



Open Ocean Restoration Area

June 2023



RECENT ACTIVITIES

In the past year, we continued to implement a range of restoration projects and monitoring activities. Working with partners, our projects are conserving important habitats, reducing threats that can cause mortality such as bycatch, and filling critical information gaps to restore Open Ocean resources. We released our [third draft restoration plan](#) to help restore for injuries to seabirds, held a public review and comment period, and are now working to finalize the restoration plan. In fall 2022, we held a [public webinar](#) to provide updates and highlight restoration of Common Loons. In spring 2023, we held a [public webinar](#) to share results and upcoming implementation activities for the mesophotic and deep benthic communities restoration projects.

WHAT WE DO

We are working to restore wide-ranging and migratory 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.

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



Restoration Overview

\$357 million committed to 34 approved projects

RECENT NEWS // MARINE MAMMAL RESTORATION

The Open Ocean Trustees have approved four marine mammal restoration projects totaling over \$23 million, and over \$6 million for monitoring and data collection projects.

Improving disaster response. We are strengthening the capacity of the Gulf-wide network of marine mammal disaster responders with training and equipment. We also completed a Phase 1 study to assess the risks of oil exposure when these mammals come to the surface to breathe. Phase 2 continues in 2023.

Reducing stressors to cetaceans. This project completed a risk assessment for a better understanding of the sources of underwater noise, and its impacts on whales and dolphins (cetaceans). The next step involves working with industry partners to test available noise reduction technologies.

At-sea surveys of cetaceans and seabirds. This year, we began a three-year project to collect data on the distribution and abundance of cetaceans and seabirds in the Gulf of Mexico to better understand changes in their populations and plan restoration.

Modeling and data. We continue to develop data and tools to understand and share information about stressors and the health of cetaceans. We are also developing models to evaluate the effectiveness of restoration activities.



RESTORATION PLAN 4 // [Submit your project ideas](#)



through August 14, 2023, for Fish and Water Column Invertebrates and Sea Turtles.



RECENT NEWS // DRAFT RESTORATION PLAN 3 RELEASED

We released the [Draft Restoration Plan 3 and Environmental Assessment](#) on March 14, 2023, with a public comment period through April 28, 2023. We held two public webinars on March 28 and April 4, 2023, to present the draft plan, answer questions, and receive public comments. Proposed projects include a range of restoration actions to restore for the injury to seabirds, such as enhancing seabird breeding habitat, re-establishing seabird breeding colonies, and reducing seabird bycatch. We anticipate finalizing the plan this fall 2023.



Funding Overview

Restoration Type	Settlement Allocation	Funds Committed Through May 2023	Percent Funds	
			Committed	Remaining
 Fish and Water Column Invertebrates	\$400,000,000	\$79,063,216	20%	80%
 Sturgeon	\$15,000,000	\$2,962,070	20%	80%
 Sea Turtles	\$55,000,000	\$19,966,838	36%	64%
 Marine Mammals	\$55,000,000	\$23,501,256	43%	57%
 Birds	\$70,000,000	\$14,609,974	21%	79%
 Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities	\$273,300,000	\$126,816,161	46%	54%
 Provide and Enhance Recreational Opportunities	\$22,397,916	\$22,388,991	100%	0%
 Monitoring and Adaptive Management	\$200,000,000	\$11,712,090	6%	94%
 Administrative Oversight and Comprehensive Planning	\$150,000,000	\$56,472,253	38%	62%
Total	\$1,240,697,916	\$357,492,849	29%	71%

We recently [approved three monitoring and adaptive management activities](#) to evaluate the outcomes of Open Ocean restoration, identify data gaps, and identify the benefits of restoration to natural resources and the ecosystem.

MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ONLINE
www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/open-ocean

