

News Release

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Lord, Aeck & Sargent Selected as Design Architect for Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Facility

Structure Targeted for LEED Gold-Level Certification

*Architecture Will Connect to Region's Coastal Vernacular and
Create Special Place for Teaching About Sustainability by Example*

MOSS POINT, Miss., Dec. 7, 2004 – The biologically diverse, 18,400-acre Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), located in Southeast Mississippi, will soon have a “green” interpretive and research center. The Grand Bay NERR is administered by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR), which selected the team of Lord, Aeck & Sargent as design architect and Studio South Architects as architect of record for the project.

The Grand Bay NERR facility, which is targeted for LEED¹ Gold-Level Certification, will adhere to a rigorous set of energy and water saving criteria. The building's design overlays smart sustainable strategies such as daylight harvesting light shelves, sunshading overhangs and displacement ventilation, with coastal vernacular elements such as low slung roofs, deep porches and a one-story wood-framed structure elevated on pilings.

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Funding support for the \$5.8 million Grand Bay NERR project was secured by the State of Mississippi from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Currently in the design stage, the project is expected to go out to bid in May 2005.

“Because the NERR is an educational, research and stewardship program, we want this facility to demonstrate to the highest degree possible our commitment to the environment,” said David Ruple, Grand Bay NERR project manager, who is coordinating the facility design and construction on behalf of the DMR. “We’ll be building on a disturbed site within a sensitive landscape, so we want this structure to have minimal impact.

“We also want this building to be a state and regional demonstration of our philosophy of environmental consciousness and to show our visitors by example how natural building materials and sustainable design strategies and techniques can be incorporated into public facilities,” Ruple said.

When occupied in February 2007, the 20,000-square-foot Grand Bay NERR facility will combine exhibit, education, research, residential and administrative space. It will house:

- interpretive exhibits pertaining to the local ecology, which encompasses coastal bay, expansive saltwater marshes, maritime pine forest, pine savanna and pitcher plant bogs;
- classrooms;
- laboratories for use by NERR and academic partner researchers;
- a dormitory for visiting researchers and graduate students studying coastal ecology; and
- administrative office space for staff members of the Grand Bay NERR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which owns the lands on which the facility is being sited.

About the Design

In describing the Grand Bay NERR building design, Joe Greco, AIA, a Lord, Aeck & Sargent LEED accredited professional and design principal for the project, said, "We felt it was important to show off and make understandable good green design practice in a way that creates a sense of community." He noted that the building will unfold with an initial approach through an elevated boardwalk across a natural rain garden. Sweeping, low-slung roofs and deep porches create the entrance courtyard, and the building hovers on pilings several feet above the ground. Amphitheatre steps are used to define the edge of the community courtyard. Breezeways create connection between outdoor teaching areas, the residential wing and the samples processing area. Exposed wood framing, metal roofs and ample glazing establish a vibrant, inviting character, while creating a connection to the region's coastal vernacular.

"We're striving to create an architecture that's at home and comfortable in its surroundings but that rigorously pursues green technologies and common sense strategies to create a special, informative, memorable place. This will be an inspirational environment for educational programs that seek to teach the importance of sustainable practice to future generations in an active, hands-on way," Greco noted.

According to Jim Nicolow, AIA, a LEED accredited professional who leads Lord, Aeck & Sargent's sustainable design efforts, the use of daylight harvesting will optimize the building's thermal performance and is expected to result in energy performance that is a 40 percent improvement over code. With the use of rainwater harvesting, no potable water will be required for sewage conveyance, resulting in an anticipated 40 percent reduction in water use.

"The Grand Bay NERR facility will be a wonderful example of appropriate coastal development. We're excited to be involved in the design of a green demonstration building that shows and teaches through its architecture what sustainable design is all about and that it's possible to develop land responsibly in sensitive areas," Nicolow said.

The Design Team

Founded in 1942, Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural, and housing and mixed-use development markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. In 2003, The Construction Specifications Institute awarded Lord, Aeck & Sargent its Environmental Sensitivity Award for showing exceptional devotion to the use of sustainable and environmentally friendly materials, and for striving to create functional, sensitive and healthy buildings for clients. Lord, Aeck & Sargent is headquartered in Atlanta and has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

Studio South Architects, PLLC was formed as a separate corporation by Guild Hardy Architects PA and Allred / McNabb PA, two of the largest architectural firms in southern Mississippi, in order to share resources and better serve their clients. As a firm that understands the importance of sustainable design and eco-friendly buildings and that strives to set the standard of green design in the region, Studio South only teams with the most qualified and dedicated design professionals to complete a project. Studio South has offices in Biloxi, Gulfport and Pascagoula. For more information, visit the firm at <http://www.studiosoutharchitects.com>.

The Grand Bay design team also includes:

- KEEN Engineering (San Francisco), MEP/FP engineer;
- Cannon Engineering (Gulfport, Miss.), MEP/FP engineer of record
- Simpkins & Costelli (Gulfport, Miss.), structural and civil engineers
- The Landscape Studio (Hattiesburg, Miss.), landscape architect; and
- ENSAR Group (Boulder, Colo.), daylighting consultant

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¹ The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System® is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. Members of the U.S. Green Building Council representing all segments of the building industry developed LEED and continue to contribute to its evolution.

Note to editors: *If you would like to learn more about the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, visit the following web pages:*

<http://www.dmr.state.ms.us/Coastal-Ecology/GBNERR/thereserve.htm>

<http://nerrs.noaa.gov/GrandBay/welcome.html>

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