

Multibeam Survey of "No Activity Zones" and Small Topographic Features

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September 14, 2022

Abstract

In order to protect sensitive habitats from permitted bottom disturbing activities, an updated evaluation of the efficacy of the No Activity Zone (NAZ) boundaries, which BOEM applies to certain topographic features in the Gulf of Mexico, is needed. As part of this reevaluation, updated multibeam bathymetry and backscatter data was collected for 17 topographic features of high interest in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Due to NOAA's shared interest in the region, this project was conducted as a collaborative effort between BOEM and Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS), co-funded by NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO), and supported by OMAO and NOAA's Navigation Response Team. Surveys were conducted aboard multiple NOAA platforms, including the research vessel Manta and the hydrographic survey vessel NOAA Ship Thomas Jefferson. The completed datasets are publicly available and will be used by both BOEM and NOAA to reevaluate and modify agency policies used to manage environmental resources.