



NFWF

Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

RECIPIENT

The Nature Conservancy

AWARD AMOUNT

\$15,166,000

PARTNERS

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Aquaculture Division

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Northwest Florida Water Management District

Santa Rosa County

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

LOCATION

Santa Rosa County

AWARD DATE

November 2018

STATUS

Awarded

PROGRESS UPDATE

Project recently awarded. (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.

FLORIDA

Pensacola East Bay Oyster Habitat Restoration - Phase II

This project will construct 33 individual oyster reefs along approximately 6.5 miles of the eastern shore of East and Blackwater bays in Santa Rosa County, building from the design, permitting, and pre-restoration monitoring completed during Phase I (GEBF 2015). These oyster reefs will utilize materials that are more resistant to displacement by wave energy in order to sustain the restored reefs. Oysters are an ecological keystone species in the Gulf of Mexico, contributing to the healthy function of the marine ecosystem. Oyster reefs provide habitat for many recreationally and commercially important marine species as well as structural integrity that reduces shoreline erosion and improves water quality. Large-scale restoration projects like this are needed to help recover oyster populations in the Gulf of Mexico.

Project activities will address funding priorities in the Florida GEBF Restoration Strategy to restore the ecological function of landscape-scale coastal habitats and to replenish oyster populations. This project will also help meet oyster reef restoration goals outlined in the Santa Rosa County RESTORE Multi-Year Implementation and the Natural Resource Damage Strategic Framework for Oyster Restoration. An application will be submitted to designate the project area as an oyster harvest exclusion zone. At this scale, reef restoration is expected to also provide foraging habitat for numerous avian species and enhance habitat for important finfish and shellfish species.



Credit | Anne Birch, TNC



Pictured above, a tri-colored heron by a restored oyster reef in Florida. Oyster reef structures have been designed to provide secondary ecosystem services such as habitat for marine organisms.