

# Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

Making the Connection

Simen Kaalstad

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

[skaalstad@asmfc.org](mailto:skaalstad@asmfc.org)



# Outline



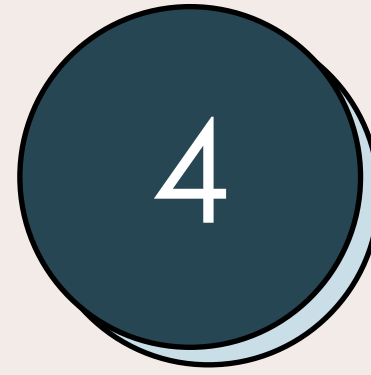
Introduction



Priority  
Habitats



Challenges &  
Threats



Conservation  
Strategies



Regional  
Impacts

# Introduction

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) is a coast-wide assembly of 39 different state, federal, tribal, and non-governmental organizations committed to protecting, preserving, and enhancing Atlantic fish habitats.

## Our Vision

“Healthy, thriving habitats that support **all fish across their entire life cycle** — from headwaters to coral reefs.”

## Our Mission

“To conserve, protect, restore, and enhance habitats for **native Atlantic coastal, estuarine, and diadromous fishes** through partnership-driven science and action.”

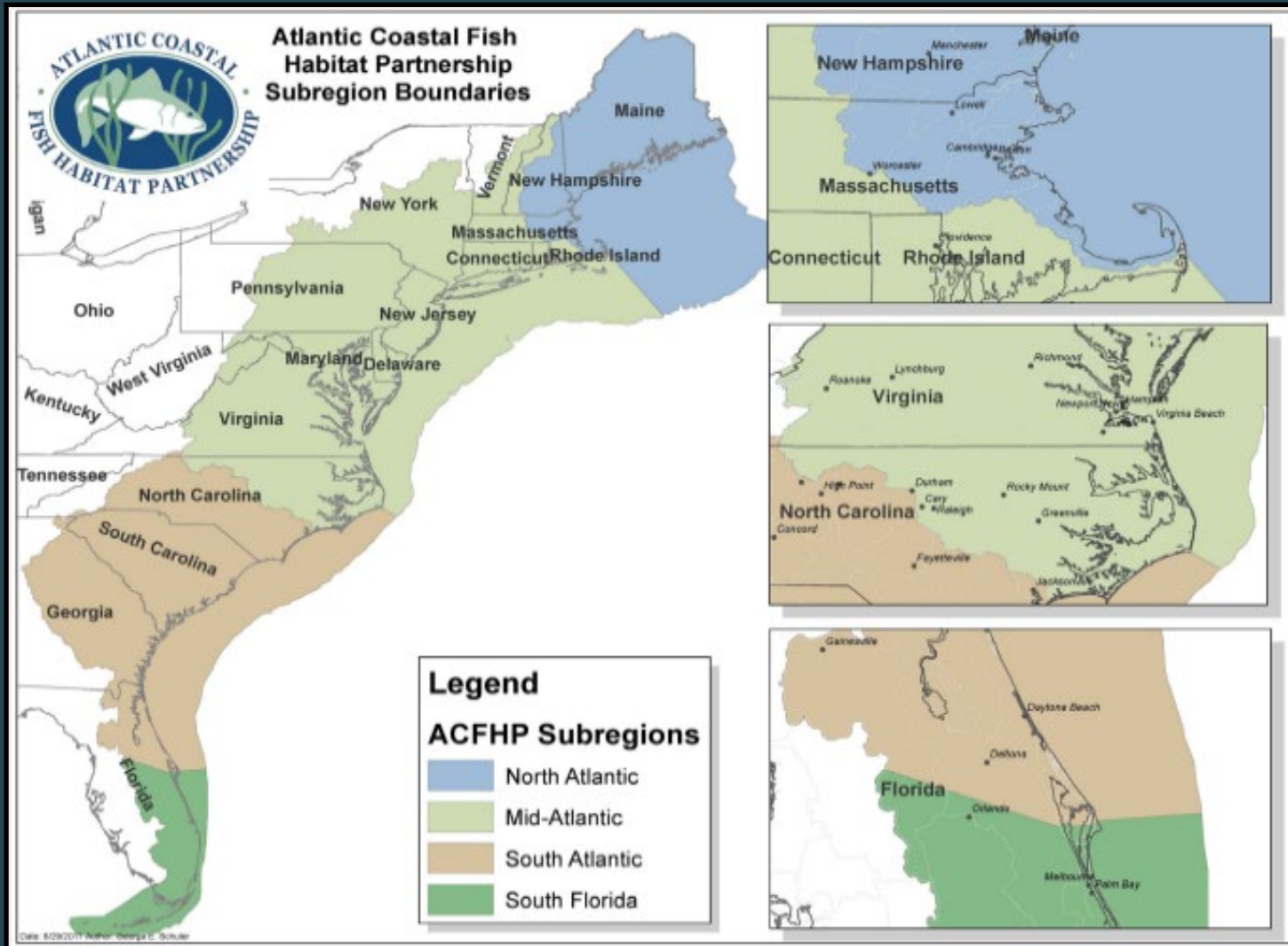
## Geographic Scope:

ACFHP extends from the Florida Keys to Maine and is broken up into **4 sub-regions**:

1. North Atlantic
2. Mid-Atlantic
3. South Atlantic
4. South Florida

~29,000 miles of shoreline and coastal waters

Includes a densely populated area with over 25% of the U.S. population



### 39 Partners:

- Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- RI Dept. of Environmental Management
- NH Fish and Game Department
- Fly Fishers International
- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
- Ducks Unlimited
- The Nature Conservancy

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Spring 2025 Steering Committee Meeting - Portsmouth, NH

Financial & Administrative  
support provided by

**Atlantic States Marine  
Fisheries Commission**  
Arlington, VA

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
Service**  
Regional Office

**National Fish Habitat  
Partnership**

# Priority Habitats



Riverine Bottom



Submerged  
Aquatic  
Vegetation



Marine &  
Estuarine  
Shellfish Beds



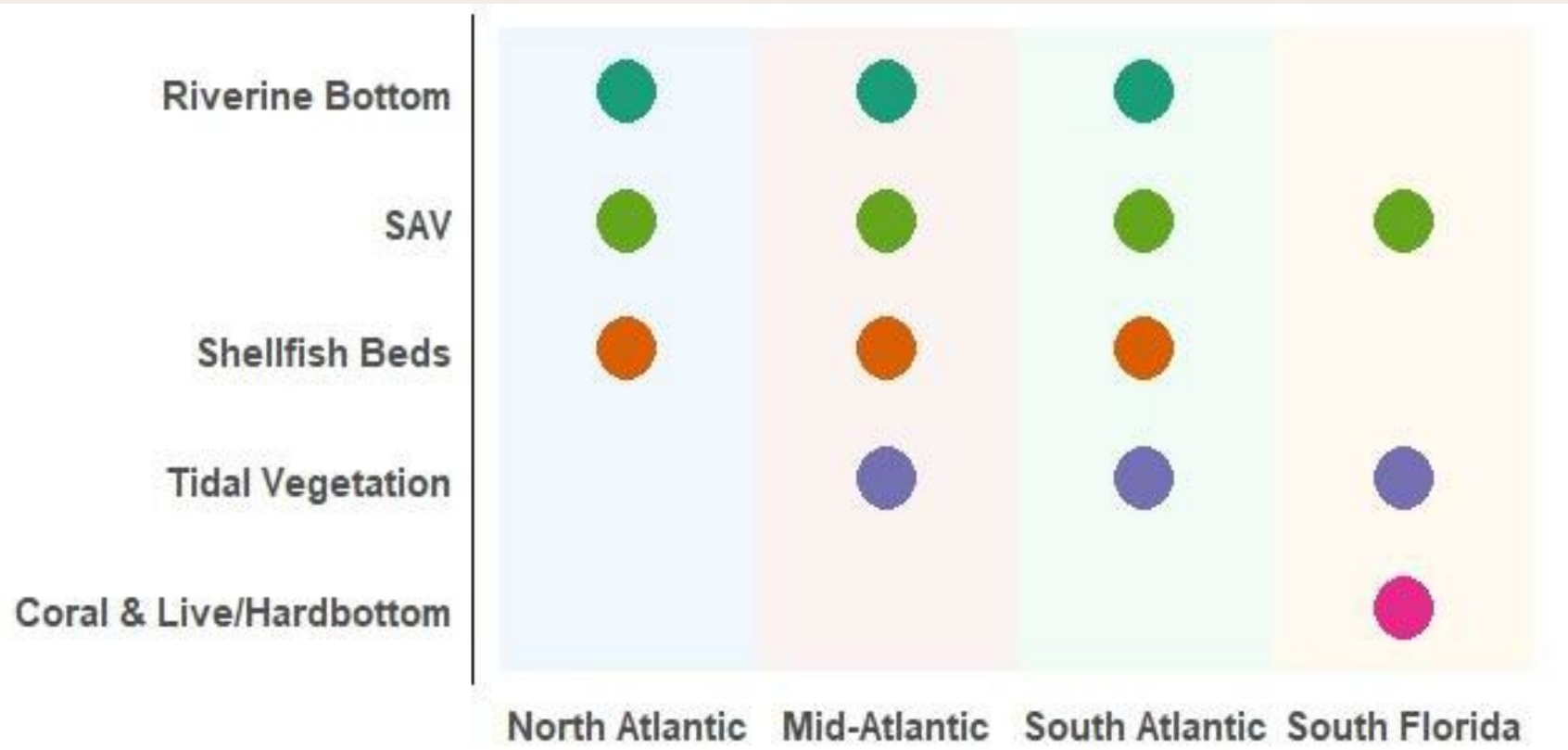
Tidal  
Vegetation



Coral and  
Live/Hard  
Bottom

# Priority Habitats

By Sub-Region





# Major Threats



Riverine Bottom



Submerged  
Aquatic  
Vegetation



Marine &  
Estuarine  
Shellfish Beds



Tidal  
Vegetation



Coral and  
Live/Hard  
Bottom

## The Major Threats within Each Subregion to ACFHP's Priority Habitats<sup>12</sup>

<b>Riverine Bottom</b>	➔ Obstruction to Fish Passage/Habitat Connectivity	NA, MA, SA
	Dredging and Coastal Maintenance	NA, MA, SA
	Water Quality Degradation and Eutrophication	NA, MA, SA
	Consumptive Water Withdrawal	NA, MA, SA
	Sedimentation	NA, MA, SA
	Contamination of Water and Sediments	MA, SA
	Invasive Species/Disease	MA, SA

## The Major Threats within Each Subregion to ACFHP's Priority Habitats<sup>12</sup>

<b>Submerged Aquatic Vegetation</b>		Dredging and Coastal Maintenance	NA, MA, SA, SF
		Water Quality Degradation and Eutrophication	NA, MA, SA, SF
	→	Vessel Operation Impacts	NA, MA, SA, SF
		Sedimentation	NA, SA, SF
		Contamination of Water and Sediments	SA, SF
		Invasive Species/Disease	SA, SF





## The Major Threats within Each Subregion to ACFHP's Priority Habitats<sup>12</sup>

<b>Marine and Estaurine Shellfish Beds</b>	→ Water Quality Degradation and Eutrophication	NA, MA, SA
	Sedimentation	NA, MA, SA
	Dredging and Coastal Maintenance	MA, SA
	Consumptive Water Withdrawal	MA, SA
	Invasive Species/Disease	NA, SA
	Vessel Operation Impacts	SA
	Contamination of Water and Sediments	SA



## The Major Threats within Each Subregion to ACFHP's Priority Habitats<sup>12</sup>

### Tidal Vegetation

➔ Dredging and Coastal Maintenance	MA, SA, SF
Water Quality Degradation and Eutrophication	MA, SA, SF
Sedimentation	MA, SA, SF
Vessel Operation Impacts	MA, SF
Invasive Species/Disease	MA, SF
Contamination of Water and Sediments	SA



The Major Threats within Each Subregion to ACFHP’s Priority Habitats<sup>12</sup>

<b>Coral and Live/ Hardbottom</b>	Dredging and Coastal Maintenance	SF
	Water Quality Degradation and Eutrophication	SF
	Vessel Operation Impacts	SF
	Contamination of Water and Sediments	SF
	➔ Invasive Species/Disease	SF





# Conservation Strategies

- Building Local and Regional Relationships
- Coordinating Outreach Initiatives
- Developing Science & Data Products
- Supporting On-the-Ground Habitat Restoration Projects



# Supporting On-the-Ground Restoration



ACFHP funds and supports projects that conserve or connect priority aquatic habitats:

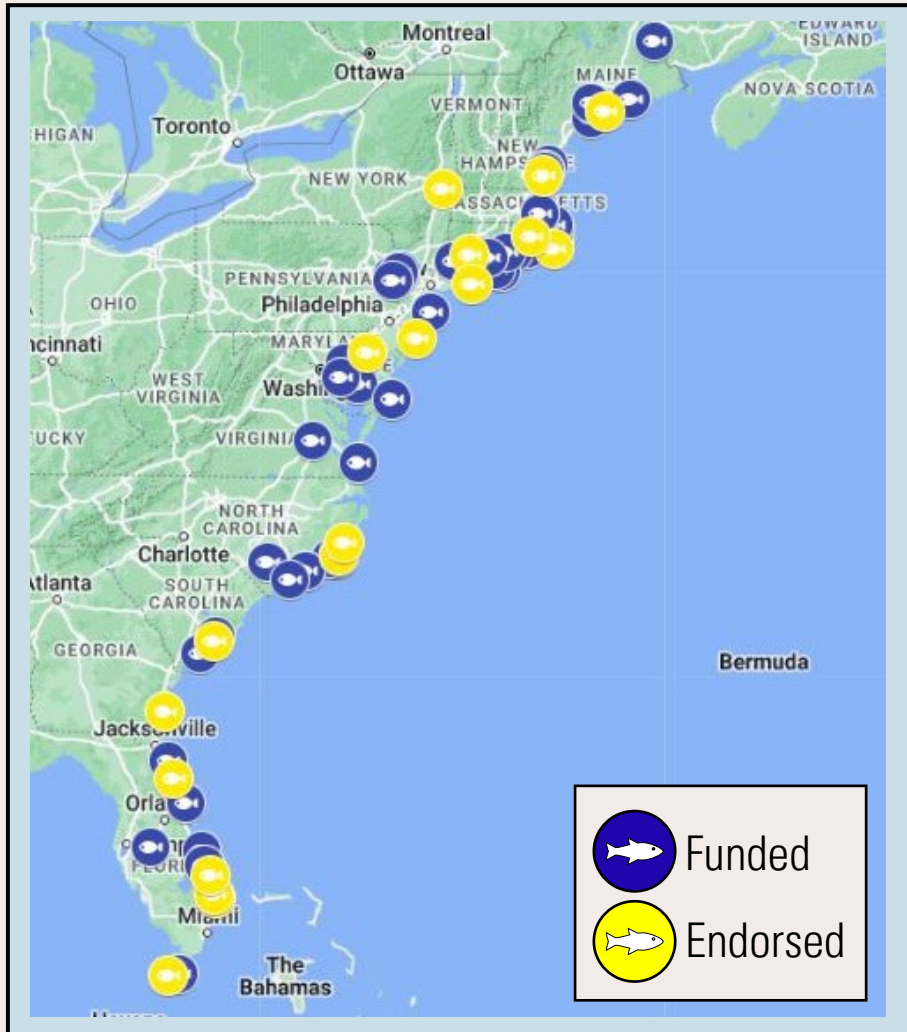
## 1. Annual RFPs

- NFHP – USFWS
- NOAA – NMFS Increasing Recreational Fisheries Engagement through FHPs

## 2. Project Endorsements



# Supporting On-the-Ground Restoration



ACFHP funds and supports projects that conserve or connect priority aquatic habitats:

- 54 projects funded since 2010 (~ 4 per year)
- Restored or protected nearly 170 acres of estuarine habitat
- Opened access to over 450 miles of river habitat and 14,500 acres of diadromous spawning habitat

# Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award

Annual award celebrating outstanding fish habitat conservation efforts along the Atlantic coast

Honors the legacy of one of the founding ACFHP Steering Committee members, Dr. Melissa Laser of the Maine Department of Marine Resources.


Engages a wider community of resource managers, volunteers, and scientists beyond ACFHP.




Annie Roddenberry, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, 2025


# Science & Data

**Datasets Used** (10) **Map Details**





**North Carolina Strategic Habitat Areas (SHA)**  
North Carolina Strategic Habitat Areas, NC DEQ,  
<http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/habitat/SHAs>  
North Carolina Strategic Habitat Areas, NC DEQ,  
<http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/habitat/SHAs>  
*Kat Hoenke (August 8, 2018)*

 Dataset





**South Atlantic Estuarine Analysis**  
*Kat Hoenke, Jessica Graham, Jen Walters, Lisa Havel*  
ACFHP South Atlantic Estuarine Conservation Prioritization Scenario. Metrics include seagrass, oyster, wetland, 303D, causeways, and development  
*Kat Hoenke (Last modified June 29, 2020)*

 Dataset




**South Atlantic Diadromous Analysis**  
*Kat Hoenke, Jennifer Walters, Jessica Graham, Lisa Havel*  
Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) Southeast Map Series: Anadromous Protection Prioritization Scenario, 07/18/2018  
*Kat Hoenke (Last modified June 29, 2020)*

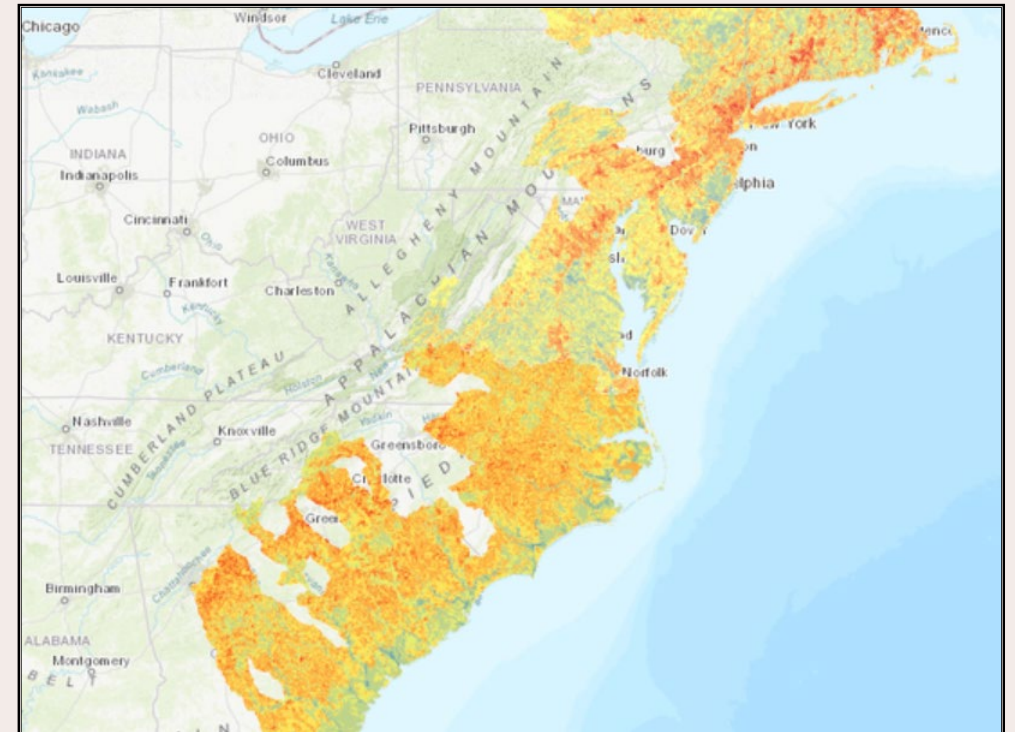
 Dataset



**Mid-Atlantic Diadromous Analysis**  
*Erik Martin, TNC*  
Mid-Atlantic Diadromous Analysis Results, ACFHP  
*Kat Hoenke (Last modified September 4, 2020)*

 Dataset

## Fish Habitat Conservation Area Mapping and Prioritization Project (2020)





# Science & Data

## Species-Habitat Matrix

Species <span>↑↓</span>	Region <span>↑↓</span>	Habitat Category <span>↑↓</span>	Habitat Type <span>↑↓</span>	Life Stage <span>↑↓</span>	Rank <span>↑↓</span>	Numeric Rank <span>↑↓</span>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Horseshoe Crab	North Atlantic	Tidal Vegetation	Saltwater & Brackish Marsh	Adult	Medium	2.00
Horseshoe Crab	North Atlantic	Tidal Vegetation	Saltwater & Brackish Marsh	Egg & Larva	Medium	2.00
Horseshoe Crab	North Atlantic	Tidal Vegetation	Saltwater & Brackish Marsh	Juvenile & Young-of-Year	Medium	2.00
Horseshoe Crab	North Atlantic	Tidal Vegetation	Saltwater & Brackish Marsh	Spawning Adult	Medium	2.00
Little Skate	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Firm Hard Bottom (boulders to emb	Adult	Low	1.00
Little Skate	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Loose Coarse Bottom (gravel to cok	Adult	Medium	2.00
Little Skate	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Loose Fine Bottom (mud, silt, and s	Adult	Very High	4.00
Little Skate	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Loose Fine Bottom (mud, silt, and s	Egg & Larva	Very High	4.00
Little Skate	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Loose Fine Bottom (mud, silt, and s	Juvenile & Young-of-Year	Very High	4.00
Little Skate	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Structured Sand (shoals, capes, offs	Egg & Larva	High	3.50
Little Skate	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Structured Sand (shoals, capes, offs	Juvenile & Young-of-Year	High	3.50
Loligo Squid	North Atlantic	Coastal Inert Substrates	Firm Hard Bottom (boulders to emb	Egg & Larva	Medium	2.00



# Regional Impact: North Atlantic

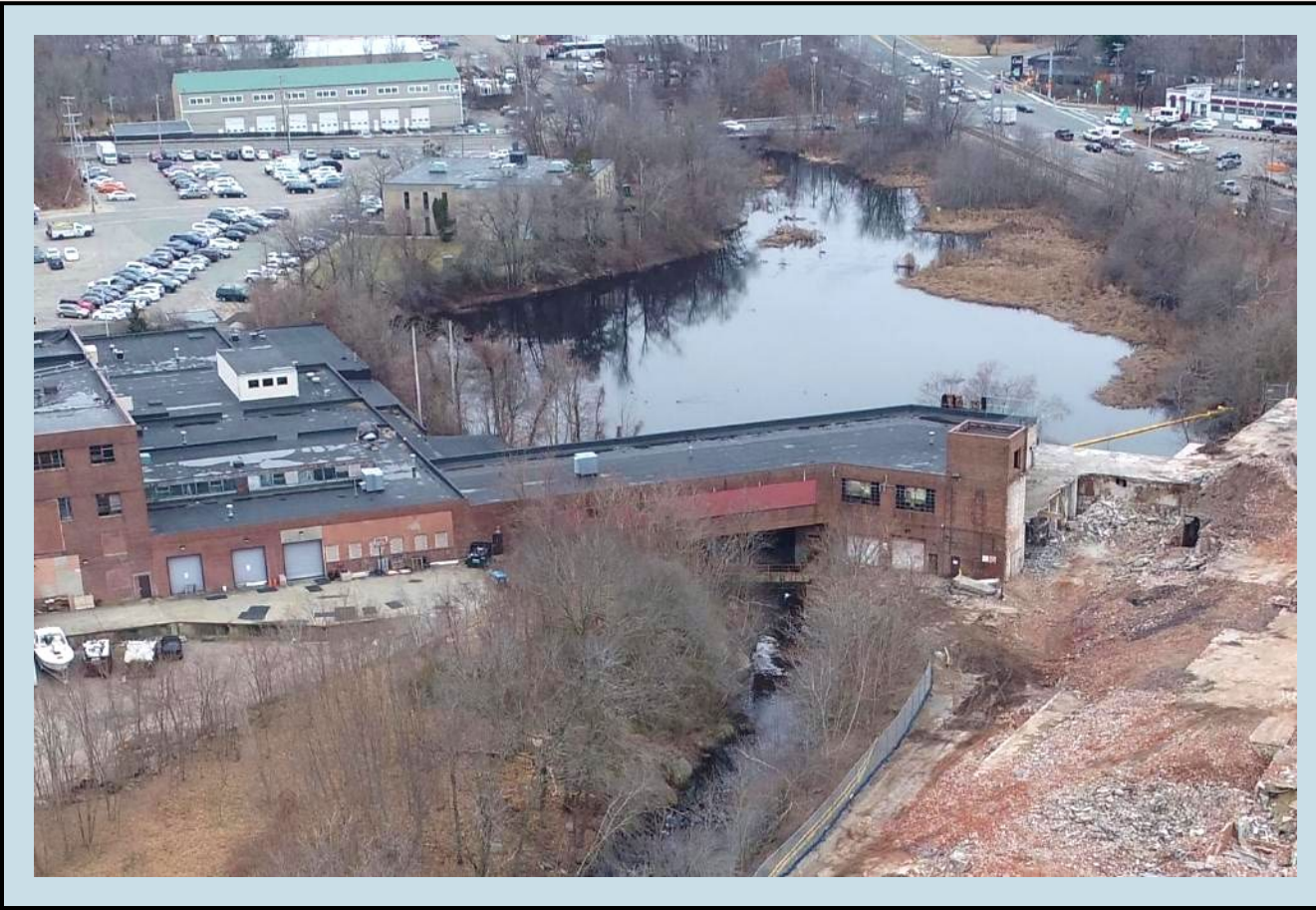
## Armstrong Dam Removal

Monatiquot River, MA

Led by Town of Braintree

Restored 36 miles of unimpeded  
upstream access to 180 acres of river  
herring spawning habitat

Completed early 2024





# Regional Impact: North Atlantic





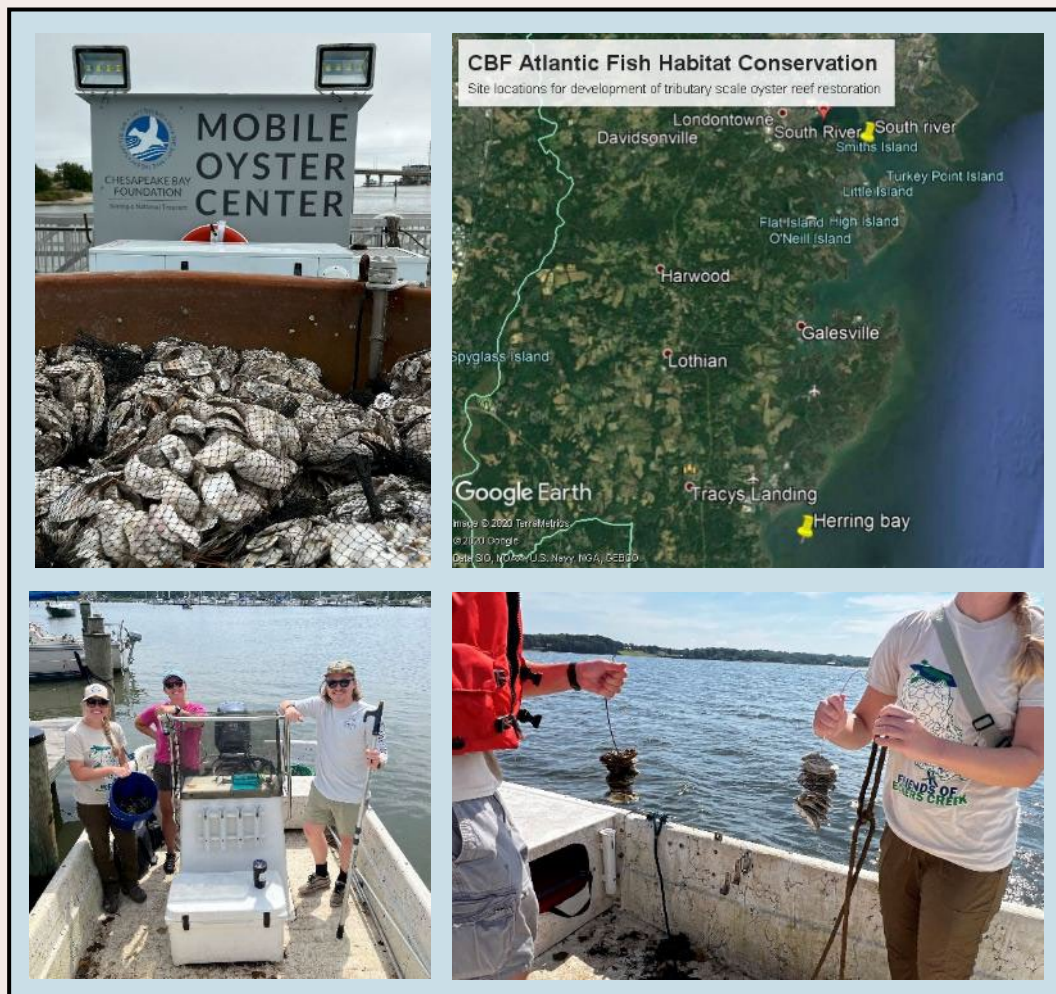
# Regional Impact: Mid-Atlantic

## Tributary-Scale Oyster Reef Restoration

South River & Herring Bay, Annapolis, MD

Led by Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Restores, augments, and expands existing oyster reef sanctuaries  
1.5 ➔ 5 acres.



# Regional Impact: South Atlantic

## Battleship North Carolina *Living with Water*

Cape Fear River, Wilmington, NC

Led by USS North Carolina Battleship  
Commission

Restores ~800 ft. of intertidal shoreline &  
~2 acres of tidal wetland to mitigate  
nuisance tidal flooding.



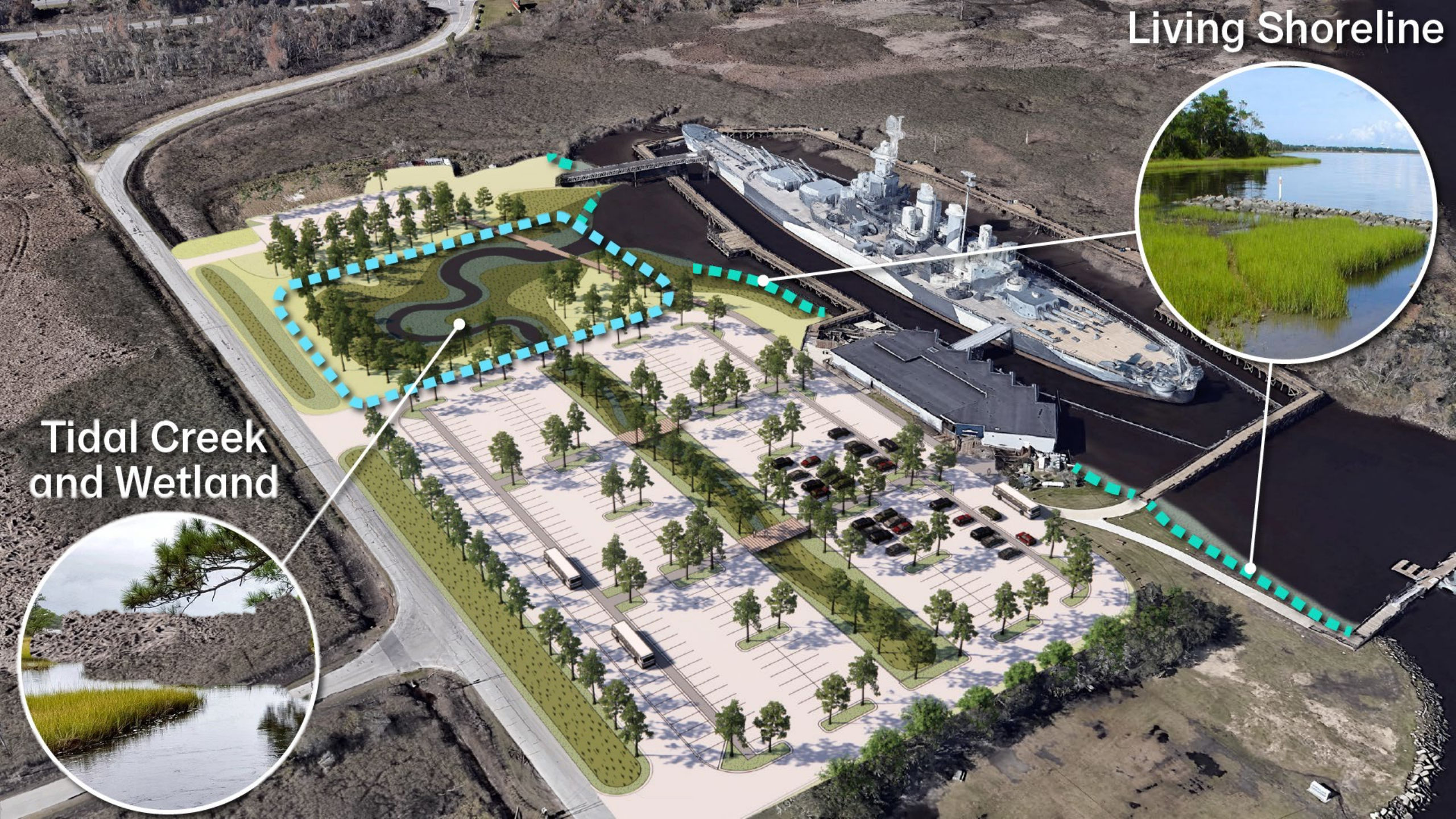






Living Shoreline

Tidal Creek  
and Wetland





# Regional Impact: South Florida

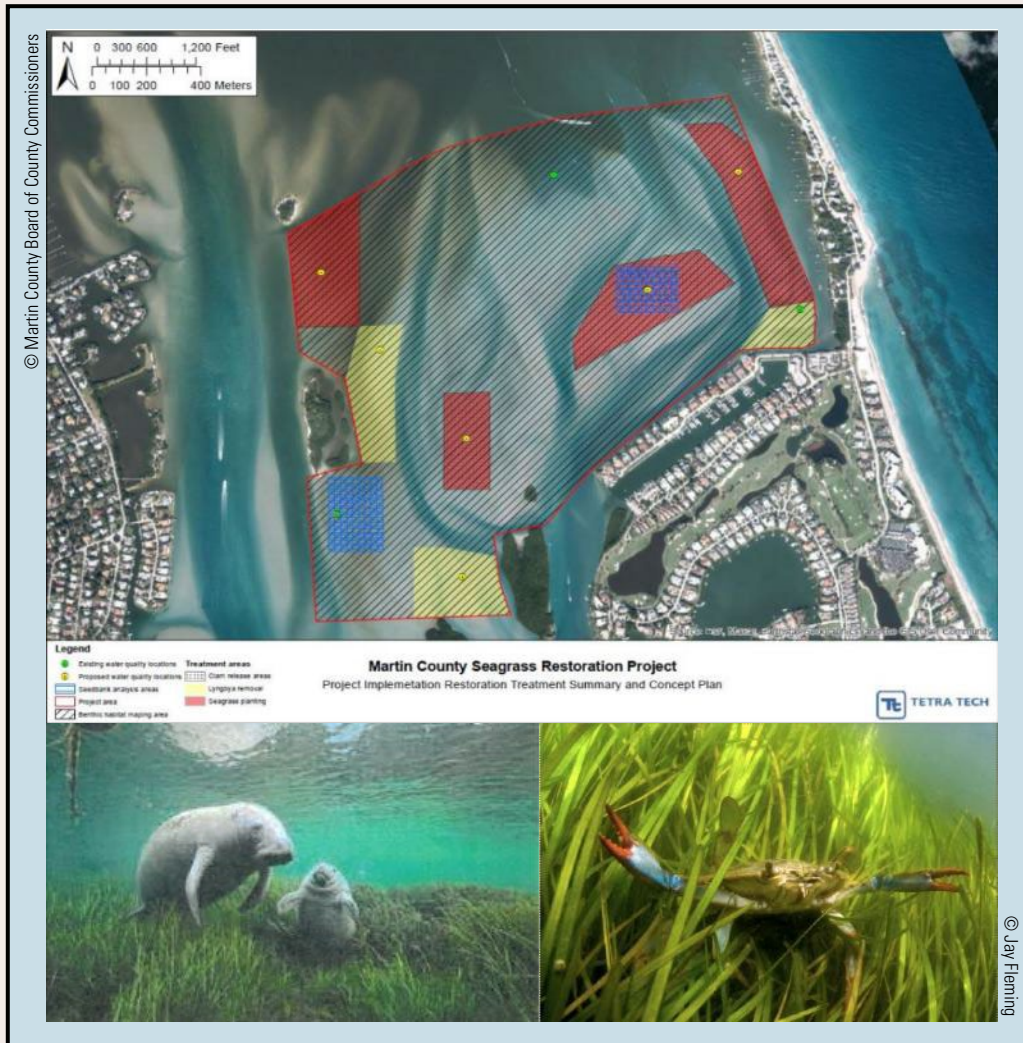
## Southern Indian River Lagoon Seagrass Restoration

### Martin County, FL

Led by Martin County Board of County Commissioners

Will restore appx. 600 acres of seagrass meadows utilizing nature-based solutions:

- planting shoal grass
- removing *Lyngbya* bacteria
- detoxify and stabilize sediments using clams





# Summary



On-the-  
Ground  
Restoration

Outreach &  
Engagement

Conservation  
Excellence  
Award

Science &  
Data

Project  
Endorsement

# MAKING THE CONNECTION

[ATLANTICFISHHABITAT.ORG](http://ATLANTICFISHHABITAT.ORG)



From the headwaters to the  
continental shelf

Among state, federal, tribal,  
and non-governmental  
organizations

Between people and fish  
habitat

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a large body of water. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, purple, and orange. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow. In the foreground, there is a wooden viewing platform with a railing, situated on a grassy bank. The water reflects the colors of the sky. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

# THANK YOU!

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