

Media Press Kit and Fact Sheet – Mississippi Aquarium

About Mississippi Aquarium

Mississippi Aquarium, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, is a premier institution delivering an awe-inspiring experience that supports education, research and conservation. The Aquarium is committed to animal welfare and the majesty of the gulf and beyond. The Aquarium sits on 5.8-acres and contains over 80,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor exhibits connected by landscaped walkways with plants that represent all the physiographic regions of Mississippi.

We aim...

“To be a premier institution delivering an awe-inspiring experience which supports animal research and conservation, inspires learning and instills a passion for the aquatic world.”

We exist to...

“Be the window to the waters of Mississippi, the Gulf Coast and beyond, fostering a sense of appreciation by encouraging guests to explore majestic environments and play an active role in research and conservation efforts.”

We do this by

- Providing an unparalleled experience to our guests through engaging education and gracious hospitality.
- Pledging to fiscal responsibility that enables us to make a difference for our guests, animals and team.
- Championing research efforts to conserve and protect the waters of Mississippi, the Gulf Coast and the world.
- Protecting the beauty of aquatic wildlife and sharing the power of nature’s stories to inspire commitment for generations to come.

When will Mississippi Aquarium Open?

August 29th, 2020

What makes Mississippi Aquarium stand out from other attractions in the Gulf Coast Region?

Accreditations

Mississippi Aquarium will meet the high standards of accreditation and certification from multiple industry institutions including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), which is the gold standard for zoos and aquariums across the country, American Humane (AHA), International Marine Animal Trainers' Association (IMATA) and Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (Alliance). This will make Mississippi Aquarium the only accredited aquarium in Mississippi.

Unique Features

Mississippi Aquarium's most unique feature is the 360-degree suspended acrylic tunnel in our main habitat. While most aquariums have a 180-degree tunnel on their ground levels, Mississippi Aquarium's tunnel goes directly through the primary habitat. This will give guests a chance to "walk on water" while having views of marine life from every angle—above them and below them.

Location

In downtown Gulfport, Mississippi Aquarium is located directly across from the white sands of the Coastal Mississippi beaches to showcase all the marine life our special ecosystem has to offer. Mississippi Aquarium is the perfect venue to host a wide variety of events, including weddings, receptions and banquets. Whether it is a grand affair or a small intimate gathering, the Aquarium will serve as the perfect backdrop to an event that will be talked about for a lifetime.

What can guests expect when the campus opens?

- More than one million gallons of fresh and saltwater
- 5.8-acres of indoor/outdoor campus
- 200+ species in 12 habitats
- 50 species of native plants
- Swirl Exhibit
- 30-foot long, 360-degree tunnel
- 65-foot tall Sails entry fountain
- Half a mile of walking paths connecting the habitats
- Summer camps and education programs
- Large, one of a kind event space

The Three Pillars: Education, Conservation and Community

Education

Reaching the hearts and minds of all guests by connecting them with the planet's most precious ecosystems is the driving force behind Mississippi Aquarium's Education Department. The education programs are designed to inspire, connect and instill not only respect for the marine environment but also empower conservation action and promote sustainable choices for the future.

- **Interactive Classrooms**
Students and teachers alike will experience onsite exploration and hands-on lessons in a state-of-the-art classroom. Interactive programs such as Trainer for a Day will allow guests to build relationships with marine animals just as a certified trainer would.
- **S.T.E.A.M. focused Field Trip Program:**
Mississippi Aquarium will host Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

(S.T.E.A.M.) focused field trips that give students and teachers alike an opportunity to experience onsite exploration and hands-on lessons in a state-of-the-art classroom.

- **University Partnerships**

As partners in education, the University of Southern Mississippi and Mississippi State University have strategic roles in the success of Mississippi Aquarium. With the University of Southern Mississippi, we will participate in saltwater research and education, and with Mississippi State University, we will work together with our veterinary services to provide their students with additional hands-on opportunities and experience.

- **Mobile Marine Unit**

Mississippi Aquarium's community outreach vehicle, the Mobile Marine Unit (MMU), will travel across the state and region to provide education about animals and ocean conservation, bringing a little bit of Coastal Mississippi around the state.

- **Educator Support Programs**

Mississippi Aquarium will provide virtual learning lessons to bring the Aquarium to the classroom and will serve as a resource for teachers by supplying lesson plans and interesting educational materials. Educators can look forward to professional development workshops for teachers to earn credits toward certifications. The Aquarium will also offer supportive services and customized lessons for students with disabilities and special needs.

Conservation

Mississippi Aquarium's Aquatic Research Center will be the foundation of our conservation efforts. Making the connection with the aquatic world through education and biology inspires individuals, families and communities to "take action" for conservation.

Mississippi Aquarium's research and conservation programs will make the maximum contribution to regional science and education while being integrated into the cultural, scientific and educational foundation of Mississippi.

- **Dolphin Research on behavior, genetics, welfare and health**

The Aquarium's dolphin experts have dedicated their lives to the wellbeing of dolphins. The Aquarium will utilize the thriving group of bottlenose dolphins who will call the aquarium home to study behavior, genetics, welfare and health.

- **Seafood Watch Program**

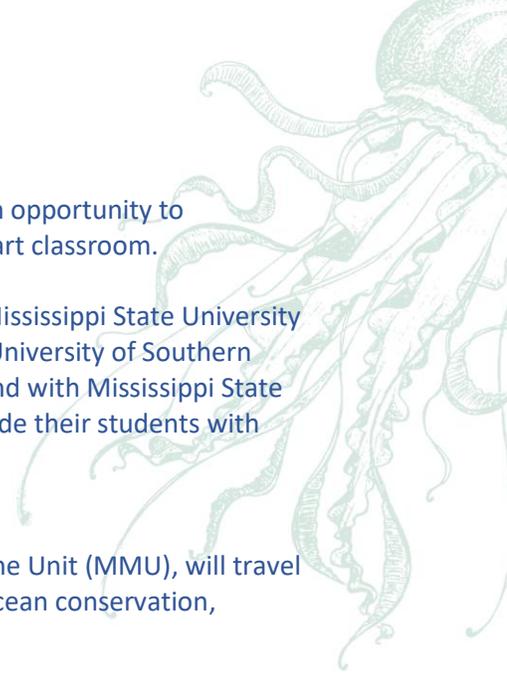
The Aquarium has teamed up with The Monterey Bay Aquarium to join the Seafood Watch Program. This program helps consumers and businesses choose seafood that's fished or farmed in ways that support a healthy ocean, now and for future generations.

- **One Health Initiative**

An initiative to study the connection between humans, animals and the environment, which is critical to helping restore and preserve our unique Mississippi habitats with the animals who call our oceans, rivers and coastline home.

- **Field Conservation**

We are committed to promoting and enhancing marine research and conservation all while showcasing Mississippi's diverse native wildlife and the many rivers that create this diversity in the Gulf of Mexico.



- **Conservation Programs**

The research and conservation program is based on strengthening ties with local researchers and organizations that share goals for understanding aquatic life. The research program will have the important direct benefit of increasing animal health and husbandry expertise by building new knowledge about the biology, health and husbandry of aquatic organisms.

- **Chandelier Island Brewing Co.**

Mississippi Aquarium and Chandeleur Island Brewing Company have joined forces to create a series of craft beer promoting the conservation efforts of endangered species. A portion of each case sold goes directly to Mississippi Aquarium's conservation efforts for various endangered species that call the Mississippi Gulf Coast their home.

- **Conservation Car Tag**

Mississippi Aquarium has created a specialty Mississippi license plate promoting animal conservation. The license plate features an Atlantic bottlenose dolphin and Kemp's ridley sea turtle with the Aquarium's iconic sails in the background. Proceeds from the purchase of the plate will support conservation efforts for dolphins and sea turtles along Coastal Mississippi and beyond.

- **Conservation Partners**

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR)
University of Southern Mississippi
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Chandelier Island Brewery Co.

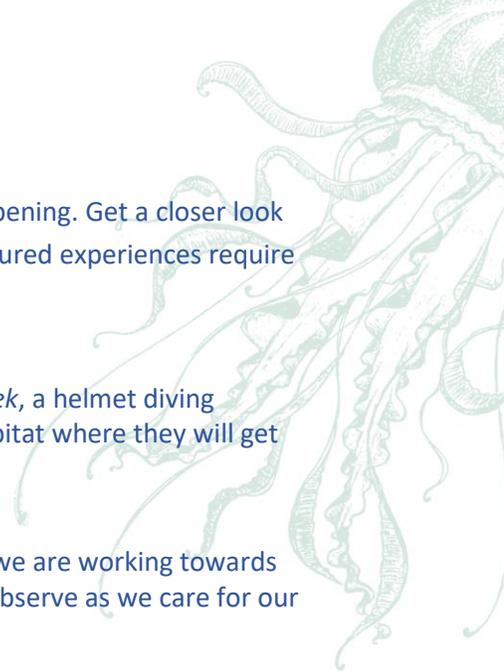
Community

Mississippi is a special community, deeply rooted in its culture. Mississippi Aquarium will create lasting memories of our state's rich cultural diversity. The Aquarium is not only an icon for Coastal Mississippi, but it is also a pillar for the entire state of Mississippi. The Aquarium is committed to working with our aquatic community on research and conservation efforts to improve our waterways for those that call them home.

Mississippi Aquarium is an anchor for economic development in and around the downtown Gulfport area. Nearly 100 full-time jobs will be created by Mississippi Aquarium. Additionally, part-time and volunteer opportunities will also be available after opening. Within the local area, employment growth will be seen due to the number of visitors that are expected to come into the area.

- **Beach and river cleanup programs**
- **One-time plastic use reduction campaign**
- **Marine Mobile Unit**
- **Mentoring Science Clubs**
- **Volunteer Opportunities**
- **Recycling Programs**
- **Project SAIL: Sponsored Admission for Instruction Learning**

An initiative that ensures that diverse audiences, regardless of economic status, have an opportunity to participate in the Aquarium's on-site educational programs at no cost to the school. Title 1 schools in the Mississippi Gulf Coast counties can apply for the funds to cover the transportation and admission costs associated with instructor-led or self-guided field trips.



One of a Kind Experiences: All experiences will be rolled out shortly after opening. Get a closer look into our exhibits to experience and help our staff care for our animals. All Featured experiences require a general admission ticket plus an experience ticket.

SeaTREK

Guest and animal interactions are taken to the next level through SeaTrek, a helmet diving experience. Guests will fully immerse into the main aquatic wonders habitat where they will get up close and personal with fish, sharks, rays and much more.

Dolphin Experience

Go behind the scenes with our Animal Care experts to learn about how we are working towards protecting this precious species. Guests will be able to touch, feed and observe as we care for our dolphins and learn what it takes to keep them happy and healthy.

Penguin Experience

Guests will learn all about the African Penguins – where they are from, what they eat and how our efforts support these beloved birds. Participate in touching, feeding, and taking pictures with our feathered friends!

Backstage Tour

Take a tour behind the scenes with the Aquarium’s staff to get a sneak peek into the daily operations at Mississippi Aquarium.

Our Habitats

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- **Crocodylian Habitat**
 - **River Fishes Habitat**
 - **North American River Otter Habitat**
 - **Bottlenose Dolphin Habitat**
 - **Bird Aviary**
 - **360’ acrylic tunnel surrounded by sharks, turtles and more**
 - **Bait Ball Habitat**
 - **Gulf Community Habitat**
 - **Bottom Dweller Habitat**
 - **Invertebrate Touch Experience**
 - **Shark and Ray Touch Experience**
 - **Temporary Penguin Habitat**

How is the development of Mississippi Aquarium being funded?

Mississippi Aquarium’s construction and pre-opening costs are funded through a public and private partnership. 90% of the funding is coming from the City of Gulfport, the State of Mississippi, Restore Act Grants and Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) funds. The other 10% will come from private donations through the Mississippi Aquarium Foundation. After the Aquarium opens in April 2020, the facility will be self-sustaining. At this time, our Foundation goal is on target to being met.



Ticket Pricing Information:

Adult Admission (ages 13-64) \$29.95
Child Admission (ages 3-12) \$24.95
Senior Admission (ages 65+) \$26.95
Infant Admission (ages 2 and under) \$0.00

Memberships:

Individual Membership: \$95
Individual Memberships + 4: \$86 each
Save 10% when you buy 4 or more Individual Memberships!

Membership Benefits Include:

- Unlimited admission during your 12-month membership
- 15% discount on Centennial Plaza hotels and restaurants
- Skip the lines with Member Express entry
- Invitation/discount tickets to Members Only events
- Subscription to the members-only newsletter
- 10% off retail and photos
- 10% off birthday parties, summer camps and kids events
- Reduced individual guest ticket when accompanied by a member (10%)
- Individual membership cards are printed onsite at the time of purchase

Where can I get more information on Mississippi Aquarium?

For more information and updates on Mississippi Aquarium, visit www.msaquarium.org.

