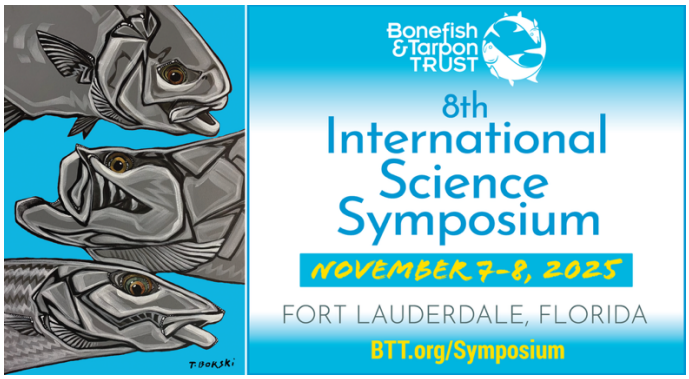


Building on success: where do we go from here?

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An amazing amount of research on bonefish, tarpon, permit and other flats species has been accomplished over the 28 years since BTT began. And we have a growing list of research results being applied to revised and improved management, conservation, and education. Science-based conservation successes include improved catch and release handling, spawning site protections, habitat protection and restoration, improved fisheries regulations. And the expansion of flats-related research has been phenomenal. At this and previous symposia, regions from which research has been shared include the southeastern US, Gulf of Mexico, The Bahamas, Mexico, Belize, Cuba, Costa Rica, Turks and Caicos Islands, Puerto Rico, The Seychelles, Brazil. A big reason for this success has been that the research has been collaborative among scientists, guides and anglers, and resource managers.

As much as we have accomplished, this is just the foundation for the next steps toward building a strategic approach that operates at the landscape scale. The landscape scale incorporates: the regional connectivity resulting from long-distance migrations of adult tarpon and larval dispersal of all our focal species; the coastal habitat mosaic that supports each of the life stages of our flats species; the watersheds for estuaries and coasts; and the communities that are in the landscape.

Many past research projects have taken a landscape approach, and many of the presentations at this symposium do as well. Unfortunately, the way our resources have generally been managed has tended to be in silos, with some agencies focusing on fisheries while others manage habitat, in some instances without the inclusion of stakeholders. As habitat and water quality declines become main drivers of fisheries declines, a new approach to flats fishery

management is needed. With this in mind, this presentation provides a framework for placing the research shared in the science sessions in the context of a landscape approach for management – a new approach with fewer silos, coproduction as a core component, at the landscape scale – that is strategic and structural.