

# **Characterizing Shipwrecks and Biological Communities in the Mesophotic Zone, Gulf of Mexico**

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## **Abstract**

The University of Rhode Island (URI) and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), working in close cooperation with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) as part of the North Atlantic CESU, is currently investigating, evaluating, and characterizing up to five shipwrecks and three associated hard bottom sites in the vicinity of Fishnet Bank off the coast of Louisiana. All sites are in the mesophotic zone, i.e. between 40 - 150 meters water depth. In July 2021, two of the shipwreck sites were photographed and filmed using technical divers. In June 2022, four shipwrecks and three hardbottom sites were imaged and documented using a Searover mid-class ROV. The primary deliverables for the project will be Phase II archaeological investigations, detailed characterizations of shipwreck and hardbottom biological communities of invertebrates and fish; and, to the extent possible, high definition orthomosaic maps and 3D models of each shipwreck and hardbottom site. This presentation summarizes the project's activities and progress thus far.