NFWF | Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

MISSISSIPPI

Reef Fish Assessment for Mississippi Coastal and Nearshore Gulf Waters

RECIPIENT
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

AWARD AMOUNT
$4,582,500

PARTNERS
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

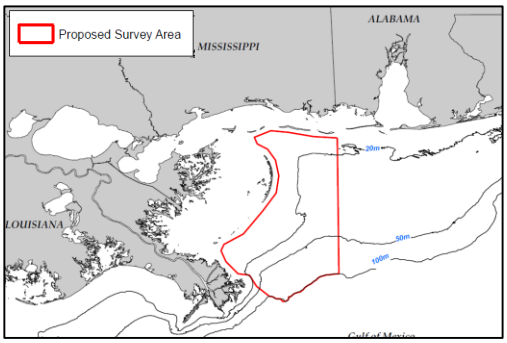
University of Southern Mississippi

LOCATION
Coastal waters of Mississippi

AWARD DATE
November 2014

This study is a two-year effort that will implement a significant and meaningful expansion of the collection of data on both catch effort and stock assessment of reef fish species in coastal Mississippi. These data will be used to improve ecosystem-based management capabilities and improve and expand single-species stock assessments for managed fish species. The project includes the implementation of both fisheries-dependent and fisheries-independent data collection. This project is similar to and complimentary of fisheries monitoring projects being supported by the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund in Florida and Alabama.

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 like red snapper is the lack of sound data related to both catch effort and population levels. Establishment and expansion of monitoring and assessment programs is critical to managing and monitoring the recovery of fisheries and ecosystems.



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**.

This project expands reef fish monitoring in Mississippi to improve data collection and inform fisheries management.