

Northern Gulf of Mexico Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Network

**TRIUMPH GULF COAST, INC. PRE-APPLICATION FORM**

Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. ("Triumph Gulf Coast") has created a pre-application process to provide initial consideration of potential ideas for projects or programs that may seek an award of funding. Applicants are required to participate in the pre-application process. Notwithstanding the response from Triumph Gulf Coast on the pre-application form, an Applicant may still elect to submit an Application.

**APPLICANT INFORMATION:**

Name of Individual/Entity/Organization: Okaloosa County

Brief Description of Background of Individual/Entity/  
Organization: County government

Contact Information:

Primary Contact Information: Jane Evans  
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Names of co-applicants, partners or other entities, organizations that will have a role in the proposed project or program: n/a

**REQUIRED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In a maximum of three (3) pages, please describe the proposed project or program, including (i) the amount of funds being sought from Triumph Gulf Coast; (ii) the amount and identity of other sources of funds for the proposed project or program; (iii) the location of the project or program; (iv) summary description of the proposed program, including how the program will be transformational and promote economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties, and (v) a summary timeline for the proposed project or program.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

This pre-application process will **not** result in an award of funding by Triumph Gulf Coast. Rather, this process is designed to facilitate submission of ideas for potential projects or programs before the Applicant expends time and/or resources to complete a full Application. All Applicants for funding are required to complete an Application, which will be scored, and then considered for award in the discretion of Triumph Gulf Coast Board.

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FADSProject Name: Northern Gulf of Mexico Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) Network

- i) Funding amount requested: \$500,000
- ii) \$500,000 of Restore Act funds through pot three (allocated to Okaloosa County) are being pursued for development of this network of FADs
- iii) Approximately 60-80 miles from the nearest point of land (Okaloosa County). Although, these FAD locations can be accessed from across Northwest Florida and Alabama with very little additional travel distance.
- iv) Okaloosa County proposes to deploy approximately eight (8) large mooring buoys also known as FADs to attract and provide pelagic habitat for highly prized pelagic game fish such as Marlin, Tuna, Mahi Mahi, and Wahoo just to name a few. This network of FADs will expand and increase access of this fishery to fishing entities located across the Northeastern Gulf of Mexico which encompasses the 8 disproportionately affected Florida counties from the Deepwater Horizon Oil spill as well as the states of Alabama and Mississippi. Additionally, this FAD system will provide habitat to a number of fish species that may have been directly affected by the oil spill. The main purpose of deploying this network is to expand and enhance recreational and sport fishing opportunities across the region which will result in a significant economic impact to not only the fishing industry in the region but to regional tourism. The current purposed placement of the buoys was a collaborative effort to ensure ecological qualities, legal constraints, and public interests were not omitted.

Anchored FADs are present around many Caribbean islands, Guam, West Indian Ocean islands, Australia, New Guinea...etc.; however, very few FADs occur in American waters and none have been deployed in the Gulf of Mexico. FADs are a very old technology, the use of buoys and other floating objects to attract fish and has garnered a great deal of interest especially to those groups participating in pelagic fisheries. The islands of Hawaii have an extensive anchored FAD system for recreational uses, in place for over 30 years and is the only currently active FAD system in the United States. Given the lack of documented FAD systems within the United States and the limited information available in other regions where FADs exist, the Hawaii program serves as a model for developing this project in the northeastern Gulf of Mexico.

A recent economic impact report funded by Okaloosa County, suggested that over the lifespan of the initially deployed FAD network (estimated 7-year period) it is estimated it will support 368 jobs, create nearly \$56 million in economic impact, and generate over \$2.6 million in government revenues (fiscal impact) across the 8-county region of Northwest Florida alone. What was not considered in this economic impact report was the potential for

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increased visitation to northwest Florida for potential high dollar billfish tournaments and marina construction or modifications to support larger offshore pelagic fishing vessels. Therefore, the estimated economic impact is likely underestimated. Continued benefits from the deployment of this FAD network will be the collaboration with national and international universities and scientists to conduct required monitoring activities at these buoy locations. Offshore research is costly and when opportunities to couple initiatives among projects presents itself, mutually beneficial results can be achieved. For this project, monitoring the human use or visitation of these FADs will be important information to provide to fisheries managers. Additionally, these FAD buoys will provide a permanent, stable platform for above and sub-surface oceanographic and atmospheric equipment. This equipment can be installed to monitor synoptic oceanographic and meteorological conditions in the area and potentially provide real time data to the public which will be used to make safe and educated decisions about planning offshore, relatively long-range fishing trips. Additional equipment can also be installed to monitor biological conditions and even affix devices to detect and track movements of specific species of interest. In conclusion this unique FAD network will create 368 jobs, and generate nearly \$56 million in economic impact across the 8-county region of Northwest Florida while providing the region with enhanced pelagic sport fishing and other recreational fishing opportunities. This network will also provide collaboration opportunities with universities and scientists who would not have been able to conduct monitoring activities in the region otherwise. This project is ready to be implemented and if funded, delays in project implementation due to planning are unlikely and execution of this project will be immediate.

- v) To date approximately \$150,000 has been spent for various studies.. These include:
- Estimated economic impact of installation of this planned FAD system
  - Determined the feasibility and estimated costs associated with implementation of this project.
  - Submitted relevant permit applications for the installation of these FADs.
- Additional conversations since initial application submittal have resulted and permit issuance is imminent.

If funded, project implementation would be rapid as planning and regulatory requirements have already been completed or are nearly complete. Therefore, the solicitation and selection of a vendor for construction and deployment of the offshore FAD network can be completed within 6 months of being selected for funding. Further, FAD construction and deployment activities would occur within 6 months of contractor selection for an estimated project completion of less than one year.

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