

Reflections

on **Restoration** and **Partnerships**

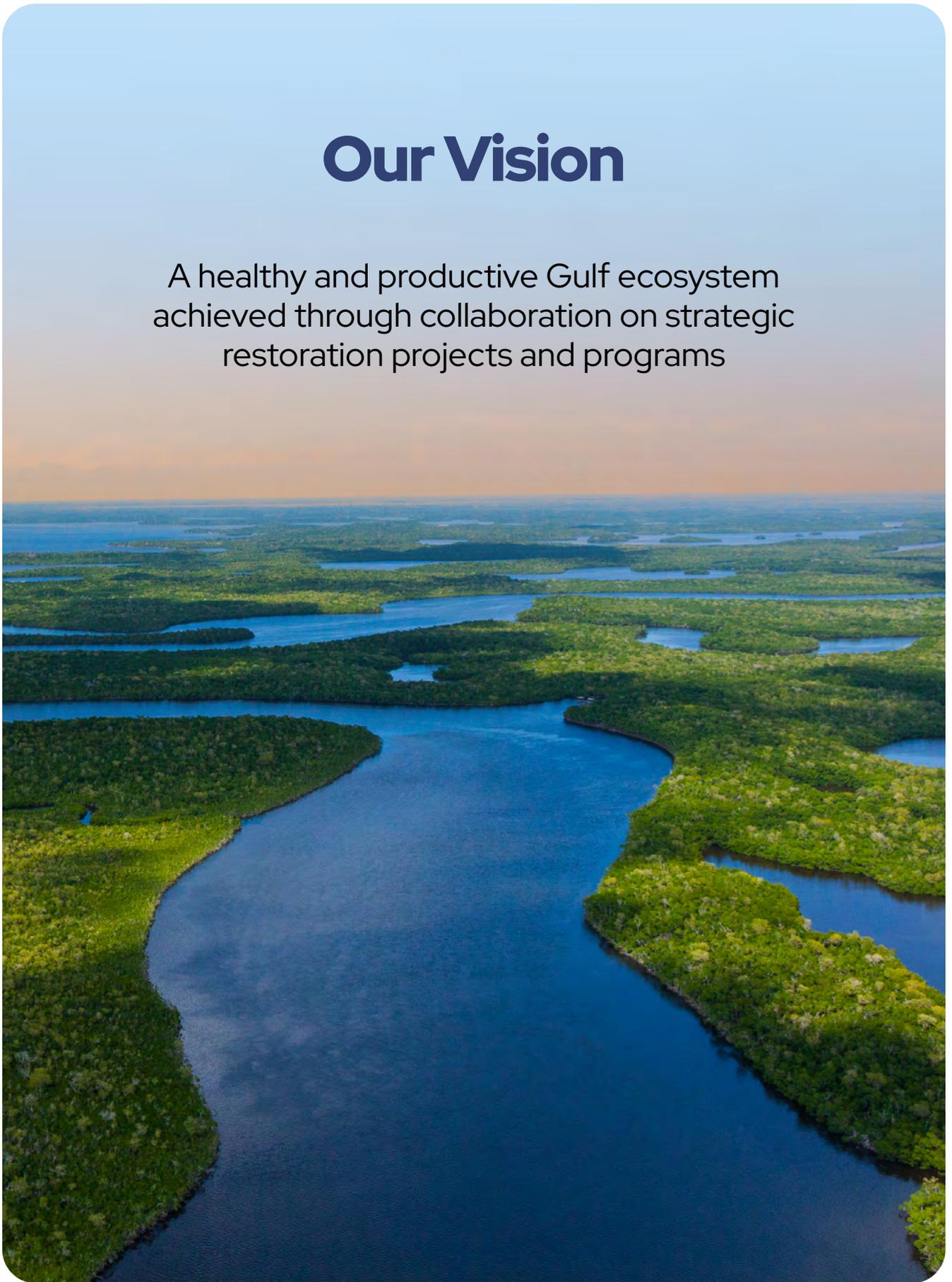


2025 Status Report

Revitalizing the communities and natural resources of the Gulf Coast

Our Vision

A healthy and productive Gulf ecosystem achieved through collaboration on strategic restoration projects and programs



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RESTORE Act and RESTORE Council

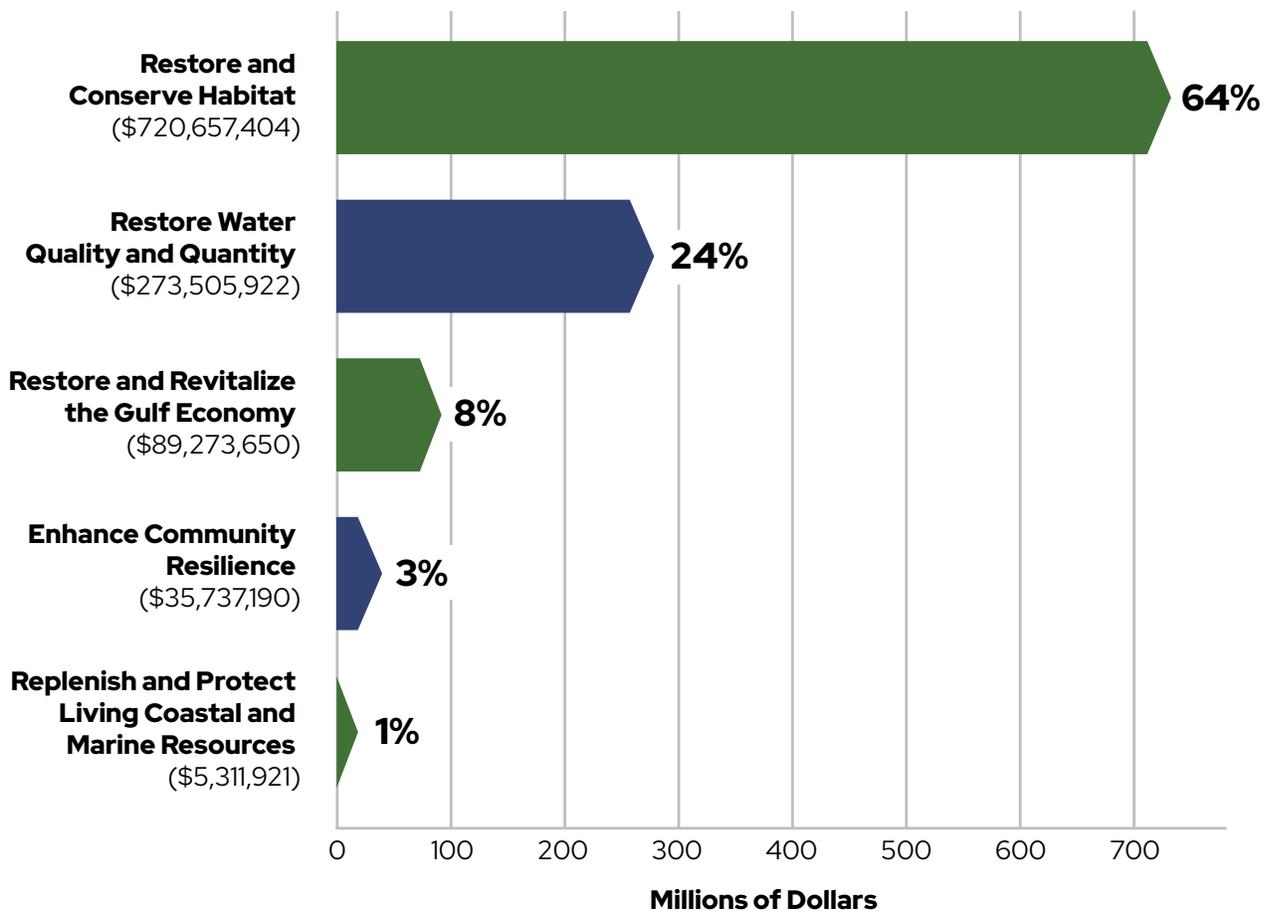
The Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act) is a federal law passed in 2012 in the wake of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill in April 2010. The RESTORE Act created the RESTORE Council, a group comprised of the governors of the Gulf states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, and the Secretaries of the federal Departments of the Army, Commerce, Interior, Agriculture, and Homeland Security, as well as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. This unique governance structure fosters collaboration among government agencies with key roles in Gulf Coast restoration.

As an independent agency, the RESTORE Council does not receive annual appropriations from Congress and is entirely funded through a Trust Fund established by the RESTORE Act. All funding stems from a 2016 consent decree between the United States and the private parties responsible for the oil spill. The RESTORE Council funds ecosystem restoration and economic recovery projects across the Gulf Coast region.

Significant Accomplishments and Project Highlights

To date, the RESTORE Council has invested over \$1.1 billion in Gulf Coast restoration. Over \$470 million was awarded through the Council-Selected Restoration Component. In that same period, over \$679 million was awarded through the Spill Impact Component.

Awarded FPL and SEP Investments by Council Goals



The RESTORE Council has adopted goals to help coordinate region-wide Gulf Coast restoration and guide the collective actions at the local, state, and federal levels. These goals were collaboratively developed and approved by all 11 members of the RESTORE Council and can be found in the Council-approved [Comprehensive Plan](#). There are a number of *Deepwater Horizon* funding sources leveraged to accomplish an ecosystem-level approach to restoration. The chart above and following data reflect progress made through RESTORE Council investments only.

RESTORE Council Goals, Targets, and Progress

Goal 1: Restore and Conserve Habitat

Total Awards: **74** Proportion of Funding: **64%**



71,601

Acres to be restored via hydrologic restoration



29,628

Acres to be acquired



23,132

Acres to be managed under improved stewardship or BMPs

Goal 2: Restore Water Quality and Quantity

Total Awards: **51** Proportion of Funding: **24%**



137,000

Upland forest acres to be restored



65,761

Agricultural acres to be under best management practice agreements



31,600

Pounds of nutrients (N & P) to be removed or avoided

Remaining Goals

Total Awards: **38** Proportion of Funding: **11.5%**



12K-400K

Goal oyster population density (individuals per acre)



25,200

Linear feet of transportation channel to be improved

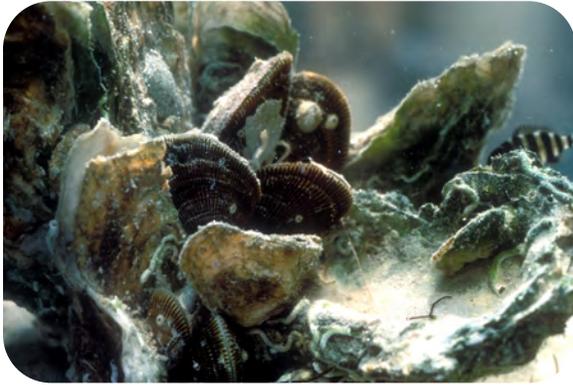


1,943

Facilities to benefit

Amplifying Results through Ecosystem Restoration

The RESTORE Council recognizes that healthy ecosystems support thriving and resilient coastal communities through clean water, abundant fisheries, and storm protection. Ecosystem restoration activities provide many social, economic, cultural, and environmental benefits for their regions. For



A cluster of Eastern oysters growing on a reef. Oysters provide essential habitat for marine life.
Credit: NOAA

example, restoring habitats that support diverse fish and wildlife populations can provide commercial, recreational, and other human uses of the ecosystem; improve water quality; and protect coastal communities.

In addition, restoration projects and programs support economies locally and across the Gulf region, both directly in the form of restoration-related jobs and indirectly through a healthier and more productive ecosystem. In implementing these activities, RESTORE Council members leverage funding from a variety of sources to maximize project benefits and promote large-scale ecosystem and economic restoration.

- Coastal habitats such as mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs support a vast array of marine and terrestrial species like oysters, sea turtles, and many commercially and recreationally significant fish that rely on coastal and estuarine habitats for spawning and nursery grounds. Restoring these areas supports local fisheries, ensuring long-term food security and economic stability for fishing communities.
- Delivery of nutrients and other pollutants to coastal waters has created water quality problems across the northern Gulf, compromising living resources as well as recreational and economic opportunities. The RESTORE Council's water quality investments aim to reduce nutrient and pollutant loading, which is often important for restoring aquatic habitats and other living resources sensitive to water quality impairment (e.g., seagrasses and oysters).
- Investing in ecosystem restoration and healthy coastlines sustains local communities by attracting tourists and creating jobs in conservation and ecotourism.



Habitat restoration supports fish and wildlife diversity, helps improve water quality, and safeguards coastal communities.

By working closely with its restoration partners, the RESTORE Council is making significant progress toward comprehensive Gulf Coast restoration, protecting communities from coastal flooding, creating and strengthening coastal economies, and providing substantial environmental and economic benefits to current and future generations. Highlighted below are just a few examples of projects and programs that represent some of the significant accomplishments across the Gulf:

Protecting and Restoring Valuable Coastal Habitat: Armand Bayou Nature Center Land Acquisition Project

The RESTORE Council has prioritized the acquisition and protection of valuable coastal habitat to ensure it is available for use and enjoyment by future generations. As an example, the state of Texas, through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), received \$3 million in RESTORE Act Council-Selected Restoration Component funding to acquire critical land within the Armand Bayou Watershed in Harris County, Texas. Utilizing these RESTORE Act funds as well as other funding sources and donations, the Armand Bayou Nature Center (ABNC), through a collaborative partnership between Harris County and the ExxonMobil Corporation, acquired 1,145 acres of remnant coastal prairie land for habitat preservation and restoration.

Established in 1974 by environmental visionaries, ABNC protects three rapidly disappearing habitats that were historically dominant along the Texas Gulf Coast: Texas coastal tallgrass prairie, riparian forest, and the unchannelized estuarine bayou and surrounding marshes. Coastal tallgrass prairie once comprised 9 million acres along the Texas and Louisiana coasts, but less than 1 percent of that historical prairie is left today.



Restoration of Texas coastal tallgrass prairie will ensure that the hundreds of species of wildlife that depend on this vital habitat can thrive. Credit: TCEQ

ABNC's acquisition of this highly valuable wildlife habitat expands the preserve's total acreage to 3,947 acres, making it the largest urban wilderness preserve in Texas. Approximately half of the acquired land



Other than the tallgrass prairie (pictured), two other vanishing habitats are the riparian forest and the unchannelized estuarine Armand Bayou and surrounding marshes. Credit: TCEQ

is remnant coastal prairie, with the other half riparian forest and bayou wetlands. ABNC will begin the process of returning the land to its former glory as a tallgrass prairie and restoring marsh grasses along the bayou, ultimately providing publicly accessible wilderness habitat for the enjoyment and well-being of future generations. Conservation work at ABNC has brought about the return of many native animal species that had almost completely disappeared, like American alligators, bald eagles, ospreys, brown pelicans, and river otters. Several rookeries of colonial nesting waterbirds have also been re-established as a result of these efforts.

Innovating to Enhance Community Resilience: Mississippi River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp Project

The RESTORE Council supports innovative approaches to promoting ecosystem restoration and community resilience. For example, the state of Louisiana, through the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), has received approximately \$204 million in RESTORE Act funds for the Mississippi River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp project. This large-scale project will enhance the ecosystem health of approximately 45,000 acres of bald cypress and water tupelo forest in coastal Louisiana by reintroducing Mississippi River water into the Maurepas Swamp, improving coastal forest habitat and water quality.

The project, in conjunction with a nearby hurricane protection levee, will help improve community resilience and protect infrastructure from storm flooding. In Louisiana, the practice of enhancing community resilience by combining ecosystem restoration projects with flood protection levees is referred to as a “multiple lines of defense” strategy.



The Maurepas Swamp Project will revitalize over 45,000 acres of one of Louisiana’s largest and last remaining coastal freshwater swamps. Credit: Louisiana CPRA

Clean Water for Healthy and Prosperous Communities: Mississippi Water Quality Improvement Programs

Clean water is essential for healthy and prosperous Gulf communities. The state of Mississippi, through the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), is implementing large-scale water quality improvement programs along the Gulf Coast, utilizing \$29.1 million in RESTORE funding from both the Council-Selected Restoration and the Spill Impact Components. Program activities include completing planning and construction projects to implement septic-to-sewer conversions, new stormwater and wastewater systems, and repairs/upgrades to existing stormwater and wastewater systems.



The RESTORE Council invests in water quality improvements, reducing the pollution entering the waters of the Gulf Coast.

Water quality degradation in Mississippi coastal waters is caused by elevated bacteria, nutrient pollution, and associated hypoxia often attributed to urban runoff, discharge, and overflow issues associated with aging infrastructure or insufficient wastewater management. The conversion of septic-to-sewer and implementation of stormwater

and wastewater improvements under this program will reduce pollutant loads to downstream coastal water bodies, resulting in water quality and fishery habitats improvements, improved conditions for water recreation activities along the coast, and benefits to the economy of the Mississippi Gulf Coast region. A total of 11 projects are currently underway.

Improving Water Quality at the Watershed Level: Three Mile Creek Watershed Restoration Project

Water quality supports recreational and commercial fisheries and tourism; without it, coastal ecosystems are degraded, along with the environmental and economic benefits these ecosystems provide. The RESTORE Council has funded meaningful investments in water quality in all five Gulf states. In one such



Streambank stabilization in Langan Lake Park reduces the erosion that has historically impacted the lake. Credit: RESTORE Council

project, the state of Alabama, through the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), was awarded \$23.9 million in RESTORE Act Spill Impact Component funds for the Three Mile Creek Watershed Restoration project. Managed by ADCNR, the goal of this project is the restoration and protection of water quality of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine, and marine water resources by providing streambank stabilization along Twelve Mile Creek and dredging and restoring Langan Park Lake. Twelve Mile Creek and Langan Park Lake both drain into Three Mile Creek and Mobile Bay.

The project leverages habitat restoration work conducted by the Mobile Bay National Estuary

Program, which expands watershed-scale restoration for Three Mile Creek. The coordinated restoration of the creek between the two projects will improve water quality of the creek and lake, providing a healthier natural environment for wildlife and improved recreational opportunities and ultimately reducing pollution in Mobile Bay.

Leveraging Funds for Bigger Results: Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline Project

The RESTORE Council maximizes the ecosystem benefits of its investments by leveraging funds with other restoration partners. The state of Florida, through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), was awarded \$1.8 million in RESTORE Act Council-Selected Restoration Component funds for the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline project. Leveraging partners on this project include the U.S. Department of Defense, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the state of Florida. Project sites include White Island; Magazine Point, along the eastern shore of Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola; and Sherman Inlet, along the eroded southern shore of NAS Pensacola. Shoreline retreat at Magazine Point and Sherman Inlet has put critical naval infrastructure at risk.



A living shoreline, similar to the one being implemented in the Pensacola Bay Watershed. Credit: RESTORE Council

Living shorelines alleviate shoreline erosion through placement of rock material and restoring shoreline habitats. The multi-phase project will construct approximately 24,800 linear feet of rock and reef breakwater and approximately 200 acres of saltmarsh, seagrasses, and sandy shoreline habitat, benefitting fish, birds, and other estuarine species.

Improving Water Quality and Working with Private Landowners: USDA Gulf Coast Conservation Reserve Program

The RESTORE Council funds work with private landowners to support voluntary land management practices that reduce pollution before it enters the streams and bayous that flow into the Gulf of America. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) received \$9.1 million in RESTORE Act Council-Selected Restoration Component funds to implement the Gulf Coast Conservation Reserve Program (GCCRP) Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The program works with private landowners to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat within priority watersheds of the Gulf.

The USDA provides technical and financial resources to help landowners plan and implement conservation practices. One completed project in Santa Rosa County, Florida, involved the installation of conservation measures to repair gullies on forested lands. These efforts reduced soil runoff in the Blackwater River and Coldwater Creek, located within the Escambia Bay Watershed. This partnership between USDA and private landowners has resulted in reduced soil and nutrient loss, restored fish and wildlife habitat, and improved overall water quality along the Gulf Coast.



The Gulf Coast Conservation Reserve program approved funding through the RESTORE Council to restore Brock Gully and treat soil erosion on private lands in coastal watersheds. Credit: USDA

Creating Jobs and Strengthening Coastal Economies



Shrimp boats play a crucial role in the Gulf region's fishing industry and economy. Credit: NOAA

The RESTORE Council's investments support the economies of Gulf states by providing jobs, promoting seafood and tourism, and restoring and protecting natural resources at the foundation of a strong Gulf economy. The RESTORE Council also supports local economies through seafood promotion and tourism projects such as boat ramps, artificial reefs, and improvements to state and federal parks. Across the Gulf, the RESTORE Council's investments provide jobs for planners, engineers, construction workers, scientists, and others working to protect and restore the coastal environment.

Looking Ahead

Over its lifetime, the RESTORE Council will invest over \$3 billion in restoration activities in the Gulf Coast, advancing the RESTORE Council's vision of a healthy and productive Gulf Coast economy and ecosystem. As additional projects and programs are funded, the RESTORE Council looks forward to serving the people of the Gulf Coast through preserving and enhancing the long-term environmental health and economic prosperity of the Gulf Coast region.



www.restorethegulf.gov