

US Department of Commerce

Connecting Coastal Waters: Restoring Coastal Wetland Hydrology

The Connecting Coastal Waters initiative will invest \$17,888,563 over 3 years to restore over 22,000 acres of wetlands and estuarine habitats across the 5 Gulf States. This project will: (1) implement 11 proposed coastal wetland hydrology restoration projects in partnership with each Gulf State; (2) leverage place-based collaborations to achieve measurable benefits for coastal wetlands; and (3) deliver science and tools, including an inventory of coastal wetland hydrology restoration projects. Hydrology is one of the main factors influencing both the location and function of coastal wetlands. Natural hydrology for Gulf Coast wetlands is maintained by freshwater input; however, wetlands along the Gulf Coast have been experiencing significant shifts in hydrology as a result of changes in freshwater drainage patterns and restrictions of tidal flows. For this reason, NOAA will implement Connecting Coastal Waters in partnership with state and local agencies, non-governmental and academic organizations, and industry partners to accomplish the following:

- Restore coastal wetlands degraded by altered hydrology with partners in each Gulf State;
- Inventory coastal wetland hydrology restoration opportunities in each Gulf State to support the development of future coastal wetland hydrology restoration projects;
- Conduct community outreach and stewardship activities, including demonstration workshops and hands-on learning at restoration sites.

NOAA has worked with partners in each state to identify priority hydrology projects, as well as additional hydrology restoration needs to support the proposal of these first 11 projects that meet the goal of restoring coastal wetlands. Requested funding amount: \$ 17,888,563.