OPEN OCEAN RESTORATION AREA

Communication Networks and Mapping Tools to Reduce Fish Mortality *(preferred)*

Vermilion snapper
Photo by G.P. Schmahl, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

RESTORATION TYPE: Fish and Water Column Invertebrates

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project would restore priority fish species through the collection and sharing of data, development of models, and advancement of communication networks for commercial and recreational fisheries. These activities would continue and expand upon existing effort from the Open Ocean Trustees' *Communication Networks and Mapping Tools to Reduce Bycatch – Phase I* project, which assessed the feasibility of commercial fisher- and recreational angler-led hotspot communication networks for several Gulf of Mexico fisheries.

This project, estimated to cost $18 million, would be implemented over approximately 8 years.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- Implement strategies for improved data sharing and communication in the fishing community to reduce bycatch, depredation, and the disruption of spawning aggregations
- Activities would benefit injured species such as reef fish, highly migratory species, and other priority fish species

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This project would implement strategies for developing species distribution models for priority fish species and voluntary communication networks to minimize bycatch, depredation, and fishers' interactions with spawning aggregations of priority fish species while maintaining target catch.

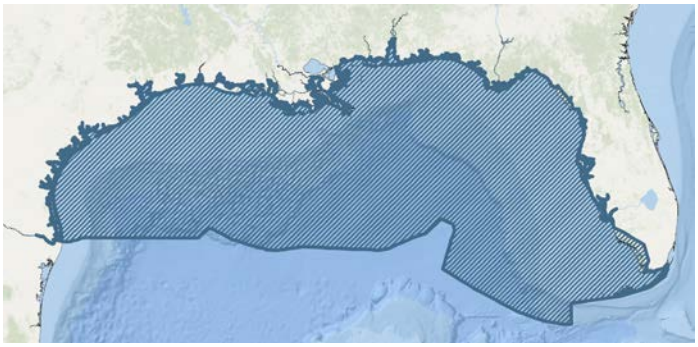
Models would be developed for use in voluntary practices to reduce bycatch and depredation, made available to fisheries groups, and tested to gather feedback on their success in meeting project goals. Data gaps would be evaluated, and additional data would be collected to refine models of distribution for priority species. Model predictions would then be distributed through communication networks.

Spawning aggregation sites for priority species would be identified through the collection of additional data on timing and location of spawning, including data on environmental factors. These data would inform models and maps and support communication within the fishing community. A workgroup of fishers, scientists, and managers would be convened to develop a conservation strategy to conserve spawning aggregation sites.

The project would also enhance at-sea observer coverage for the commercial reef fish fishery to increase capacity for gathering data and monitoring restoration project effectiveness. Bycatch communication networks would be developed to improve communication among reef fish and other commercial and charter vessels on bycatch and depredation observations.

Project activities would occur in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

This project would leverage information on fish spawning aggregation sites that has been developed through a NOAA RESTORE Science Program-funded project that identified reef fish spawning sites in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/open-ocean