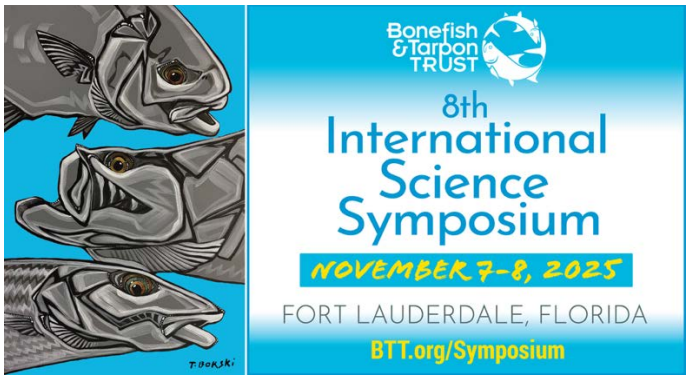


Actionable knowledge to guide conservation and restoration of juvenile snook and tarpon habitat

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A science co-production framework is being applied to inform local policies that protect vulnerable fish habitat. In Southwest Florida, nursery habitats for two economically important sportfish (snook and tarpon) exist along a tidal wetland gradient adjacent to accelerating coastal development. Since land-use and infrastructure planning can directly affect fish nursery habitat, researchers have sought partnerships with managers that govern at fine spatial scales to conserve or restore these habitats. A novel collaborative approach was developed to integrate research and management conducted by multiple agencies (local, state, federal), universities, and NGOs in Southwest Florida. Workshops supported by the NOAA RESTORE Science Program were held to plan actionable science using a facilitated co-production process. The findings were incorporated into a research plan that is being implemented over the next five years. One of the goals is to integrate juvenile sportfish habitat into county GIS maps for land-use planning and stormwater engineering. The resulting decision-support tools will be shared with land-use planners for proposed revisions of county comprehensive planning policy that address opportunities for zoning and infrastructure siting, local and state land acquisition, and habitat restoration.

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