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RESTORE Act funding to assist Three Mile Creek trail construction

MOBILE, Alabama — Discussions for a walking/biking path along Three Mile Creek from Langan Municipal Park to the Mobile River began in the 1980s. Women Making a Difference (WMD), a public health advisory board for the Mobile County Health Department (MCHD), got things rolling in 2013 by applying for and receiving a grant from the Sybil H Smith Charitable Trust.

The funds were used to install the 0.8-mile section of the Mobile Greenway Initiative path that begins at the eastern edge of Day Lake at Tricentennial Park and extends westward to Ridge Road West. This section opened in December 2017.

The plan was for City of Mobile officials to later expand the path going east and west from Tricentennial Park. Now it appears that part is ready to move forward.

On Wednesday, the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council voted on projects to receive approximately \$39 million in funding from the RESTORE Act (Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States). The RESTORE Act legislation was passed by Congress to steer a percentage of the civil penalties levied against the responsible parties of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon incident directly to the Gulf Coast states to assist with recovery efforts (<https://restorealabama.org/>).

A slice of this funding will go to help continue the work along Three Mile Creek. The Mobile Greenway Initiative will receive \$9.7 million to use on the multi-use path while the Three Mile Creek Watershed Restoration gets an additional \$11.73 million that will restore the lake in Langan Park, stabilize sections of Twelve Mile Creek and improve water quality in Three Mile Creek.

A list of all the projects can be found at www.cityofmobile.org/news.php?view=full&news=2838

“I applaud my colleagues on the Alabama Council for championing these transformational projects,” Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson said in a statement about the funding. “Mobile is a city closely connected to the water, and as one of the largest ports in the country, we were devastated by the BP oil disasters. Citizens lost their jobs, entire industries suffered and many felt hopeless for the future. These projects will ultimately connect citizens to our waterways, stimulate economic activity and revive historically significant areas in our community.”

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In 2012, MCHD convened the Women Making a Difference group. He requested that they look into the feasibility of installing a recreational trail and canoe/kayak launch along Three Mile Creek. Dr. Bernard H. Eichold II, Mobile County's Health Officer, wanted to give everyone an opportunity to see why the waterway is something worth reviving.

In December 2014, WMD applied for and received private grant funding of \$218,650 to make improvements to an area of Three Mile Creek in Midtown Mobile. Funds from the Sybil H Smith Charitable Trust were intended to create a kayak and canoe launch and to install the walkways near Tricentennial Park.

The original source of drinking water for the City of Mobile, Three Mile Creek is forever tied to the development and growth of our great city. Vintage maps show it as Bayou Chateauguay, named for the younger brother of d'Iberville and Bienville. It affects many local communities as it flows through six of Mobile's seven districts, parts of Prichard and all three of Mobile County's districts.

To promote the project, MCHD has hosted Creek Fest at Tricentennial Park for three years. In 2017, almost 500 visitors attended. The agenda included music, food, fellowship, environmental exhibits, canoe and kayak rides in the creek, the cane-pole fishing tournament, and merit badge opportunities for Boy Scouts. Making appearances were Mayor Stimpson and District 2 City Councilman Fred Richardson.

Members of MCHD's Vector Control volunteered to help set up tents. Groups who had displays included Alabama Coastal Foundation, Coastal Alabama Conservation and Resiliency Corps, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, Mobile Area Water and Sewer System, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile Baykeeper, Mobile County Sheriff's Flotilla, Mobile Infirmary, Mobile Medical Reserve Corps, Mobile United, University of South Alabama Medical Center, United Way of Southwest Alabama and Visit Mobile. The City of Mobile brought its "Fun Mobile," which is a truck full of games and sports equipment.

"Our group has hosted Creek Fest at Tricentennial Park to showcase the plans," Prevention & Wellness Director Kelly Warren, who serves on the WMD, said at that time. "We plan to have Creek Fest there on May 12, 2018, to show everyone the trail."

Please visit www.creekfest.org and www.facebook.com/ILoveCreekFest for more information.

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Back in May 2017, construction of the Mobile Greenway Initiative’s walking trail near Tricentennial Park began. The 10-foot-wide path has already become a popular exercise area for area residents.

“We are so excited that it is open, but we are even more excited as additional things get done,” Warren said.

To see a video tour of walkway, please visit the Mobile County Health Department's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vu2BMXSVWII>

The goal of WMD is to bring attention and action to issues affecting the public’s health in Mobile County. The board is comprised of women from across the community, including social service agencies, health and mental health systems, conservation, city, housing, workforce development, concerned residents and leadership. The board is well-equipped to positively impact the health of the community.

“The WMD is not finished,” Warren said. “We just have to look for another way to enhance the health of our community.”