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Enhanced Assessment of Gulf of Mexico Fisheries – Phase IV

This project requests a fourth year of funding for the Florida Gulf of Mexico fisheries assessment to support the second year of full scale implementation. This project builds upon and expands the GEBF investments in both fisheries-dependent and -independent data collection begun in 2013. Reef fish, particularly red snapper, have historically been subject to overfishing and habitat loss, causing significant decline in stocks. The largest single impediment to effective management of Gulf of Mexico reef fisheries remains the lack of sound data related to both catch effort and population levels. This lack of reliable data is particularly evident in relation to the recreational fishery, a significant and growing component.

This project will continue a significant expansion of the collection of data on both catch effort and stock assessment of reef fish in the northern Gulf of Mexico to provide a greater understanding the potential long-term impacts of the Deepwater Horizon spill on fisheries. Additional funding is being requested to leverage potential funding available through NFWF’s electronic monitoring program under a cooperative agreement with NOAA.

Increased data collection for key species, such as the snapper pictured above, will create a more accurate stock assessment and influence best practices in Florida Gulf Coast fisheries.