Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station

Institutional Effectiveness for Calendar Year 2016:

Special (Annual) Report Section Highlights (1/1-16 – 12/31/16)



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

The Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station had another near record year of use in 2016--its 31st year of existence--as a program supporting environmental research, university education and public outreach activities for Southeastern Louisiana University. Turtle Cove ERS serves as the university’s primary means of access to the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Estuarine System via two primary sites that consist of the Boatshed/Classroom/Parking lot Facility on Galva Canal in Manchac (built by Southeastern in May of 2005), and the 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. The guest house, bulkhead, wharfs, boardwalk and Caretaker Residence received a $6 million FEMA funded restoration after 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).

Turtle Cove “resources” for purposes of annual Institutional Effectiveness (I.E.) reporting include: the two facility sites and related infrastructure; staff (2 full-time positions and two GA positions); fleet of boats and motors (10 skiffs and mud-boats of all sizes, 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 items). All of these resources support university-related research, education and public outreach activities and programs for Southeastern and its surrounding community of stakeholders and users of Turtle Cove.

HIGHLIGHTS OF USE DATA

Use of Turtle Cove resources for **research** in Calendar Year 2016 was the highest since 2008 with a total of 488 user-days of activity (fourth highest in the post-Katrina era), continuing an important and desirable upward trend over the past several years. **University education** use (832 user-days) was the highest of the entire 31-year period of Turtle Cove as a Southeastern program. The **public outreach** component remained strong at 1,187 user-days of activity, but was lower this year than last mainly due to the Laplace Tornado and the two severe flooding events of March and August which caused the cancellation of at least six groups. Overall **total** user-days of activity for all categories totaled 2,507, the third highest year in the post-Katrina era and fourth highest in the 31-year history of the station. The above mentioned weather events in-part prevented 2016 from being perhaps our most successful year ever overall.

In summary for Calendar Year 2016, Turtle Cove resources supported 102 different and distinct groups of users totaling 2,126 different individuals and 2,507 user-days of activity. The n*umber of groups*, *number of* *different individuals*, and *number of user-days* produced, respectively, were as follows: RESEARCH (*25, 258, 488*); EDUCATION *(27, 727, 832*); and PUBLIC OUTREACH (*50, 1141, 1187*). The history of use of Turtle Cove, from its inception as Southeastern’s primary environmental research station in 1981 (activities began in earnest in 1985) is presented in Figure 1 below. Note that significant drops in use are usually aassociated with extreme weather events such as hurricanes and floods (i.e., Hurricanes’ Katrina and Rita in 2005, Gustav and Ike in 2008, Issac in 2012, and the tornado and floods in 2016). Figure 2 that follows represents the breakdown of use amongst categories over this same time period.

SATISFACTION SURVEY

Our annual year-end “satisfaction survey” was again overwhelmingly positive in that all respondents give us a score of 4 or 5 out of “5” possible points for “overall satisfaction with Turtle Cove resources.” On a scale of 1-5 (1 being lowest, and 5 being highest), 18 of 21 respondents rated us as a 5 (“Very Satisfied”), with one respondent rating a “4” and two respondents rating “N/A.” These figures are comparable to all prior year’s results from the annual satisfaction survey.

SELF-GENERATING FUNDS

More than ever, Turtle Cove continues to emphasize generating funds from external sources outside of the university’s operating budget. Calendar Year 2016 produced a non-fundraiser-year record of $14,331.69 in such funding. Activities that allow for self-generation of funds, and amounts of funds generated in 2016, include: gas and facility-use donations for researcher use of Turtle Cove equipment and facilities ($5,200); donations received from field trip activities for university education, K-12 school groups, and other general groups that are able to provide a donation for their field trip experience ($7,606); sales of Turtle Cove-specific logo merchandise ($200), and; annual endowment net-revenue from three Turtle Cove-specified endowments managed by the Southeastern Foundation ($1,325). In addition, approximately every 2-3 years, a formal fundraiser is now held that generates funds through the sale of tickets for an entertainment event at the station, sponsorship of Turtle Cove boardwalk signs, a silent auction, and other activities (the first fundraiser in 2014 produced a net-revenue gain of $21,000). The next formal fundraiser for Turtle Cove is scheduled for October 28, 2017 with the theme being the first public showing of the Manchac/Turtle Cove Artifacts Exhibit, a special project that has been designed primarily for the Manchac and Turtle Cove communities.

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.