

Pensacola East Bay Oyster Habitat Restoration project

Construction of the [Pensacola East Bay Oyster Habitat Restoration project](#) in East and Blackwater Bays in Santa Rosa County is underway! The restoration project is managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and funded by a \$15 million grant from the [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund](#).

TNC lends science and conservation management expertise to the project, WSP provided pre- and post-construction monitoring, and Jacobs is leading the engineering process. 33 individual reef structures—constructed of limestone rock and oyster shell to maximize oyster settlement and growth—are being built along approximately 6.5 miles of shoreline.

The reefs will help restore oysters to the bays and benefit the oyster fishery, fish and other wildlife, water quality, and nearshore habitats. The project supports the new [Oyster Fisheries and Habitat Management Plan](#) for the Pensacola Bay System, developed by TNC and the community to improve the resilience and sustainability of the region's oysters. The goal is to return oysters to where they thrived historically.



The Pensacola East Bay Oyster Habitat Restoration project. Photo Credit Darryl Boudreau-NFWFMD

Oyster reefs are one of the planet's most imperiled marine habitats—more than 85 percent of the world's oyster reefs and those in most of Florida's bays and estuaries have been lost. "Oysters and the reef habitat they form are vital for the health and well-being of our environment, economies, and communities throughout the Gulf of Mexico," said Anne Birch, marine program manager for The Nature Conservancy in Florida and FOA board member.

The restoration reflects the long-term collaborative effort of diverse partners including the oyster fishing community and a technical working group of the Florida Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Division of Aquaculture, NFWF, NOAA, Santa Rosa County, Northwest Florida Water Management District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Eglin Air Force Base.