



NSF's Convergence Accelerator

NSF Convergence Accelerator's 2021 Cohort Phase 1 Award

Project Title

Advancing Innovative Convergence Between Fisheries and Offshore Energy to Drive Adaptive Stewardship of Fisheries Habitat in a Dynamic Blue Economy

Awardee

Blue Latitudes

Award/Contract

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PROJECT ABSTRACT

For decades, fisheries and offshore energy in the Gulf of Mexico have developed concurrently, with offshore oil and gas platforms providing fisheries habitats and fishing opportunities for many commercial and recreational fisheries. As the Blue Economy shifts away from oil and gas and towards renewable energy resources, decommissioning offshore oil and gas platforms in the Gulf of Mexico is imminent with unknown implications for fisheries. The 'Advancing Innovative Convergence Between Fisheries and Offshore Energy to Drive Adaptive Stewardship of Fisheries Habitat in a Dynamic Blue Economy' project will quantify how fisheries use the highly productive artificial reef ecosystems found on offshore oil and gas platforms and produce tools to better understand the impacts of future offshore development (e.g., wind installations) on fishers.

Led by Blue Latitudes LLC., the convergence project will establish the framework for an ecological-economic fisheries model that integrates spatial data from commercial and recreational fisheries and data from ecological parameters, including diversity, abundance, and connectivity, to realize the direct and indirect value that offshore platforms provide for fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. The goal is to facilitate decision-making for decommissioning and future offshore energy development that considers the ecological, economic, and social implications of the removal or addition of artificial structures on fisheries. The broader impacts of this project will improve sustainable use of fisheries resources for economic growth, create streamlined pathways to capitalize on existing ocean resources, and improve interactions between disconnected ocean-related sectors in the Blue Economy, while also providing educational opportunities in the Gulf of Mexico region.

Using a multidisciplinary approach, use-inspired research, and innovation processes, the National Science Foundation's Convergence Accelerator provides an opportunity to accelerate solutions into practical application and to provide a positive societal impact.