NFWF | Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

FLORIDA

Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration

RECIPIENT
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

AWARD AMOUNT
$4,189,400

PARTNERS
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

University of Florida

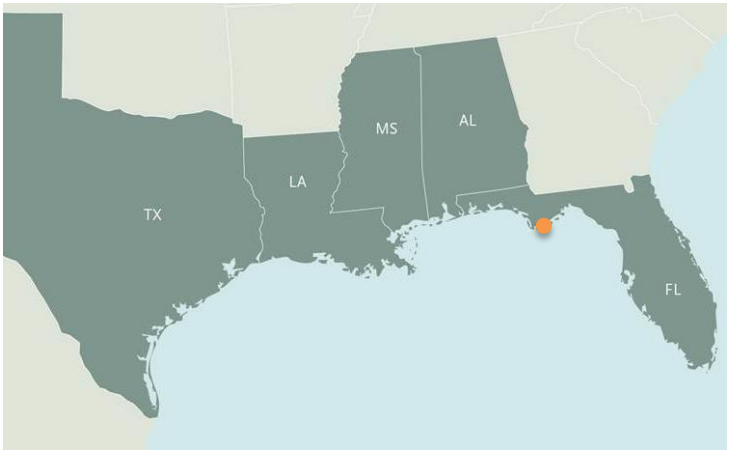
LOCATION
Apalachicola Bay, FL

AWARD DATE
November 2013

This project will enhance approximately 18 acres and improve the management of approximately 3,000 acres of degraded oyster reef habitat across a range of salinity levels and other conditions to better understand the optimal conditions for promoting oyster resiliency to various future disturbances (e.g., increased salinity levels, sedimentation due to storms, etc.). A key objective of the proposed 5-year oyster restoration and research project is to provide important information to inform the design and management of future oyster reef restoration projects.

The Apalachicola River watershed, including Apalachicola Bay, is one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the U.S. The Apalachicola Bay oyster fishery represents 90 percent of the total oyster fishery in the state of Florida, and 9 percent of the oyster harvest in the Gulf. Decreased freshwater flows into the Bay, combined with other factors including overharvest and drought, have hastened the decline of this important biological, cultural and economic resource.

Oyster harvest in Apalachicola Bay is now at less than 50 percent of historic levels. The multiple stressors impacting oyster populations in the Apalachicola Bay Watershed creates a sense of urgency for management efforts to increase the resiliency of this important resource.



Enhancement of 18 acres and improved management of 3,000 acres of oyster beds in this historic fishery will help inform improved management in the future.

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.**