



# NFWF

# Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

### RECIPIENT

Sea Turtle Conservancy

### AWARD AMOUNT

\$5,000,000

### PARTNERS

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Local sea turtle permit holders

Local county/city code enforcement officials

### LOCATION

Pinellas, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, and Collier counties

### AWARD DATE

November 2018

### STATUS

Active

### 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](http://www.nfwf.org).

## FLORIDA

# Eliminating Light Pollution on Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches – Phase III

This project will expand the Sea Turtle Conservancy’s (STC) successful lighting retrofit program to Florida’s Southwest Gulf Coast. STC’s lighting retrofit program works to reduce or eliminate artificial light pollution on priority sea turtle nesting beaches with the goal of increasing nesting success by reducing or eliminating hatchling disorientation and ‘false crawls’ by adult females. Florida has the largest population of nesting loggerhead sea turtles in the world, hosting some of the highest densities of sea turtle nesting across the Gulf on the southwest coast. As the Florida Gulf Coast continues to be developed, beachfront lighting worsens and continues to disrupt sea turtle recovery efforts, causing nesting females and thousands of sea turtle hatchlings to be disoriented every year, preventing them from ever reaching the sea. In addition to continued work with project partners to identify high priority properties and willing property owners to mitigate artificial light problems on those properties, STC will conduct lighting workshops to train and educate personnel to evaluate, monitor, and enforce local lighting ordinances designed to protect sea turtles. If properly maintained, these fixes represent permanent solutions to disorientation.

Successful nesting and hatchling survival is essential for the protection and recovery of endangered sea turtle populations in the Gulf of Mexico. Project efforts are complimentary to prior activities undertaken to darken public beaches under the Natural Resource Damage program and earlier GEBF funding for similar activities on properties in targeted Panhandle counties. Outcomes from this project address sea turtle protection and restoration activities identified in the Florida GEBF Restoration Strategy, federal recovery plans for sea turtles, and the Natural Resource Damage Strategic Framework for Sea Turtle Restoration.



Artificial light disorients nesting females and hatchlings. The pictures above show disoriented turtle tracts (left) and normal tracts (right)