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Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program awards funds for Gulf research

St. Petersburg, Fla. – July 18, 2016 –The Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO) is pleased to announce that the Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program (FLRACEP) will be awarding a 2-year fisheries and ecosystem monitoring grant to existing Center of Excellence University of South Florida. The FIO-led FLRACEP selected a project based on expert peer review and a rigorous evaluation of applicability to the program’s mission and the priorities laid out in the request for proposals.

FIO Director Dr. Bill Hogarth said of the award, “we received six outstanding proposals for monitoring Florida’s marine resources, and it’s disappointing to only be able to fund one. The USF proposal for *Spawning Habitat and Early-Life Linkages to Fisheries* applies an innovative approach that builds on the USF Center of Excellence work that Dr. Ernst Peebles is currently leading and applies it to pressing fishery science and management issues in a way that could prove to be transformational.”

FLRACEP funded ten projects from eight Centers of Excellence in 2015 to study Gulf of Mexico marine resources, with results expected in late 2017. Dr. Peebles is among the initial grantees, and will lead this new 2-year, \$800,000 project trying to establish a novel way of assessing the population health and status of important Gulf fisheries resources. If successful, the project could receive up to 15 years of additional funding and provide essential information for fisheries scientists and managers in Florida and throughout the Gulf.

For details on the RESTORE Act, FLRACEP rules and policies, and the new Center of Excellence, visit FIO’s web site: <http://www.fio.usf.edu/research/flracep>.

About FIO: The [Florida Institute of Oceanography](http://www.fio.usf.edu) is an Academic Infrastructure Support Organization serving 30 public and private academic institutions, research laboratories and agencies from across the State of Florida working collaboratively to support Excellence in Marine Science, Technology, and Educational Resources. FIO is hosted by the University of South Florida and located in St. Petersburg, Florida.