

## Sanctuary Partnerships



Photo: Joyce & Frank Burek

The *Secret Reef* exhibit is an immense replica of Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

### More Than an Exhibit

The partnership between Tennessee Aquarium and Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary began with the development and creation of an exhibit, but continues in other forms today.

As new opportunities arise, sanctuary staff provide resources to the aquarium such as information, images, video, and occasional visits. We continue to reach out to one another to enhance guest experiences, train staff and volunteers, provide professional development opportunities for educators, and improve ocean literacy.

### NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



## Bringing the Sanctuary to the People

### Exhibit Partners

For Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, located over 100 miles off the Texas coast, partnerships with zoos and aquariums provide a means to share the wonders of the sanctuary with those who may never visit.

Through the development of displays and exhibits we can bring the sanctuary to a much larger audience. At Tennessee Aquarium, this is accomplished through the 618,000-gallon *Secret Reef* exhibit.

### The Secret Reef

In April 2005, the Tennessee Aquarium opened its new Ocean Journey building. The centerpiece of this expansion is an immense replica of Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, a coral reef ecosystem located in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

The *Secret Reef* gives visitors a realistic view of the huge, boulder coral formations that make up the reefs at East and West Flower Garden Banks, and the wildlife that depend on them.

Aquarium staff worked closely with the sanctuary to ensure the accuracy of the exhibit and its accompanying information. Several of

the aquarium's curatorial and education staff also visited the sanctuary for an informational workshop and scuba field experience in 2004. The first-hand view of the reefs and their remote location really gave depth to the staff's understanding of this ocean treasure.

"Many people learn facts about marine habitats and the amazing species that live in a coral reef. But, experiencing these things at the Flower Garden Banks sanctuary helped our educators better communicate the wonder, the uniqueness and the value of this precious place to our visitors," says Tim Baker, Tennessee Aquarium Education Director.

"Our partnership with Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary breathed life into our *Secret Reef* exhibit in so many fascinating ways."

### Make the Connection

Interested in making more of a connection with one of your National Marine Sanctuaries?

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Photo: Tennessee Aquarium

Diver presentations provide guests with a more in-depth experience at the *Secret Reef* exhibit.