OPEN OCEAN RESTORATION AREA

Gulf-Wide Sea Turtle Bycatch Reduction *(preferred)*

Turtle Excluder Device
Photo by NOAA via U.S. Dept. of State, Bureau of Oceans.

RESTORATION TYPE: Sea Turtles

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project would reduce the risk of commercial fishery interactions with sea turtles through outreach and education with shrimp trawl and commercial hook-and-line fisheries. Outreach and education activities would build upon existing NOAA Gear Monitoring Team efforts under the Regionwide Trustees' *Sea Turtle Early Restoration Project, Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Reduction component* project. Further, the project would support the adoption of small-bar turtle excluder devices (TEDs) developed through the Open Ocean Trustees' *Reducing Juvenile Sea Turtle Bycatch through Development of Reduced Bar Spacing in Turtle Excluder Devices* project. This project would reduce risk of sea turtle bycatch in commercial fisheries by encouraging alternative gear and methods.

This project, estimated to cost $8.5 million, would be implemented over approximately 8 years.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- Reduces sea turtle bycatch in commercial fisheries by encouraging compliance with existing bycatch reduction requirements
- Reduces risk of small, juvenile sea turtle bycatch in shrimp trawl fisheries by distributing alternative gear

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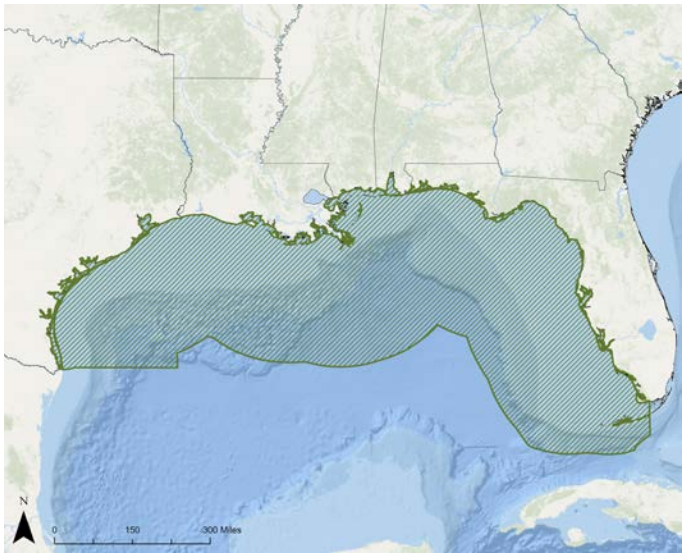
Existing NOAA Gear Monitoring Team outreach and education activities would be continued in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp trawl fishery and expanded to include commercial hook-and-line fisheries. For instance, courtesy dockside and at-sea inspections of TEDs in the shrimp trawl fishery would continue to ensure that required gear is installed and functioning properly. This project would also expand the Gear Monitoring Team's activities to commercial hook-and-line fisheries, providing additional resources and education and outreach on sea turtle resuscitation, dehooking, and safe handling and release requirements.

In addition to Gear Monitoring Team activities, the project would encourage the voluntary adoption of small-bar TEDs, which would reduce the risk of bycatch of small, juvenile turtles in commercial trawl fisheries. These small-bar TEDs would protect small, juvenile sea turtles that are too small to be excluded by the currently-required 4-inch TEDs or that may be unable to lift the TED flap to escape. The project would partner with gear manufacturers and net shops to fund the manufacture and installation of these small-bar TEDs on participating vessels.



This project would benefit all five species of sea turtles found in the Gulf of Mexico by implementing bycatch reduction strategies across multiple fisheries.

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