



OPEN OCEAN RESTORATION AREA

Gulf-Wide Sea Turtle Vessel Strike Reduction (*preferred*)



Green Sea Turtle
Photo from Pixabay

RESTORATION TYPE: Sea Turtles

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project would reduce the risk of boat strikes to sea turtles by identifying hotspots of boat and sea turtle interactions, determining key risk factors for strikes, and identifying voluntary, site-specific measures to reduce boat strike risk. Boat strikes (from both recreational boats and other vessels) constitute a major threat to sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico, making the reduction of interactions a high priority for sea turtle restoration. Strategies to reduce boat strikes are most effective when tailored to specific local conditions. Site-specific studies, such as boater surveys and assessments of local boating behavior, would be key considerations when determining what risk reduction strategies would be most successful at a given site.

This project, estimated to cost \$3.5 million, would be implemented over approximately 8 years.



PROJECT BENEFITS

- Increases understanding of factors that contribute to boat strikes across the Gulf of Mexico
- Reduces the risk of injury or mortality to sea turtles from boat strikes



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This project seeks to identify areas of concern, understand key risk factors in hotspots, and implement tailored risk reduction measures to reduce boat strikes by encouraging voluntary change in local boating behavior.

In Phase 1, data analyses would identify spatial and temporal distribution of recreational boat strikes to sea turtles across the Gulf of Mexico. Areas of concern would be identified where high boating and sea turtle activity coincide, such as inlets, bays, coastal foraging areas, mating areas, and coastal areas off nesting beaches.

In Phase 2, on-site studies of turtle and boater behavior would evaluate key risk factors in areas of concern, such as distance to marinas, location type, boating demographic, and temporal characteristics such as day of the week or holidays. On-site studies may include visual observations of boating and sea turtle activity and social science surveys.

In Phase 3, site-specific, voluntary measures to reduce vessel strike risk would be implemented at three or more hotspot locations. These activities may involve large-scale coordinated public education and outreach to encourage boater adoption of voluntary conservation measures.

The boat strike risk reduction strategies implemented by this project would benefit all five species of sea turtle found in the Gulf of Mexico.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

