



NFWF

# Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

### RECIPIENTS

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

### AWARD AMOUNT

\$931,600

### PARTNERS

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Walton, Washington and Holmes Counties

Northwest Florida Water Management District

Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance

### LOCATION

Choctawhatchee River Basin

### AWARD DATE

November 2015

### STATUS

Monitoring

### PROGRESS UPDATE

Water quality monitoring and sediment modelling are ongoing. Analysis of restoration sites was completed. (February 2019)

The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), supports projects to remedy harm and eliminate or reduce the risk of harm to Gulf Coast natural resources affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. To learn more about NFWF, go to [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org).

## FLORIDA

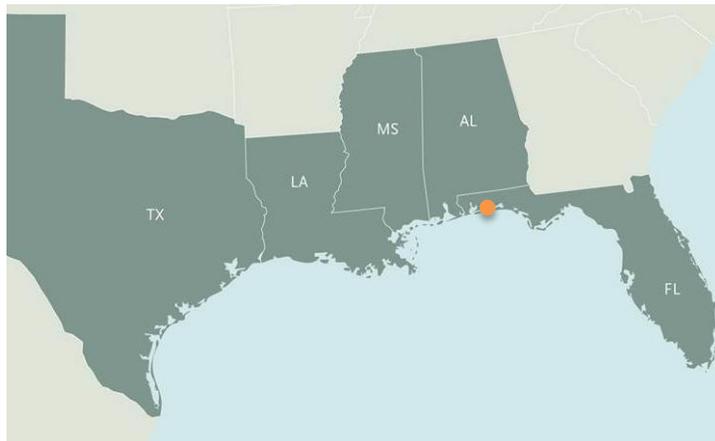
# Water Quality Improvements to Enhance Fisheries Habitat in the Lower Choctawhatchee River Basin – Phase I

This project seeks to improve water quality and enhance access to fish spawning and rearing habitat in the eastern Choctawhatchee Bay watershed by reducing upstream sediment loading. This initial phase will inventory, prioritize, and develop solutions to address the most significant source of sediment in the watershed – runoff associated with un-paved road- stream crossings. Funding will be used to update existing inventories of unpaved road data and evaluate impacts to habitat and living resources in order to prioritize the most significant contributing sediment sources that are currently affecting Choctawhatchee Bay; resulting in site-specific solutions and cost estimates for necessary improvements.

The Choctawhatchee River and Bay are designated critical habitat for the threatened Gulf sturgeon and this assessment is expected to target locations where improvements will enhance access to their freshwater spawning habitat. The direct connection between roads and streams results in the significant unchecked delivery of sediment, alteration of natural surface and subsurface hydrology, and the introduction of hazardous materials into the watershed. This project will assess the magnitude of this impact to accessing critical spawning and foraging habitat for the Gulf Sturgeon and identify cost-effective remediation strategies.



Gulf Sturgeon | Credit: Breitbart



Impacts to aquatic species, habitat and hydrology from unchecked sediment loading of unpaved roads within the Choctawhatchee watershed are significant.