



NFWF | Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

FLORIDA

Benthic Habitat Mapping, Characterization and Assessment

This project seeks to provide important data on the extent and species utilization of offshore fishery habitats along the West Florida Continental Shelf – an area utilized by reef fish and sea turtle populations for shelter, feeding and spawning. This project proposes to gather high-resolution data of a portion of a 2,800-square-kilometers area to provide the baseline data necessary to identify priority management and restoration activities anticipated to be the subject of future requests for funding. Additional anticipated outcomes from this effort include potential changes to fisheries management in important areas through re-evaluation of current Essential Fish Habitat and targeted designation of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern. Recommendations of additional protection require accurate information on the location and value of these fish and wildlife habitats, which will be informed through this assessment.

This project addresses the identified need to improve data collection to inform sustainable fishing practices for red snapper and other reef fish, and will inform future efforts to reduce bycatch of marine fish and sea turtles through improved management during periods of high utilization in these benthic habitats.



Improved fisheries management and data collection, C-BASS pictured in the above right, in the West Florida Shelf area of the Gulf of Mexico will provide significant benefits to reef fish and marine turtles, like the above left.

AT A GLANCE

RECIPIENT:
University of South Florida

AWARD AMOUNT:
\$4,477,900

PARTNERS:
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute

Florida Institute of Oceanography

LOCATION:
West Florida shelf from Pensacola to north of the Dry Tortugas, Florida

AWARD DATE:
November 2014

STATUS:
Active

PROGRESS UPDATE:
Two cruises were completed (C-BASS and mapping). Data analysis and outreach activities continues.



The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF), administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 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 GEBF and view a comprehensive project map go to www.nfwf.org/Gulf