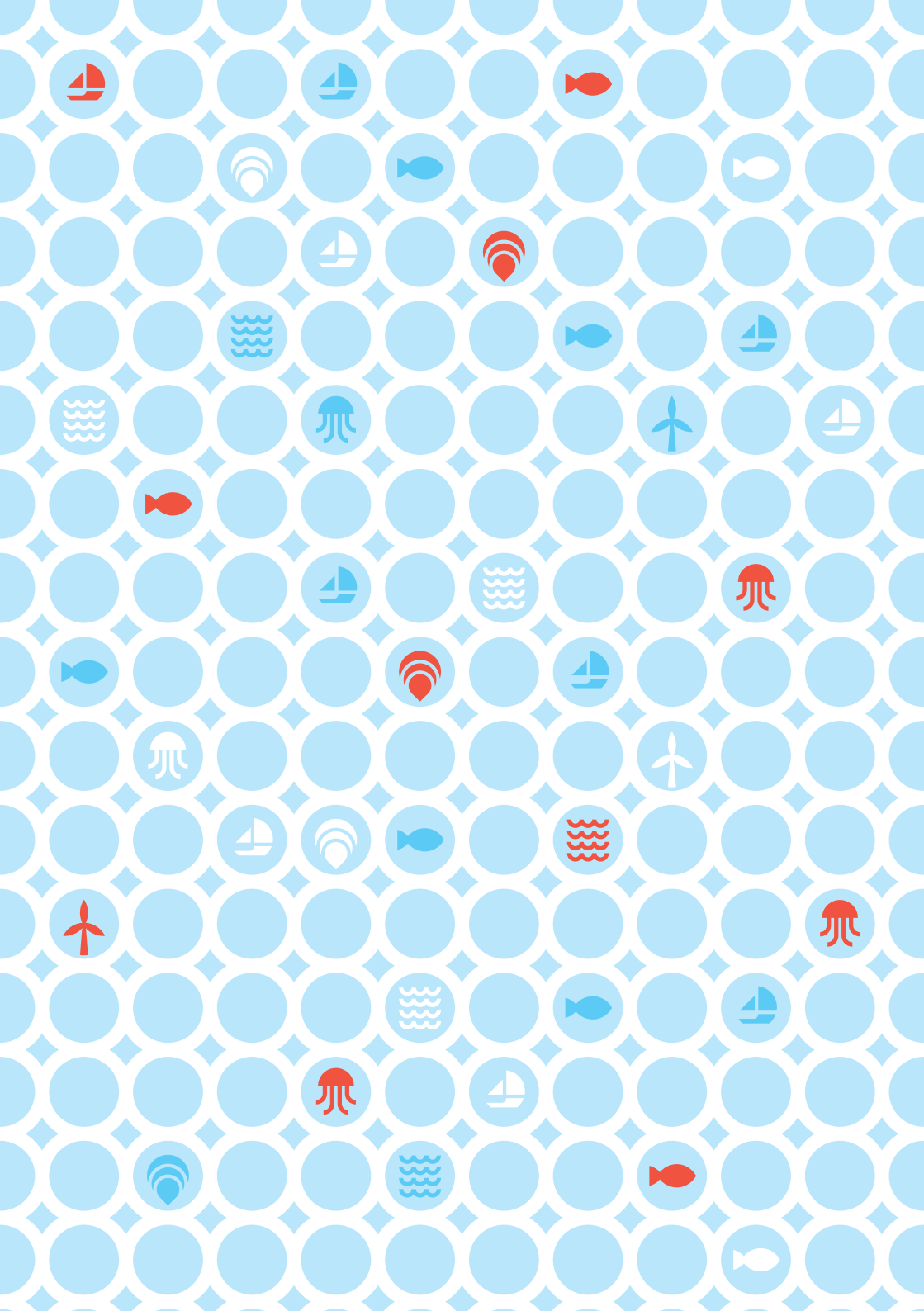
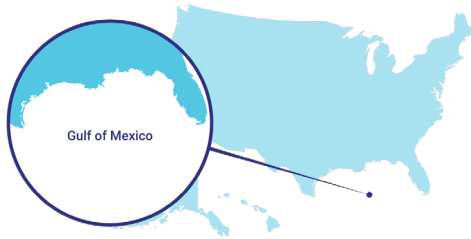


# MULTI-USE BLUEPRINT

Recreational fishing, Biodiversity, Oil & Gas Platforms  
in the Gulf of Mexico, United States



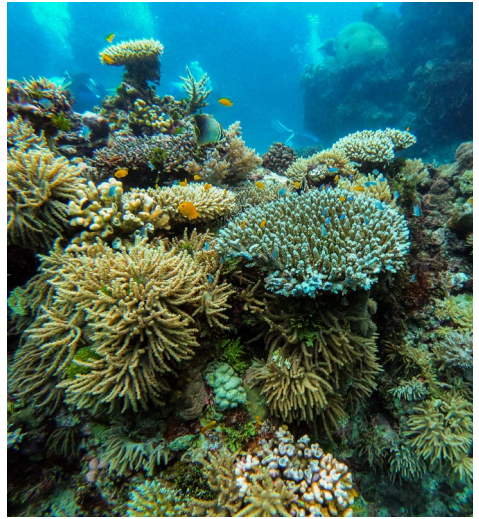
## Location



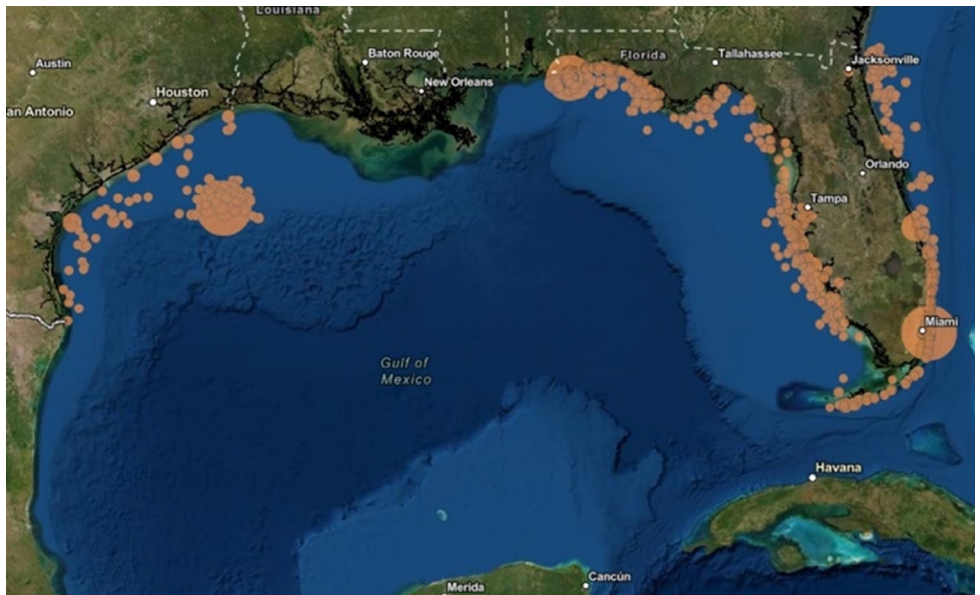
Surrounded by the U.S. states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, and the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo, the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) is a place where the environment and the economy both coexist and compete. While a major resource for the American, Mexican, and Cuban commercial and fishing industries, the Gulf also serves as a popular beach destination and an international maritime highway fueled by vast hydrocarbon reserves. Specifically, in 2003, the Gulf of

### Gulf of Mexico Open Data Platform

Source: <https://gmod-portal-gomalliance.hub.arcgis.com>



Mexico's ocean economy employed more than 562,000 people, paid wages of more than \$13.2 billion, and contributed over \$32 billion to the region's gross state product. Tourism and recreation comprised 71 percent of the employment in the Gulf region's 2003 ocean economy. Because of increased interest and participation in fishing at offshore oil and gas platforms and widespread.



## Description

The U.S. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) is responsible for permitting the placement and eventual removal of temporary facilities on the Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). When an OCS lease expires and/or development and production operations cease, companies are obligated to decommission and remove their facilities and clear the seabed of all obstructions. An operator may choose to completely remove this infrastructure from the water, as required, or work with BSEE and the appropriate Gulf state to consider the appropriateness of transferring ownership of the platform into that state's artificial reef program. For the operator, the decision to remove the infrastructure or engage in the Rigs-to-Reef program usually depends primarily on the cost of removing the infrastructure from the water, as many operators find the Rigs-to-Reef program an opportunity to minimize decommissioning costs while also establishing good will with the recreational fishers and conservation community. In the Gulf, the respective state receives a payment from the operator, which is used to maintain the state's Rigs-to-Reef program.

## Enabling conditions and tools

The BSEE led Rigs-to-Reefs program implements several tools and techniques to nurture the enabling conditions towards a successful multi-use initiative within the Gulf. Some of these tools and techniques include:

## Federal and state partnerships

Through a cooperative agreement mechanism, BSEE coordinates with the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Gulf states and their universities, and the oil and gas industry to implement the following five objectives:

- 1 Develop a national policy that recognized the artificial reef benefits of oil and gas platforms;
- 2 Prepare a Rigs-to-Reefs program plan for the Gulf of Mexico;
- 3 Establish standard procedures to ensure and facilitate timely conversion of obsolete platforms as reefs;
- 4 Identify research and studies necessary to optimize the use of platforms.

## Support from diverse sectors

Due to the enhanced marine life activity which has resulted in increased fishing activity, both the recreational fishing and environmental not-for profit organizations are actively engaging in the enhancement and support of this program. In addition, the oil and gas industry supports this program as they recognize the reduced cost for decommissioning.

## Clear goals

The Rigs-to-Reefs Program has both clear environmental and economic goals and benefits, thus sustainably responding to the needs of many stakeholders.

## Capacity

Each Gulf state has an artificial reef plan and coordinator, providing them with the capacity to plan and implement a state program and engage regionally. The state coordinator identifies offshore areas which are suitable for reefing, whether existing or newly proposed reef sites, works with the operator to develop a reefing proposal, secure the required permit, and negotiate the terms of an agreement for a donation from the operator to the state. In most cases, half of the cost benefits to the operator are donated to the state's artificial reef program.

## Impacts and positive changes

While research to better understand the biological and economic impacts of the Rigs-to-Reefs program is needed, other considerations, including the potential impact from the significant decline of oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico is at the forefront. In general, it is believed that the Rigs-to-Reefs program does enrich the marine life. Specifically, according to the Coastal Marine Institute, a typical eight-leg structure provides a home for 12,000 to 14,000 fish and a typical four-leg structure provides two to three acres of habitat for hundreds of marine species. In addition, the Programs allows for the repurpose of obsolete structures saving fuel emissions that otherwise would be expended transporting and disposing of the structure. Also, because of the enhanced artificial reef system from the offshore oil and gas platforms, many recreational fishermen and divers consider the Gulf as a sports fishing paradise.

## Contacts and links

- **Partners:** The Bureau of Safety and Environment Enforcement (BSEE); The Gulf states
- **Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement's Environmental Compliance Program:**  
<https://www.bsee.gov/what-we-do/environmental-compliance/environmental-programs/rigs-to-reefs>
- **Alabama Artificial Reef Program**  
<http://www.outdooralabama.com/artificial-reefs>
- **Florida Artificial Reef Program – counties**  
<http://myfwc.com/conservation/saltwater/artificial-reefs/>
- **Mississippi Artificial Reef Program**  
<http://www.dmr.ms.gov/marine-fisheries/artificial-reef>
- **Louisiana Artificial Reef Program**  
<https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/artificial-reefs>
- **Texas Artificial Reef Program – 100 miles EEZ – can be out to the EEZ – enabling legislation**  
[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/habitats/artificial\\_reef/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/habitats/artificial_reef/)

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## Imprint

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