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 to ensure reef sustainability. 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 oyster restoration projects provide significant ecological and resiliency benefits to near shore habitats.

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.

AT A GLANCE

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, Florida

AWARD DATE: November 2018

STATUS: Active