

Potential DWH Oil Spill Early Restoration Projects

Project Title: Scallop enhancement for increased recreational fishing opportunity in the Florida panhandle.

Description of project: Use existing restoration methodology (wild harvest of juveniles and supplemental hatchery production) to enhance bay scallop populations in the bays of Florida's panhandle. Ideally, populations can be increased to self-sustaining levels, as exhibited in a previous management action and restoration effort in Citrus County. If successful, the waters of five coastal counties would have added recreational fishing opportunity. Scallop harvest has been prohibited there since 2002. In Florida, this activity has a long cultural heritage that particularly encourages multigenerational interaction in families. The methodology could also be used to stabilize populations in nearby Gulf, Franklin, and Wakulla counties if resources are impacted in the near future or are shown to have been impacted by responses to the DWH disaster (altered fishing season).

Project Location: Bay, Walton, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties.

Estimated cost: \$660,000 for five years / \$1,460,000 for ten years.

Submitted by: Stephen P. Geiger – Fish & Wildlife Research Institute, FWC

Permit Status/implementation time: Not currently required if FWC directs the enhancement under current regulations.

How project addresses injury: Recreational fishing and the associated fishing industries are believed to have been impacted by the DWH spill, as fear over contamination reduced fishing activity. A survey of Citrus County recreational harvesters in 2010 suggested \$960–\$1,917 spending per party for out of town visitors, and \$120–\$237 spending per party for local harvesters (conservatively 400 parties per week). A study published in 2004 suggests that the scallop harvest has a positive annual economic impact of \$1.4 million for Citrus County alone. If successful, a recreational harvest in the above named counties might have similar economic impacts while enhancing inshore recreation fishing opportunities.