**EM-17 Improvement of Water Quality through Reduction of Inshore and**

**Marine Debris**

A. OBJECTIVES

1. To improve water quality by significantly reducing the amount of trash entering estuary water bodies and the ocean through education and awareness activities targeted at students (K-12), parish governments, business communities, and individual citizens.

B. BACKGROUND/MAJOR ISSUES

Despite the highest fine for littering in the country, Louisiana waterways are still full of trash and debris. Marine debris results in animal fatality through ingestion and entanglement, boat motor problems (?), loss of tourism revenue and decrease in water quality. With the breakdown of plastics which accounts for ?% of marine debris, it becomes more toxic and dangerous to sea life. Research on the effects of this plastic ingested by sea life as food is ongoing.

Current/past programs of the BTNEP:

1. Bayou Lafourche Cleanup
2. Marine Debris Education and Prevention Program
3. Lake Field’s Cleanup
4. DEQ’s Trash free water participant
5. Distribution of canvas bags
6. School Sustainability Programs (Recycling)

C. DESCRIPTION

This action will support education and awareness of the issues surrounding Marine Debris through hands-on projects promoting the removal and prevention of Marine Debris in the BTES. We will strive to create common understandings concerning the severity of aquatic trash in Louisiana communities and present this to the citizenship through workshops and volunteer opportunities.

This action will serve to develop stakeholders that will be informed, concerned and responsible citizenry, from children to adults, within the BTES. The population will become more literate in issue surrounding marine debris from ingestion by aquatic animals, entanglement of aquatic animals and birds, water quality to boat motor damage and unsightliness.

D. LEAD AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The BTNEP Program Staff will be the lead implementer. Support implementers will include the Management Conference, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Gulf of Mexico Program, Louisiana Sea Grant, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), Keep Louisiana Beautiful (KLB), Keep America Beautiful (KAB), Louisiana State University, and Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation (BTEF).

F. TIMELINES AND/OR MILESTONES

1. The Bayou Lafourche Cleanup is sponsored by BTNEP and held annually
2. The Marine Debris Education and Prevention Program is held annually.
3. Involvement in EPA’s Trash Free Waters Initiative – ongoing
4. Education/outreach events - ongoing
5. Create common understandings concerning the severity of aquatic trash in Louisiana communities and watersheds;
6. Familiarize ourselves with applicable anti-littering state laws;
7. Attending seminars and presentations pertaining to existing prevention and education programs especially those near waterbodies
8. Partnering for any Marine Debris Removal Initiative located inside the BTES
9. Watershed Education and Outreach
10. Review and incorporate ongoing research

G. POSSIBLE RANGE OF COSTS AND SOURCES OF FUNDING

***Range of cost:***

Total Funding Necessary (Annually): $50,000 - $100,000

***Sources of funding:***

1. Local, State, Federal, Industry, Institutional, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Private
2. Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation and its partners
3. Marine Debris Grants (i.e. NOAA, GOMA, KLB, KAB)

H. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The monitoring strategies are intended to serve as mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of projects implemented under the action plans. These strategies should only be used as a guide, not as a requirement. It must be recognized that the monitoring strategies will be expensive to implement and that, because all levels of government and much of the private sector currently have severe funding restraints, they may not be affordable without significant modification. The monitoring strategies do not override or replace project monitoring that would be done by an agency related to specific agency-sponsored projects.

***Possible Data Gathered***

1. Documentation of Marine Debris collected
2. Document meetings and activities of the BTNEP staff
3. Regularly Reports to EPA

***Monitoring***

1. Parties Responsible - The BTNEP Staff.
2. Timetables for gathering data- Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) Management Conference (quarterly)
3. How data is shared – All data and projects are available on the BTNEP website and partner websites.
4. Data is collected and shared with GOMA, NOAA and Ocean Conservancy.
5. Additional Funding is always needed.