



# Restoring the Gulf of Mexico

**THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION IS WORKING ACROSS THE GULF COAST TO PROTECT AND RESTORE KEY ESTUARIES FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE**

The Gulf of Mexico is home to approximately 15,000 species of wildlife, including 28 types of dolphins and whales, 49 species of sharks, and five different sea turtles. A wide variety of ecosystems support this abundance, including estuaries, wetlands, barrier islands, oyster beds, and coral reefs.

The National Wildlife Federation has worked for nearly two decades to improve the health of the Gulf of Mexico for people and wildlife. We were a leading voice calling for justice for the Gulf in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, and we have long championed the restoration of Louisiana's disappearing coastal wetlands, protections for freshwater flowing to the Texas coast, and comprehensive Everglades restoration.

Our long history in the Gulf has given us a first-hand view of the important role estuaries play as the foundation of coastal ecosystems and as nurseries for marine life. The Gulf of Mexico Restoration Program advocates that federal restoration funds, including those from the Deepwater Horizon disaster, be spent on scientifically-sound efforts to benefit key estuaries in ways that will have the greatest impact on the Gulf as a whole.

# Making the Most of Restoration

## PRIORITIES FOR A RECOVERING GULF

The National Wildlife Federation has created an online, interactive report recommending a portfolio of projects across key estuaries that will provide lasting benefits to the Gulf of Mexico.

[GulfRestoration.NWF.org](http://GulfRestoration.NWF.org)



HEALTHY HABITATS such as wetlands, dunes and oyster reefs can reduce the risks from floods and storm surge. The National Wildlife Federation encourages communities to invest in storm protection projects that protect or restore existing natural habitats or solutions that emulate natural processes, such as living shorelines or engineered wetlands. Natural infrastructure projects often protect communities as well as or better than traditional solutions like seawalls. Natural infrastructure can also enhance quality of life by improving water quality, boosting fish populations or creating new wildlife viewing opportunities.





## Our Approach

TO IDENTIFY THE PROJECTS that would have the greatest collective impact, experts from the National Wildlife Federation reviewed relevant federal, state and local planning and assessment reports, and documented the existing stressors for each system. Staff then evaluated potential restoration needs required to address each underlying stressor. This process allowed the team to prioritize projects for a given estuary based on the greatest restoration needs.

## Deepwater Horizon Settlement Funds

The legal settlements with BP, Transocean and Anadarko made \$16 billion available for ecological restoration in the Gulf. Maximizing this unprecedented opportunity will require vision, coordination, and a commitment to science. Roughly one-third of these funds are already committed, and all the funds should be allocated by 2032. These are the totals available via the different legal mechanisms:

- » Clean Water Act Civil Penalties/RESTORE Act: **\$5.3 billion**
- » Oil Pollution Act/Natural Resource Damage Assessment: **\$8.8 billion**
- » Criminal Fines/National Fish and Wildlife Foundation: **\$2.54 billion**



## Make a Difference

The National Wildlife Federation has a long history of bold undertakings around the country as well as in the Gulf of Mexico. The secret to our success is a broad community of dedicated supporters who make this possible. Support our efforts to achieve true ecosystem restoration of the Gulf of Mexico for future generations.

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CONTACT ONE OF OUR EXPERTS  
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