Open Ocean Restoration Area

July 2020

WHO WE ARE

The Trustee representatives for the Open Ocean Restoration Area are:

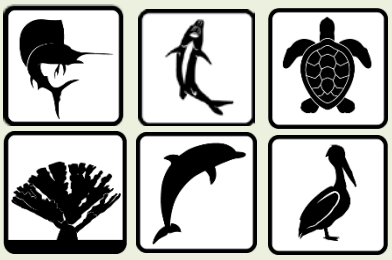
- Ashley Mills, U.S. Department of the Interior
- Laurie Rounds, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Ron Howard, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Gale Bonanno, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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 Plan 1. We also began three monitoring activities, which use Monitoring and Adaptive Management (MAM) funds to better understand environmental conditions that impact marine mammals and sturgeon. In December 2019, we released our Final Restoration Plan 2, which approved 18 restoration projects for fish, sea turtles, marine mammals, and mesophotic and deep benthic communities. We also continued stakeholder outreach and developed priorities released in an updated OO MAM Strategy this year.

WHAT WE DO

The Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group, comprised of the federal trustees, works on restoring 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 use some funds for restoration outside of the Gulf of Mexico. We coordinate with state trustees, especially when proposed projects overlap their jurisdictions.



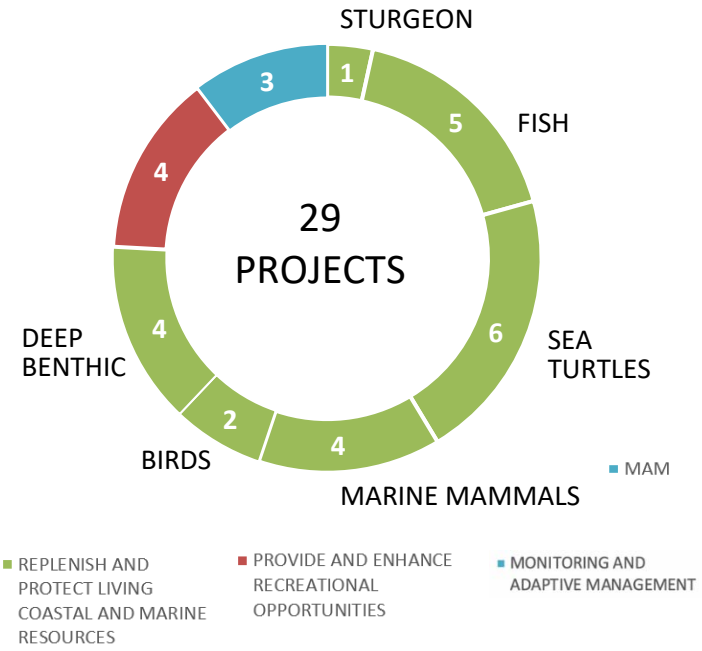
Open Ocean Restoration Area

RESTORATION OVERVIEW

For more information, visit www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/open-ocean

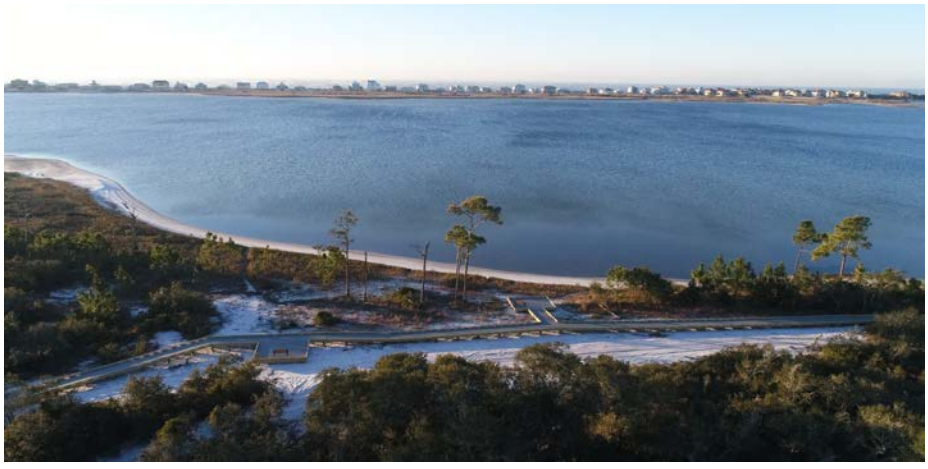
$290 million committed to approved projects

Projects by Restoration Goal



PROJECT UPDATE // A new Gulf Sturgeon electronic data entry, or logbook system, was recently put to the test by field teams tagging sturgeon in Florida's Choctawhatchee River. These tools are being developed as part of the Gulf Sturgeon Population Status and Trends activity approved by the TIG in 2019. This work will improve data collection and increase data sharing among Gulf sturgeon researchers and restoration partners. Other activities that will use this data system are Juvenile Gulf Sturgeon Gulf-wide Population Dynamics and Habitat Use and Gulf Sturgeon Spawning Habitat Characterization.

RECENT NEWS // BON SECOUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TRAIL PROJECT COMPLETED



Through this Early Restoration project, we repaired and enhanced the existing Jeff Friend Trail located on the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge in coastal Alabama. The aged boardwalk and gravel trail were repaired and improved to enhance access and the quality of visitor experience. We also constructed an observation platform along the trail and widened two accessible parking spaces to better accommodate visitors.

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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 (⟳ $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