

**Advocacy Plan**  
**Gulf of Mexico Whole System**  
January 2023

The Nature Conservancy has been protecting the natural character of the Gulf of Mexico for more than forty years. We have been saving critical habitat through land acquisition, pioneering on-the-ground and in-the-water restoration projects and advocating policy to achieve large-scale conservation in states bordering the Gulf of Mexico



**Land Acquisition**

Seek and implement funding from Deepwater Horizon, LWCF, NAWCA, FEMA, and state sources to acquire in fee and by easements strategic tracts of land with high conservation, biodiversity, and community resilience values in Gulf of Mexico watersheds on behalf of state or federal agencies and, in some cases, for retention by The Nature Conservancy.

Develop and implement strategies for restoring and sustaining oyster reefs, coastal wetlands, and nearshore ecosystems at scale in partnership with state agencies.

## **Taking Nature-based Solutions to Scale**

Use Nature-Based Solutions to protect, restore and maintain floodplains, coastal habitats, coastal prairies, wetland migration corridors, and forested lands and make communities connected to coastal watersheds more resilient to storms and floods,

Use SUNS and SUNS-like processes to work with local communities, including underserved communities, to identify NBS priorities.

Restore and sustain oyster reefs, coastal wetlands, and nearshore ecosystems across the Gulf of Mexico to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem services in partnership with state agencies.

Seek Federal funding opportunities through the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act implementation. Additionally, support state and local funding mechanisms to match/leverage federal IJA investments.

Using the Inflation Reduction Act, DOD programs, state programs and, and remaining DWH funds seek funding opportunities to undertake replicable Nature-based projects and land acquisition efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change impacts in the Gulf of Mexico.

## **Advocate for improved research, modeling, monitoring, and on the ground actions to optimize freshwater flows in Gulf estuaries**

Support creation of a comprehensive Mississippi Basin freshwater monitoring network.

Expand incentives to reduce nutrient flows in the Mississippi River Basin which impacts and hypoxia impacts into the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi Basin by working in partnership with Mississippi River Basin Whole System on a wide range of in-field, edge of field, and in stream options to reduce nutrient input to the river.

Develop pilot projects to restore the wettest floodplains to natural ground cover on the Mississippi and other rivers tributary to the Gulf.

In support of the Oceans and Coasts Network, further evaluate the appropriate role for The Nature Conservancy's engagement in Gulf of Mexico fisheries with recognition of their impact on ecological and socio-economic health

In support of the Oceans and Coasts Network, collaborate with partners to map and conserve priority offshore habitat and biodiversity areas and in evaluation of the impacts of offshore energy development.

Seek all Federal funding opportunities through the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act implementation and the Inflation Reduction Act.

## **Outreach**

Connect people to nature by proactively engaging a wide array of partner and stakeholder organizations in restoration and conservation planning and implementation and look for opportunities to implement projects in locations that will benefit at underserved and socially vulnerable communities.

Advocate for continuation of GulfCorps using Deepwater Horizon or other funding.

Work towards Gulf-wide protection and restoration of oyster habitat with support of the Congressional delegations of all Gulf of Mexico states.