

## Project Location

Apalachicola National Estuarine  
Research Reserve

Grand Bay National Estuarine  
Research Reserve

Mission-Aransas National Estuarine  
Research Reserve

Rookery Bay National Estuarine  
Research Reserve

Weeks Bay National Estuarine  
Research Reserve

## Project Duration

September 2015 to February 2017

## Project Lead

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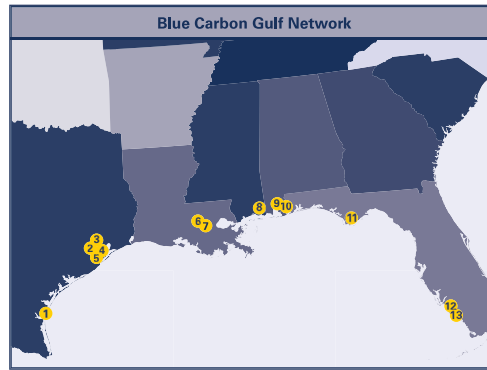
## Project Type

Science Transfer – promoting the  
use of science

## Project Partners

- Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training Program Initiative
- Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve
- NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation
- Restore America's Estuaries
- Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
- TerraCarbon
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program
- Weeks Bay Foundation
- Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

# Establishing a Blue Carbon Network for the Gulf Coast



**National Partners:**  
Restore America's Estuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Coastal Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Habitat Conservation, TerraCarbon, Gulf of Mexico Program

- 1 Mission-Aransas NERR\*
- 2 Galveston Bay Estuary Program
- 3 The Nature Conservancy
- 4 Galveston Bay Foundation
- 5 Severe Storm Prediction, Education and Evacuation from Disasters Center
- 6 Everglades Wetland Research Park
- 7 Louisiana Sea Grant
- 8 Grand Bay NERR\*
- 9 Weeks Bay NERR\*
- 10 Weeks Bay Foundation
- 11 Apalachicola NERR\*
- 12 The Water Institute for the Gulf
- 13 Rookery Bay NERR\*

\*NERR = National Estuarine Research Reserve

## Overview

The Gulf Coast continues to lose coastal wetlands at an alarming rate, including valuable seagrass beds, mangroves, and salt marshes. In addition to improving water quality, stabilizing shorelines, and providing habitat, coastal wetlands also sequester and store significant amounts of carbon in their soils. Valuation of this climate mitigation service—referred to as blue carbon—could lead to increased prioritization and funding for coastal conservation and restoration. Moreover, coastal managers are now being asked to consider the greenhouse gas management implications of their decisions. For example, when coastal ecosystems are degraded or drained, the carbon stored in their soils can be released back into the atmosphere, resulting in significant emissions. Emerging carbon markets could provide funding for wetland conservation and restoration, supporting the protection of these substantial carbon stores.

This project will develop a regional network as a platform for sharing information and coordinating efforts in the Gulf region. The goal is to support new projects that advance local understanding of blue carbon science and help pilot ways to use the value of blue carbon to fund coastal wetland restoration and conservation.

## Anticipated Benefits

- Transfer of knowledge from related projects and improved understanding of blue carbon benefits and opportunities.
- Establishment of a Gulf-wide Blue Carbon Network.
- Creation of reserve-specific blue carbon working groups.
- Development of blue carbon projects at several Gulf research reserves.
- Increased opportunities for funding wetland protection and restoration actions.

## Project Approach

Restore America's Estuaries is partnering with the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training Program Initiative and the five research reserves in the Gulf Coast to provide technical assistance and promote blue carbon projects.

- **Needs Assessment** – This project will take advantage of four currently planned workshops around the Gulf in fall 2015. The project team will facilitate discussions about current needs and opportunities related to blue carbon. Each workshop will result in a summary report of goals, needs, and opportunities, as well as a list of interested individuals and organizations.
- **Developing a Network** – The project team will help establish local working groups for each participating reserve and convene a Gulf Blue Carbon Network for leaders and interested individuals from each working group. Regular communication will facilitate information sharing and advance local priorities.
- **Targeted Training** – A regional 1- to 2-day workshop will be held to address the highest priority needs for blue carbon project development. The workshop will provide additional training and help align goals and leverage resources for increased prioritization of coastal restoration in the Gulf.

## Anticipated Products and Targeted End Users

- Written assessment of regional blue carbon goals, opportunities, needs, and stakeholders.
- Consultations and ongoing communication with local working groups.
- A culminating Gulf-wide blue carbon workshop.
- One or more webinars to share information and reach a broader audience.

### About the Science Collaborative

*The National Estuarine Research Reserve System's Science Collaborative supports collaborative research that addresses coastal management problems important to the reserves. The Science Collaborative is managed by the University of Michigan's Water Center through a cooperative agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Funding for the research reserves and this program comes from NOAA. Learn more at [www.nerrs.noaa.gov](http://www.nerrs.noaa.gov) or [www.graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs](http://www.graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs).*