-12 school groups and other general groups that are able to provide a donation for their field trip experience ($5,934—included in this figure is $1,400 from a NOAA based grant for K-12 education), and; sales of Turtle Cove-specific logo merchandise ($90). Finally, since 2014, annual endowment net-revenue transfers are made from three Turtle Cove-specified endowments managed by the Southeastern Foundation that total approximately $1,320 each year. The three endowments are: (1) Lola V. Bullock, (2) Neil H. Bullock and (3) J.D. McCarin and Mel “Shack” Cantrell. Figure 3 below is a graph that represents Self-Generated funding at Turtle Cove over the past 10-year period for all sources.

BOATING SAFETY

Finally, and as always most importantly, another year of work was conducted in a water based-environment at Turtle Cove without incident in terms of health and safety issues (i.e., “boating safety”) for all users of Turtle Cove resources, including university faculty, staff and students, as well as others from the surrounding communities who participate in our programs.

STATUS/NEEDS/CONCLUSION

Turtle Cove has steadily increased its productivity over time and has become an efficient and sustainable entity given on-going state-wide budget constraints. Major needs short term include a new water well (that will be drilled in Spring 2018) and continual repairs to boats, motors and maintenance of facilities. New outboard motors for the Pontoon Boat (2) and skiffs (3) will be needed in the coming years (approx. $10,000 per motor). A recently discovered need to address and prolong the now 10-year old steel bulkhead at Turtle Cove from salt-water corrosion is a bigger funding issue that will need to be addressed within the next few years. Overall, Turtle Cove is in good shape. The holistic operation (facilities, staffing, funding, productivity, etc.) is at or near peak efficiency and sustainability levels, and the staff looks forward to many years of continued service for all of our stakeholders.