



Sharkheads™
**SHARK
FEST**
2020

Parent Handbook



Thank you for registering your student for Shark Fest this summer, we are excited to have them join us this upcoming season. Shark Fest is an educational day camp sponsored by The University of Southern Mississippi's (USM) Marine Education Center (MEC). The MEC is the education and outreach extension of The University of Southern Mississippi School of Ocean Science and Engineering (SOSE).

We know your student will enjoy learning about shark biology, conservation efforts, and contributing to ongoing research at USM. Here are a few points of information that you need to know prior to your camp experience.

Facility Location and Contact Information

Shark Fest is located on USM's Cedar Point site at 101 Sweetbay Drive, Ocean Springs, MS 39564. The facility's phone number is (228) 818-8095 and hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Registration

Students are to arrive Monday morning between 7:45 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. Parents and children will gather in the MEC Conference Center for registration. The Conference Center¹ can be accessed from the designated parking areas. Shark Fest counselors are available to answer any questions, comments, or concerns with parents and children during Monday morning sign-in.

Tuition

Tuition includes all instructional materials, field trip transportation, admission fees, field equipment, and a t-shirt. A \$50 non-refundable pre-registration deposit is required. The deposit will be applied toward the total due. ***All fees must be paid by the first day of camp; your student will not be able to participate in the program until they are paid.***

Refund Policy

Refunds for paid tuition balances will be made if requested in writing by fax, by email, or in person at the MEC administration office² according to the schedule below. If a student is registered for a camp session and becomes unable to attend, full credit can be obtained if applied to an alternate session of Shark Fest. This refund will apply only if space is available in the Shark Fest session. Refunds in the form of a personal check may take up to eight weeks for processing. The Marine Education Center reserves the right to grant exceptions to this stated policy in certain situations.

Time of Request: Refund/Credit for Tuition Balance

- At least 14 days before start of the requested camp session = 100% minus \$50 deposit
- 7 - 13 days before start of the requested camp session = 50% minus \$50 deposit
- Less than 6 days before start of the requested camp session = No Refunds

Arrival/Departure Procedures

Parents may drop off students between 7:45 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. **Monday will be the only day you will need to exit your vehicle to register and sign your child in the MEC Conference Center.**

You will drop your student off with a Shark Fest staff member each morning at the MEC (*for your child's safety, please make sure they are signed in/out EVERY day*).

¹ See attached map, Conference Center is location #4.

² See attached map, Administration Building and Exhibit Hall are location #2.

When pulling into the Gulf Islands National Seashore property (via Highway 90) take the second left onto the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory Cedar Point campus via Laurel Oak Drive. Keep straight until you reach the gray MEC entrance sign (101 Sweetbay Drive); keep on the gravel path, moving at a slow speed until stopped by a staff member. The MEC driveway makes a loop, so please pull forward to drop off your students and return back out of the driveway towards campus.

Please stay in your car to pick up your student. A staff member will be there to collect your signature.

Parent/guardian(s) will then continue around on the gravel drive, back to the main road.

If you have children in multiple camps, you may drop them off and pick them up at the same time (i.e. dropping off children in Sea Camp and Shark Fest at 8:00 a.m. and pick up at 3:45 p.m.). Please contact the camp coordinator directly to inform them of your intentions. They will need to make arrangements with the educators in both camps.

REMEMBER DROP OFF FOR BOAT DAYS (TUESDAY AND THURSDAY) IS 7:45 a.m., PICK UP WILL BE AT 4:00 p.m.

Off-Site Transportation/Safety Policies

State owned/operated vehicles, and/or authorized automobile rentals will be utilized for scheduled field trips. Most field trips involve traveling off-campus within the coastal in-state area, by both land and sea. All vessels are Coast Guard certified and maintained.

Meals

Your student should bring a lunch and two snacks each day. ***Please note that lunch is NOT included as part of Shark Fest tuition.*** We will be outside a majority of the time so plenty of water and hydrating sports drinks are recommended. We will provide water throughout the day but PLEASE BRING A REUSABLE BOTTLE for drinks. This helps us to be responsible environmental stewards by minimizing our use of disposable plastic products.

Dress Code

T-shirts and shorts are appropriate. Please wear clothes that you do not mind getting dirty. We will be outside much of the time or in the laboratory with fish. Your student may even want to keep a spare change of clothes available during camp in case they get really wet or dirty.

Please dress modestly for camp; shorts and shirts of appropriate length should be worn at all times. Bathing suits worn under clothes are a great option to wear on boat days. One-piece bathing suits for girls and swim trunks of appropriate length for boys are recommended; all swimwear must be conservatively cut and tasteful. Shorts must be at fingertip length and no higher than mid-thigh; "short-shorts" or spandex shorts are not permitted.

The University of Southern Mississippi's policies mandate that closed-toed shoes be worn on all University vessels and on all University field trips (NO Chaco's or flip-flops; Crocs™ are allowed only with a heel strap). Failure to comply with this policy will result in expulsion from the trip or activity for the day.

What to Bring

Here is a list of items your student will need to bring to camp:

- Lunch-
- Snacks (2)
- Fishing Rod and Tackle (Optional)

- Drinks (Water, Sports Drinks)
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Reusable Water Bottle
- Hat
- Insect Repellent
- Camera (Optional)
- Towel
- Change of Clothes (Optional)
- Backpack or Other Bag for Personal Items
- Poncho or Light Rain Gear (Optional)

Electronics

To ensure your student's safety, it is vitally important they be able to clearly hear instructions given to them, particularly on boat days. We find that cell phones and iPods create a distraction that inhibits student attention. If you choose to send these devices with your student, please leave them on silent and in their bag. Please note that the USM Marine Education Center is not responsible for electronic devices that have fallen overboard or gotten wet. We require students to restrict their use of electronic devices to lunch and designated breaks only. Should you need to reach your student throughout the day, you may contact the Marine Education Center at (228) 818-8095. Excessive use of electronics will result in confiscation of the item, to be returned to the parent at the end of the day.

Behavior

Working with sharks, tackle, and being over water requires the full attention and complete compliance of students. Failure to comply with instructions is a safety hazard and will **NOT** be tolerated. Behavior problems will result in a call to parents, and depending on the severity of the problem, potential expulsion from camp.

What Will My Student Be Doing?

All activities are tentative and subject to cancellation due to weather conditions. We will have camp, rain or shine, and have a full suite of alternative activities planned in the case of inclement weather. **Please note vessel days are Tuesdays and Thursdays. All vessel excursions are dependent on both environmental and weather conditions and/or boat maintenance.** To ensure your child has the opportunity to fish, we have two boat days into the Shark Fest itinerary. **In the event that all boat days are cancelled, you will receive a \$75 refund on your Shark Fest tuition.**

Monday

Students will begin the week with introductory lessons to shark biology and proper species identification. Hands-on laboratory activities include a shark dissection, tagging demonstration, and pier fishing. Campers will also discuss boat safety and proper shark handling for the upcoming field trip days.

Tuesday

Campers will board the R/V Jim Franks and spend a full-day tag and releasing sharks in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, as well as learning how to take scientific samples to contribute to real-time research.

Wednesday

The morning will consist of sampling at East Beach (Ocean Springs, MS), where campers will dive deeper into shark ecology, significance, and environmental threats in the afternoon.

Thursday

Campers will board the R/V Jim Franks for a second time and spend a full-day tag and releasing sharks in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, as well as learning how to take scientific samples to contribute to real-time research.

Friday

To end the week up, students will be kayaking in Davis Bayou learning about estuaries and their importance to local shark species. Wrap-up and goodbyes!

Medication Storage/Administration

Medication is not administered to a child without obtaining a parent/guardian's signature on the required medication form. Shark Fest counselors are responsible for maintaining any medications a student may need. Tylenol/Benadryl may be administered to a child only after checking the camper's registration form. ***Parents should discuss any medication issues with counselors and/or camp coordinator during registration.***

Medical Crisis

Should an emergency situation arise, the coordinator or the student's counselor will tend to the child while the parent is notified. If necessary, the child will be taken to the nearest hospital or clinic until the parent(s) arrive. If parent(s) are unable to be contacted, the counselor will then proceed down the emergency contact list until someone is notified. All staff members are CPR/AED/Basic First Aid certified by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.

Medical Crisis Exemptions

If your child is exempt from medical care on religious grounds you must provide the name, address, and phone number of a certified practitioner to be contacted in the event of a medical emergency. This information must be provided prior to your child's involvement in Shark Fest.

Reporting Child Abuse

The staff of the USM Marine Education Center has a legal obligation to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect in the state of Mississippi. The Mississippi State Department of Health provides guidelines on identifying abuse and neglect. Any suspected abuse or neglect will be brought to the attention of the camp coordinator immediately.

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding your upcoming Shark Fest, please contact the Marine Education Center (228) 818-8095 and/or Jessi A. James (*Summer Camp Coordinator*) at (228) 818-8091 or jessi.james@usm.edu.



MARINE EDUCATION CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Gulf Coast Research Laboratory
Marine Education Center
101 Sweetbay Drive
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

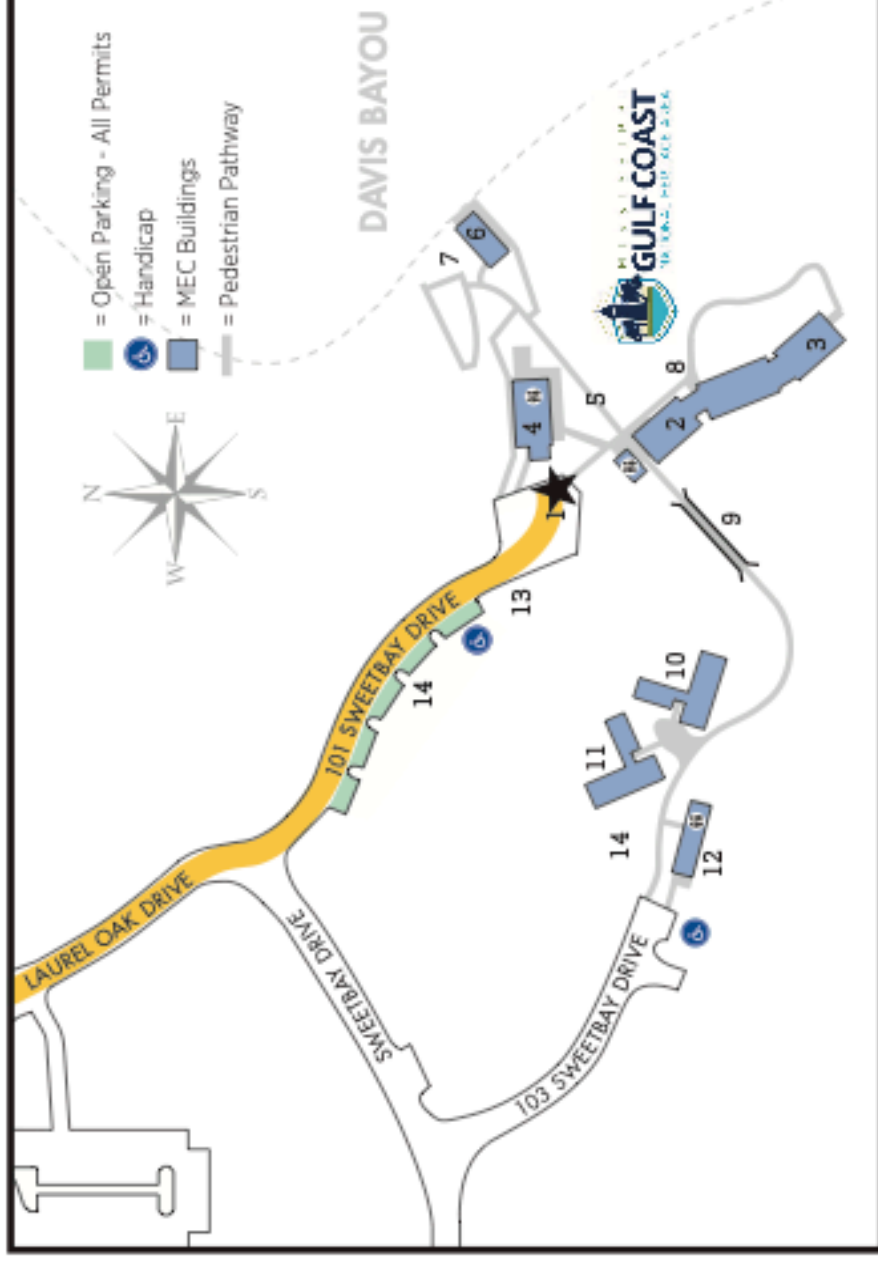
DIRECTIONS

From Bienville Boulevard (Hwy 90) in Ocean Springs, turn south into Gulf Islands National Seashore Park. Travel on Park Road for 1.3 miles. Make a left turn onto Laurel Oak Drive. Continue to Sweetbay Drive and enter at 101 Sweetbay Drive. There is a student drop-off/turnaround at the end of drive.

For mobile map/directions, Google Maps is recommended.

For more information, contact us at marine.education@usm.edu or 228.818.8095.

Sponsored by



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| 1. Student Drop-off | 8. Nature Trail |
| 2. Exhibit Hall and Administrative Building | 9. Bayhead Bridge |
| 3. Citizen Science Laboratory | 10. MEC Education Building I |
| 4. Conference Center | 11. MEC Education Building II |
| 5. Courtyard | 12. Showers & Restrooms |
| 6. Pavilion | 13. Bike Racks |
| 7. Pier | 14. Emergency Blue Phones |