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## **Eight years after Deepwater Horizon oil spill, conservation along the Gulf of Mexico advances at an historic scale**

*Awards made by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation benefit wildlife, habitats  
and coastal communities in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 18, 2018)** – The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) today marks eight years of funding recovery efforts across the Gulf of Mexico following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, including working with partners to take vital early actions to reduce harm to wildlife and five subsequent years of conservation work through the Foundation’s Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF).

NFWF launched the GEBF in 2013 in response to remedial orders contained in plea agreements between the U.S. Department of Justice and BP and Transocean. The plea agreements resolved certain criminal charges against both companies relating to the 2010 oil spill. Provisions within the agreements direct a total of \$2.54 billion to NFWF over a five-year period to be used to support natural resource projects in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

“The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund has enabled NFWF and our conservation partners to move quickly following the disastrous 2010 oil spill, generating real-world outcomes at an historic scale,” said Edwin R. “Rod” Rodriguez, Jr., chairman of NFWF’s board of directors.

The launch of the GEBF followed quick action by NFWF and its conservation partners in the weeks and months immediately following the Deepwater Horizon explosion, which killed 11 crew members and injured 17 more on April 20, 2010. The rig had been pumping crude oil from the Macondo well, about a mile below the ocean’s surface.

“The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has deep roots along the Gulf Coast, with decades of experience funding and directing conservation projects in the region,” said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of NFWF. “Because of this, NFWF and its conservation partners were able to respond quickly and effectively in the chaotic period following the explosion. Working with public

and private partners, we were able to rapidly disburse \$23 million to protect birds, sea turtles and other wildlife directly threatened by effects of the oil spill.”

NFWF’s initial efforts helped prevent the loss of an entire year’s worth of turtle hatchlings from the northern Gulf of Mexico. By creating 500,000 acres of temporary wetlands, NFWF and its partners also protected millions of birds migrating through the Gulf States, including many species of waterfowl and shorebirds. These early response efforts were made possible through coordination with state and federal agencies, conservation nonprofits and corporations.

The plea agreements later reached between the U.S. Department of Justice and BP and Transocean have enabled NFWF to build upon these early recovery efforts and work with state and federal resource agencies to implement conservation projects at a significantly expanded scale.

“NFWF is honored to have been given the responsibility to administer these funds,” said Don J. McGrath, a member of NFWF’s board of directors and former chairman of the board’s GEBF Committee. “Working closely with state and federal partners, we have moved quickly over the past five years to generate meaningful outcomes for the wildlife and communities of the Gulf of Mexico.”

Since the GEBF’s inception in 2013, 122 projects have been awarded more than \$1 billion to remedy harm and reduce the risk of future harm to natural resources that were affected by the oil spill. NFWF has worked closely with state and federal resource agencies to focus these conservation investments where they would do the most good for populations of fish, oysters, birds, marine mammals, sea turtles and other wildlife.

The awards made through the GEBF’s first five years are expected to protect, restore or enhance more than 100,000 acres of coastal habitats, including 36,000 acres of marsh habitat, 2,750 acres of beach and dune habitat, 800 acres of oyster beds and 40 miles of shoreline.

Through GEBF and other awards, NFWF has helped state and federal agencies, local governments and conservation nonprofits:

- Conserve some of the Gulf Coast’s largest remaining tracts of intact natural habitats, including many that now expand wildlife management areas and increase public access to the outdoors
- Conserve and enhance coastal habitats and artificial reef systems important to many species of fish
- Conduct large-scale oyster restoration
- Enhance fisheries management across the Gulf Coast through improved monitoring techniques
- Conserve and enhance critical rookery islands and beach nesting sites for birds

- Address light pollution and protect habitat at important sea turtle nesting beaches
- Improve capacity to rehabilitate injured sea turtles and respond to marine mammal strandings
- Protect fragile shorelines from erosion
- Improve water quality in important bays by reducing polluted runoff
- Restore or enhance barrier islands, to the benefit of wildlife and coastal communities
- Provide conservation-related employment and volunteer opportunities to people throughout Gulf States, including youth and military veterans

GEBF awards also generate immediate and long-lasting benefits to coastal communities that rely on the natural resources impacted by the spill. Many projects strengthen barrier islands, beaches and marshes that protect coastal communities and some of the nation's most important energy infrastructure from the damaging effects of hurricanes.

"Results from the first five years of the GEBF will guide conservation investments in the region for years to come," said John V. Faraci, Jr., a member of NFWF's board of directors and chairman of the board's GEBF Committee. "This important work will shape a lasting legacy of conservation across the Gulf Coast."

To read a report about the GEBF's first five year, visit [www.nfwf.org/gulf](http://www.nfwf.org/gulf).

To view a video on GEBF projects and conservation along the Gulf of Mexico, visit [www.vimeo.com/265243322](http://www.vimeo.com/265243322).

### **Quotes from Governors of Gulf States**

#### **Alabama**

"Investments under the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund have helped the state of Alabama achieve major conservation priorities that might otherwise have been a challenge to reach," said Alabama Governor Kay Ivey. "We are improving water quality in Mobile Bay and protecting the Grand Bay Savanna. We are enhancing important commercial and recreational fisheries through the restoration of oyster reefs in the Mississippi Sound and expanding artificial reefs along our coast to bolster populations of red snapper, all in an effort to preserve our natural resources for our people."

#### **Florida**

"Florida's treasured Gulf Coast spans nearly 800 miles and is home to many of our state's historic communities, world-class natural treasures and unique wildlife," said Florida Governor Rick Scott. "Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund awards have supported our efforts to preserve our beautiful

coastal areas, improve water quality and continue to welcome families and visitors from across the world to the great State of Florida.”

### **Louisiana**

“The 2010 oil spill devastated coastal wildlife populations and communities throughout southern Louisiana, exacerbating the negative impacts of one of the greatest challenges ever faced by the State: the loss of coastal lands at an epic scale,” said Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards. The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund is helping us advance barrier island restoration and river diversions, key strategies in our effort to save Louisiana’s coast.”

### **Mississippi**

“The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund’s support has enabled our state to take on once-in-a-lifetime conservation projects across our coast,” said Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant. “We are conserving coastal landscapes at an unprecedented scale, and taking bold steps to improve water quality. We are also working with a variety of partners to restore barrier islands and enhance marsh habitat through the beneficial use of dredge materials.”

### **Texas**

“Here in Texas, we’ve used GEBF dollars to leverage additional private and nonprofit funds to restore and preserve thousands of acres of coastal habitats and wetlands, while at the same time working with communities and private landowners to voluntarily participate in conservation efforts,” said Texas Governor Greg Abbott. “Not only have we been able to restore oyster, fish and bird habitats for both commercial and recreational enjoyment, we’ve bolstered resiliency efforts by enhancing the marshes, bays, dunes and barrier islands along the Gulf Coast to help protect our communities from the next storm.”

### **About the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**

*The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores our nation’s wildlife and habitats. Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF directs public conservation dollars to the most pressing environmental needs and matches those investments with private contributions. NFWF works with government, nonprofit and corporate partners to find solutions for the most intractable conservation challenges. Over the last three decades, NFWF has funded more than 4,500 organizations and committed more than \$4.8 billion to conservation projects. Learn more at [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)*

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