

Sea Turtle Early Restoration

Phase IV Proposed Early Restoration Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Sea Turtle Early Restoration Project would help restore sea turtles by addressing threats on their nesting beaches and in the marine environment. The three sea turtle species that would be addressed by this project—Kemp's ridley, green, and loggerhead—are all protected by the Endangered Species Act. This project would be implemented by the Department of the Interior (DOI), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Texas Trustees over a 10-year period.

The proposed project is comprised of four components:

Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Nest Detection and Enhancement:

This project component would be implemented by DOI and Texas Trustees, and would enhance existing programs for the detection and protection of Kemp's ridley nests by providing additional staff, training, education activities, equipment, supplies and vehicles. Both DOI and Texas would provide funding to agencies and organizations involved in these activities in Texas. Texas Trustees would provide funding through the Gladys Porter Zoo for a joint United States/Mexico conservation program in Mexico. The project would also provide for the addition of two staff cabins and two nesting corrals on the southern end of the Padre Island National Seashore, which would reduce risk associated with transporting eggs long distances over remote and rough terrain.



TPWD - Earl Nottingham

Kemp's ridley sea turtle hatchling at Padre Island National Seashore

Enhancement of the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network and Development of an Emergency Response Program:

This project component would be implemented by NOAA, the Texas Trustees and DOI, and would improve response capabilities to recover dead and injured sea turtles. The Texas Trustees and DOI would enhance the existing Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network's capacity and rehabilitation efforts in Texas. NOAA would enhance the network's current capacity across all five states in the Gulf of Mexico. NOAA would also develop a formal Emergency Response Program within the Gulf to increase the survival of sea turtles during cold stun and other emergency stranding events.

Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Reduction:

This project component would be implemented by NOAA, and would enhance two existing NOAA programs that work to reduce the bycatch of sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico. The existing Gear Monitoring Team program would be expanded to include additional

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staff, providing a greater capacity for education and outreach to the shrimp fishing community to improve compliance with federal Turtle Excluder Device regulations. The existing Shrimp Trawl Fisheries Observer Program would be expanded to include an additional observer days per year within the shrimp trawl fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.

Texas Enhanced Fisheries Bycatch Enforcement: This project component would be implemented by the Texas Trustees. It would enhance Texas Parks and Wildlife Department law enforcement activities for fisheries that incidentally catch sea turtles while they operate primarily in Texas state waters (approximately 367 miles of coastline out to 9 nautical miles). These increased enforcement

operations would focus on compliance with Turtle Excluder Device regulations during the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery season (primarily February through mid-May) to reduce turtle bycatch.

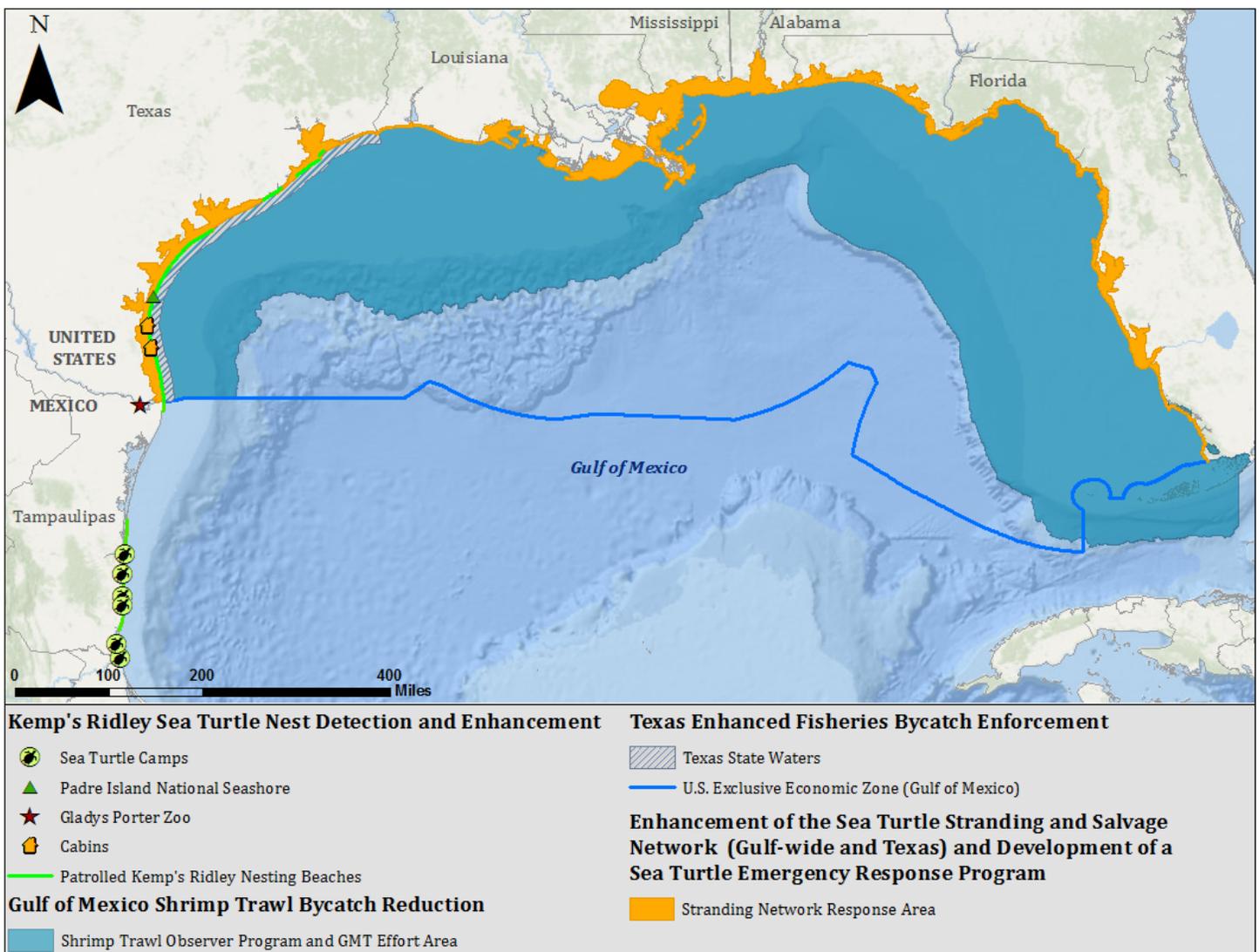
ESTIMATED COST : \$45,000,000

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Spring 2015

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