This project was a continuation of the previously funded (2013) reef fish assessment work in Florida and was complementary to 2014 projects in Alabama and Mississippi. The project funded the second phase of a five-year study to implement a significant expansion of the collection of data on both catch effort and stock assessment in the Panhandle and eastern Gulf of Mexico. The data was used to assess the recovery of reef fish stocks in association with restoration efforts implemented in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, improve and expand single-species stock assessments for managed fish species, and foster improved ecosystem-based assessment and management capabilities.

Gulf of Mexico fisheries, particularly red snapper, have historically been subject to overfishing, causing periods of significant decline in stocks. While current stock assessments show an improving fishery, more work clearly remains to be done. The largest single impediment to effective management of Gulf of Mexico reef fisheries such as red snapper is the lack of sound data related to both catch effort and stock assessment. The completed work was widely recognized by state and federal resource agencies, conservation organizations and commercial and recreational fishing interests as being an extremely critical step needed to improve management of red snapper and other reef fisheries to ensure their sustainability.

FLORIDA
Enhanced Assessment for Recovery of Gulf of Mexico Fisheries – Phase II

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The future management of red snapper and other important reef fish populations were significantly informed by this project.

AT A GLANCE
RECIPIENT: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
AWARD AMOUNT: $2,493,847
PARTNERS: NOAA
LOCATION: Florida Panhandle and West Florida Shelf
AWARD DATE: November 2014
STATUS: Closed
PROGRESS UPDATE: Expanded data collection and analysis for Phase II is complete. Lessons learned helped guide future GEBF fisheries monitoring work in Florida. The project is now closed. (September 2016)