

Of National Significance: The Gulf's 19th Century Shipwrecks

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¹SEARCH

September 13, 2022

Abstract

The Gulf of Mexico is a hotspot for historically significant cultural resources from the nineteenth century due to the extent of maritime activity during that period. BOEM is the primary Federal steward of cultural heritage found throughout the Gulf's Outer Continental Shelf, working to protect sites from the impacts of energy infrastructure development. Twelve deep-water shipwrecks have been discovered and documented that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This project is actively writing nomination forms for each of these shipwrecks. In addition, this work will develop a historic context document providing an overview of the maritime activity of the nineteenth century Gulf, and a best-practices document outlining the approach taken to nominate these sites that can be applied to future discoveries. In addition, the underwater footage of these shipwrecks' discovery and site assessments provides an opportunity to develop short documentary videos chronicling each wreck and its ties to the Gulf maritime activity. These are in progress and will be added to BOEM's Virtual Archaeology Museum website at the end of the project. This work is intended to set the groundwork for future shipwreck discoveries to be added to the National Register and to expand public knowledge and engagement with such sites through their presentation in these documentaries.