

# Open Ocean Restoration Area

June 2021



## WHO WE ARE

The Trustee representatives for the Open Ocean Restoration Area are:

- Ashley Mills, U.S. Department of the Interior
- Laurie Rounds, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Ron Howard, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Gale Bonanno, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## RECENT ACTIVITIES

In the past year, we have continued engineering, design, and implementation of restoration projects approved during Early Restoration and in our Final Restoration Plans 1 and 2. We also continued work on three activities which use Monitoring and Adaptive Management funds to address critical data gaps for marine mammal and sturgeon restoration planning and evaluation. In March 2021, we requested bird and sturgeon restoration ideas from the public for a third restoration plan. We also conducted several webinars and outreach efforts for Open Ocean restoration, including strategic planning for Fish and Water Column Invertebrates.

## WHAT WE DO

The Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group, comprised of the federal trustees, is working to restore wide-ranging and migratory species; including birds, Gulf sturgeon, fish and water column invertebrates, sea turtles, marine mammals, and mesophotic and deep benthic communities. We address these species throughout their life stages and geographic ranges, including inland, coastal, and offshore areas. Therefore, we may fund some restoration projects outside of the Gulf of Mexico. We coordinate with state trustees, especially when proposed projects overlap their jurisdictions.



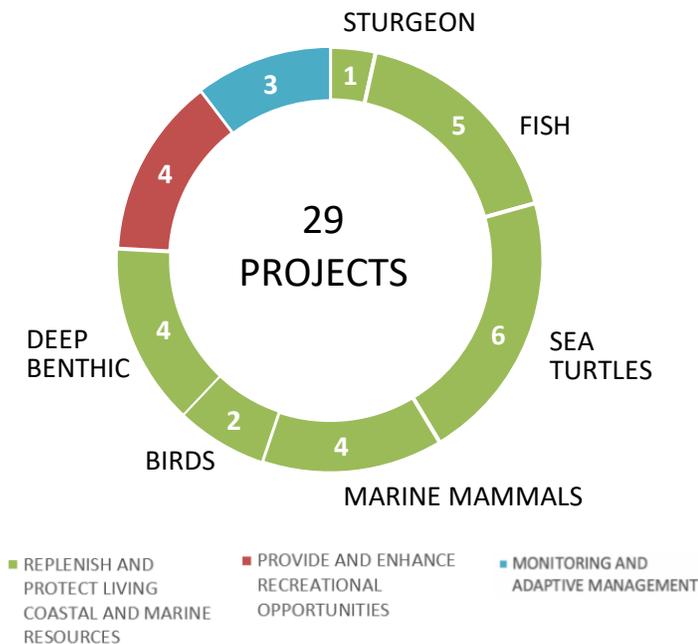
# Open Ocean Restoration Area

## RESTORATION OVERVIEW

For more information, visit [www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/open-ocean](http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/open-ocean)

\$290 million committed to approved projects

### Projects by Restoration Goal



**PROJECT UPDATE //** Early successes to restore black tern habitat have been made using a land conservation program in the Dakotas to protect suitable habitat in partnership with willing landowners. In early 2020, 13 wetland and one grassland easements were identified for acquisition as part of the \$6.3 million dollar project to restore black terns. As of December 2020, the Trustees and partners acquired five wetland easements from willing landowners totaling 985 acres of black tern nesting and foraging habitat.

### RECENT NEWS // OCEANIC FISH RESTORATION PROJECT TO RELEASE MONITORING SUMMARY REPORT (2017-2020)



Project monitoring results, to be released soon in a Monitoring Summary Report, show that partners successfully reduced fish mortality, contributing to the restoration of more than 60 species of pelagic fish in the Gulf. Through this project, 17 vessel owners—about half of the eligible vessels in the Gulf—are helping to restore fish populations. By participating in an annual fishing repose and using alternative gear, fishermen helped keep about one million pounds of pelagic fish in the Gulf to grow and reproduce. This included more than 10,600 individual yellowfin tuna and swordfish. You'll be able to read more about the results of the first four years of this project in the OFRP Summary Monitoring Report 2017-2020.

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## Restoration Projects by Goal and Type

### REPLENISH AND PROTECT LIVING COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES

#### BIRDS

Restoration of Common Loons in Minnesota (🔄 \$7.5M)

Restoration of Black Terns in North Dakota and South Dakota (🔄 \$6.3M)

#### MESOPHOTIC AND DEEP BENTHIC COMMUNITIES

Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities - Active Management and Protection (🔄 \$20.7M)

Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities - Coral Propagation Technique Development (🔄 \$16.9M)

Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities - Habitat Assessment and Evaluation (🔄 \$52.6M)

Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities - Mapping, Ground-truthing, and Predictive Habitat Modeling (🔄 \$35.9M)

#### FISH AND WATER COLUMN INVERTEBRATES

Better Bycatch Reduction Devices for the Gulf of Mexico Commercial Shrimp Trawl Fishery (🔄 \$17.1M)

Communication Networks and Mapping Tools to Reduce Bycatch -- Phase I (🔄 \$4.4M)

Oceanic Fish Restoration Project (🔄 \$20M)

Reduction of Postrelease Mortality from Barotrauma in Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Recreational Fisheries (🔄 \$30M)

Restoring for Bluefin Tuna via Fishing Depth Optimization (🔄 \$6.2M)

#### MARINE MAMMALS

Compilation of Environmental, Threats, and Animal data for Cetacean Population Health Analyses (CETACEAN) (🔄 \$5.8M)

Reduce and Mitigate Vessel Strike Mortality of Cetaceans (🔄 \$3.8M)

Reduce Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans (🔄 \$8.9M)

Reducing Impacts to Cetaceans during Disasters by Improving Response Activities (🔄 \$4.3M)

#### SEA TURTLES

Developing a Gulf-wide Comprehensive Plan for In-water Sea Turtle Data Collection (🔄 \$655K)

Developing Methods to Observe Sea Turtle Interactions in the Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Purse Seine Fishery (🔄 \$3M)

Gulf of Mexico Sea Turtle Atlas (🔄 \$5.7M)

Identifying Methods to Reduce Sea Turtle Bycatch in the Reef Fish Bottom Longline Fishery (🔄 \$290K)

Long Term Nesting Habitat Protection for Sea Turtles (🔄 \$7M)

Reducing Juvenile Sea Turtle Bycatch through Development of Reduced Bar Spacing in Turtle Excluder Device (🔄 \$2.2M)

#### STURGEON

Characterizing Gulf Sturgeon Spawning Habitat, Habitat Use, and Origins of Juvenile Sturgeon in the Pearl and Pascagoula River Systems (🔄 \$2.2M)

### PROVIDE AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Beach Enhancement Project at Gulf Islands National Seashore (🔄 \$10.8M)

Bike and Pedestrian Use Enhancements Project, Davis Bayou, Mississippi District, Gulf Islands National Seashore (🔄 \$7M)

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge Trail Enhancement Project (✅ \$545K)

Gulf Islands National Seashore Ferry Project (✅ \$4M)

### MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Evaluating the Cumulative Impact of Multiple Stressors on Cetaceans (🔄 \$3.7M)

Informing Gulf Sturgeon Population Status and Trends as a Baseline to Evaluate Restoration (🔄 \$910K)

Juvenile Gulf Sturgeon--Gulf-wide Population Dynamics and Habitat Use (🔄 \$2M)

🔄 In progress    🟢 Monitoring/O&M    ✅ Complete