



FLORIDA INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY

Contact: Andy Shepard, Program Director
(727) 553-3374

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2, 2015

[FIO Center of Excellence Research Grants Program](#)

Requesting Proposals for funding to support Coastal Fisheries and Wildlife research and monitoring.

St. Petersburg, Florida

Today, the [Florida Institute of Oceanography \(FIO\)](#) announces its [Request for Proposals \(RFP\) for the Florida Center of Excellence Research Grants Program](#). [FIO](#) was designated as the Gulf State Entity under the federal [RESTORE Act](#) to administer the Trust Fund that will distribute proceeds from fines levied in the Deepwater Horizon disaster to the Gulf States.

The [competitive grant](#) program is intended to support science and technology developments that promote the environmental recovery from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and the long-term health of Gulf of Mexico natural resources. With funding from the first spill settlement from rig owner Transocean in the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Louisiana, this program will fund grants focused on coastal fisheries, wildlife research and monitoring off the west coast of Florida, from 25 miles inland out to the deep sea.

In 2012, commercial and recreational fishing industries generated \$199 billion in U.S. sales and in Florida, marine fisheries contributes \$29.7 billion/year to the state's economy, compared to Florida's citrus, cattle ranching and space industries that produce \$14.5 billion/year. Florida marine fisheries is a major economic engine to Florida and the entire Gulf region.

"Fish and wildlife are public trust resources," said [FIO](#) Director Dr. William Hogarth. "We must work together to provide the science required for sound management and protection of these valued resources for today's and future generations. The program funds will provide scientists an opportunity to better understand the marine ecosystem supporting our fishing industries."

Projects may receive up to \$300,000 for two years of support. Proposals will be reviewed by the program's management team and a panel of independent experts. The panel will consider proposals based on the strength of proposed activities that demonstrate innovation and excellence, engage stakeholders, and contribute to the Gulf's recovery.

Priorities include promoting faster, more accurate fish population and fishing effort estimates, especially for recreational fisheries.

“By encouraging inclusion of fishermen in projects, we hope to promote their trust in fisheries data and related products, such as stock size models and predictions,” said Program Director Andrew Shepard.

Program funds will also support collaborations with other Gulf restoration programs, such as coordinated environmental monitoring at a geographic scale that matches the size of the oil spill impacts.

For details on the program, its rules and policies, and the RFP, visit [FIO](#)'s web site at <http://www.fio.usf.edu/research/restore-act>.

The [Florida Institute of Oceanography](#) is a consortium of 29 public and private academic institutions, state agencies and marine laboratories whose mission is to facilitate, support and maximize underlying technology, equipment, facilities, services and resources to academic and research programs throughout the state of Florida.

Join us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). FIO is hosted by the [University of South Florida](#) located in St. Petersburg, Florida.