

# Species Recovery Grants: FY25 Greater Atlantic Region Priorities

This document was prepared by the Protected Resources Division, NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office. The purpose is to identify some of the top regional management and research priorities for FY25 Species Recovery Grant programs. Species and projects are in no particular order. Submitting a proposal in response to this list does not guarantee funding. Further, projects not on this list may receive higher review scores, and may therefore receive funding. For more information, please contact Carrie Upite, GARFO Section 6 State Coordinator, at [Carrie.Upite@noaa.gov](mailto:Carrie.Upite@noaa.gov) for Species Recovery Grants to states, or Ellen Keane, GARFO tribal liaison, at [ellen.keane@noaa.gov](mailto:ellen.keane@noaa.gov) for Species Recovery Grants to tribes.

## Atlantic Salmon (Gulf of Maine DPS) - Species in the Spotlight

- In 2021 NOAA-Fisheries reaffirmed its commitment to the restoration of Atlantic salmon through its renewal of the Species in the Spotlight initiative and the release of its priority action plan. Our top priority is to support the implementation of projects from the SHRU-specific 5- year workplans that address the priority areas described in the action plan. This includes supporting freshwater restoration activities in designated critical habitat that will restore access and improve smolt productivity. Priority actions are ones that contribute to progress towards the downlisting and delisting criteria included in the 2019 Recovery Plan.
- The following science and assessment projects are also priorities:
  - Identification of climate-resilient habitats for Atlantic salmon and other sea-run fish in freshwater.
  - Characterization of direct and indirect effects of dams on Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which they depend.
  - Improve our understanding of human-caused geomorphic change in the freshwater range of the GOM DPS over the last 200 years.
  - Advancing the scientific underpinnings of the multi-species approach to salmon recovery.

## Sturgeon (all Atlantic Sturgeon DPSs and Shortnose Sturgeon)

- Establish regional (river or DPS-specific) and coastwide fishery-independent surveys to monitor sturgeon abundance (for both spawning adults and early juveniles) or expand existing regional surveys to include annual sturgeon monitoring. Survey methods can include testing novel methods and equipment (e.g., use of sonar) but should have a reasonable likelihood of establishing a long-term (e.g., multi-decades) time series of data for one or more of the Atlantic sturgeon DPSs or shortnose sturgeon to inform recovery.
- Collect specific age, growth, fecundity, and maturity information to inform state management programs for populations of Atlantic or shortnose sturgeon that are natal to the state's rivers.
- Address the threat of vessel strikes through the use of management and research. Research topics can include, but are not limited to, research that informs: the number of vessel strikes to an Atlantic sturgeon DPS or river-specific population (either sturgeon species); mortality estimates; factors contributing to vessel strikes; and, the development of strategies to minimize impacts.

- Identify the physical or biological features in marine waters, bays, and sounds that are essential to one or more of the Atlantic sturgeon DPSs and the management measures necessary to conserve those.
- Monitor sturgeon bycatch and bycatch mortality.
- Maintain and support current networks of acoustic receivers and acoustic tagging programs.
- Identify and implement methods that promote public engagement of the conservation of Atlantic sturgeon and shortnose sturgeon as well as public knowledge of sturgeon such as through education and outreach programs, carcass reporting programs, etc.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing programs for managing the effects of non-native fish on shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon populations in state waters or develop programs where needed.

## Sea Turtles (Loggerhead, Green, Kemp’s ridley, and Leatherback)

- Evaluate population abundance and trends, including the drivers behind any declining nesting trends.
- Assessment of threats and corresponding mitigation measures in state waters, focusing on co-occurrence with fishing gear.
- Identify and implement outreach and/or mitigation measures to reduce sea turtle vessel interactions and impacts of marine debris.
- Continue research on the distribution, behavior, habitat use, and ecology of sea turtles and changes with climate change and other anthropogenic activities.
- Research to develop and/or expand the use of stable isotope, genomics, eDNA, and other emerging technologies to increase our knowledge of habitat use, population connectivity, ontogenetic habitat shifts, and foraging ecology.

## North Atlantic Right Whale - Species in the Spotlight

- Use existing regulatory and outreach mechanisms to help minimize impacts from vessels and fisheries.
- Conduct further research on the effects of climate, wind energy, aquaculture, and noise on North Atlantic right whales.
- Further gear research to reduce risk to North Atlantic right whales.
- Work to remove and/or dispose of derelict fishing gear.
- Conduct research to collect information on risk (e.g., behavioral research) to North Atlantic right whales from vessels to help inform vessel strike reduction measures.
- Further research to assist with continued and expanded population monitoring efforts across various survey methods (e.g., aerial, passive acoustic, drone, shipboard, satellite).
- Develop and test telemetry/tag technology that is appropriate for North Atlantic right whales to supplement monitoring efforts and help locate whales and their habitat in a changing ocean environment.

Please see the [GARFO Protected Resources Division Management Needs and Research Priorities](#) for a comprehensive list of management needs.