

Deepwater Horizon

Oceanic Fish Restoration Project

Fishermen restore fish in the Gulf of Mexico

Fishermen are stepping up to restore pelagic fish affected by the oil spill by participating in the *Deepwater Horizon* Oceanic Fish Restoration Project, an initiative organized by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The project works to restore fish following the oil spill by reducing fishing pressure to support healthy, robust populations of pelagic fish.

Why do we need to restore?

Many oceanic, or pelagic, fish, eggs, and larvae were killed, deformed, or harmed by the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, including tuna, billfish and mackerel, as well as deepwater fish such as lancetfish.

PELAGIC FISH = CRITICAL TO MARINE ECOSYSTEM HEALTH + SUPPORT LIVELIHOOD OF FISHING BUSINESSES & COMMUNITIES

How does the project help restore fish?

The project has two parts:

1. Temporary, voluntary **repose for 6 months of the year**, allowing fish to grow and reproduce
2. During the repose, participants have the option to continue to fish using **alternative gear**, which results in lower bycatch of non-targeted species



HALF

Since 2017, about half of the pelagic longline fleet in the Gulf of Mexico has chosen to participate in the temporary project.

This project has successfully supported healthier populations of fish in the Gulf

BETWEEN 2017 AND 2019

23,000 PELAGIC FISH SAVED

By participating in the voluntary repose, vessel owners allowed approximately 23,000 individual pelagic fish (about one million pounds), including 10,600 individual tuna and swordfish, to remain in the water to grow, reproduce, and support future generations of fish.

NFWF and NOAA have worked directly with stakeholders to find ways to continually enhance and modify the project over the years. Participating vessel owners have reduced pressure on pelagic fish and are supporting a healthier Gulf of Mexico for generations to come. A restored fishery will allow for a more plentiful catch and benefit vessel owners and countless others whose livelihoods depend on a healthy Gulf.

Alternative Gear

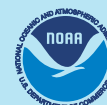
Although alternative gear was found to have lower catch rates than pelagic longline gear, almost

90%

of all fish discarded from alternative gear were **released alive**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

nfwf.org/programs/deepwater-horizon-oceanic-fish-restoration-project



NFWF