

# Marine Mammals Restoration Type

## Open Ocean Restoration Area



There are 21 whale and dolphin species found in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Cetaceans (whales and dolphins) are marine mammals that inhabit a broad range of habitats in the marine environment.

Most of the marine mammal species that overlapped with the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) oil spill footprint were injured through ingesting, breathing, and potentially absorbing oil components, resulting in adverse health effects.

The marine mammal restoration projects proposed for implementation support the following restoration approaches identified in the DWH Oil Spill Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement:

- Reduce injury and mortality of marine mammals from vessel collisions.
- Measure noise to improve knowledge and reduce impacts on marine mammals.

- Increase marine mammal survival through better understanding of causes of illness and death as well as early detection and intervention of anthropogenic and natural.

### Marine Mammals Restoration Goals

- Implement an integrated portfolio of restoration approaches to restore injured marine mammals across the diverse habitats and geographic ranges they occupy.
- Identify and implement restoration activities that reduce key stressors. Collect and use monitoring information, such as population and health assessments.
- Identify and implement actions that support ecological needs of the stocks; improve resilience to natural stressors; and address direct human-caused threats such as vessel collisions and noise impacts.

The Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group is seeking public comments on the Draft Open Ocean Restoration Plan 2 and Environmental Assessment. For more information, please visit <https://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/open-ocean>. You can submit your comments online via the comment portal at <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/OOTIGRP2> or by U.S. mail to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 29649, Atlanta, GA 30345.

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## Marine Mammals Restoration Type Proposed Projects

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	EST. COST AND TIMEFRAME
<b>REPLENISH AND PROTECT LIVING COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES</b>		
Reducing Impacts to Cetaceans during Disasters by Improving Response Activities	One of the more direct opportunities to benefit cetaceans is through improvement and enhancement of response and assessment activities during those times when large numbers of animals are threatened by human-caused and natural disasters in the Gulf of Mexico. Activities proposed by this project would include conducting a Gulf-wide gap analysis and risk assessment of disaster response capacity; planning and protocol development for disaster response and investigation; and developing new tools and techniques to minimize or reduce injury and mortality. The survival and health of cetacean populations would be enhanced through the implementation of disaster response and preparedness measures.	\$4,287,000 10 Years
<u>C</u> ompilation of <u>E</u> nvironmental, <u>T</u> hreats, and <u>A</u> nimal Data for <u>C</u> etacean Population Health <u>A</u> nalyses (CETACEAN)	Current information on cetaceans of the Gulf of Mexico is collected by a variety of organizations and is stored using different databases. This project proposes to develop a platform that would coordinate critical data for restoration and provide user-friendly, web-based access to datasets that would assist the restoration and protection of marine mammals. Technical experts would identify key datasets, parameters, analyses, and partners for the project. Additionally, the project would involve training to inform users and data collectors of standardized data collection protocols. The CETACEAN platform would support restoration planning, prioritization, and implementation by making key data available to decision makers in a centralized platform.	\$5,808,500
Reduce Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans	The acoustic environment in the Gulf of Mexico includes a spectrum of noise sources, including a variety of human-made sounds. Cetaceans rely on sound for vital life functions and increased anthropogenic noise levels may mask important biological sounds, disturb or displace vital behaviors, and cause direct physiological harm. This project would identify activities to reduce noise levels in the Gulf of Mexico; learn more about the status of new technologies and identify mechanisms for applying techniques in the Gulf; and work with groups to identify partnership opportunities to advance noise reducing technologies for testing and implementation. The highest risk areas would be identified and passive acoustic monitoring arrays would be used to continue and enhance baseline data collection to inform restoration and monitor noise reduction outcomes.	\$8,992,200 6 Years
Reduce and Mitigate Vessel Strike Mortality of Cetaceans	Vessel collisions are one of the main anthropogenic sources of mortality for large whales around the world and are a threat to cetaceans in the Gulf of Mexico. In order to appropriately focus vessel strike risk reduction activities, this proposed project would conduct analyses to identify locations of highest vessel activity in the Gulf; consolidate offshore cetacean distribution data; and then combine vessel and cetacean data to identify areas of concern for collision risk. The project would then identify and develop partnerships, cultivate buy-in from other stakeholders, and implement the most effective and efficient activities to reduce and mitigate vessel strike mortality for each high-risk area. By implementing these measures, the project would increase survival of individuals and populations for injured species such as the Gulf of Mexico Bryde's whale.	\$3,834,000 4 Years

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