



# Press Release

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## **WSP USA and Mote Marine Laboratory Partner to Advance Coastal Restoration and Resilience**

*Alliance combines cutting-edge environmental and engineering design with innovative marine science and research to address climate change in the southeastern U.S.*

**TALLAHASSEE, FL, October 27, 2021** — Sarasota, Florida-based Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium has signed a memorandum of understanding with WSP USA, a leading engineering and professional services consultancy, to expand ongoing restoration and protection of coastlines and marine habitats in Florida and elsewhere in the southeastern U.S.

The collaboration will enable knowledge sharing and leverage the complementary capabilities and resources of each organization to holistically address the unprecedented changes occurring in the ocean and coastal environments of the southeastern U.S. To better understand and preserve these resources — and to protect critical habitats, food sources, economies and communities — the partnership will focus on science, research and policy in environmental restoration and climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

“We’re already collectively working to support coastal communities and invest in regional resilience,” said Rebecca Prado, WSP’s Florida coastal resilience leader. “We recognize the value of this partnership to align research and professional services, to bring a more complete base of knowledge to local communities and state agencies managing these challenges and implementing critical projects.”

WSP works closely with businesses, government and non-governmental organizations to develop state and regional action plans to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather and sea level rise. The firm provides technical environmental and engineering services for coastal protection and restoration, community planning and infrastructure vulnerability assessment and adaptation using nature-positive strategies.

Mote, an independent nonprofit marine laboratory and public aquarium, conducts marine research around the world with a focus on finding strategic solutions to the grand problems facing our oceans and inspiring the next generation of scientists through outreach and education. Leading research initiatives and collaborating with NGOs, universities, private companies and public agencies, Mote is pushing the frontiers of marine science and technology and expanding its research to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, healthy habitats and natural resources.

“As one of the few remaining completely independent marine research labs, Mote is positioned to find unique, mutually-beneficial partnerships that enhance our marine research through collaboration and shared knowledge,” said Kevin Claridge, Mote vice president for sponsored research and coastal policy programs. “Some of the issues we’re tackling here at Mote, such as coral restoration and harmful algae bloom mitigation, won’t be achieved on our own, so we’re looking forward to seeing the solutions that our two teams find together.”

In Florida, WSP and Mote are actively working on a range of coastal resilience and restoration projects. In Apalachicola Bay and Pensacola Bay, WSP is [supporting shoreline restoration and protection and ecological uplift efforts](#) through the application of nature-based solutions, including the design of acres of oyster reefs and saltmarshes.

In recent years, Mote has greatly expanded infrastructure at several campuses in order to address the growing needs of Mote’s coral reef research and restoration initiatives, including the creation of an International Coral Gene Bank in east Sarasota County at the Mote Aquaculture Research Park and the newly-constructed coral nursery at famed Bud N Mary’s in Islamorada in the

Florida Keys. Mote's team is working across all campuses to use science to save the reef: naturally heat-resistant, disease-resistant corals are being out-planted onto the reef, incorporating genetic diversity into coral breeding programs, and studying the coral microbiome to better understand diseases.

### **About WSP USA**

WSP USA is the U.S. operating company of WSP, one of the world's leading engineering and professional services firms. Dedicated to serving local communities, we are engineers, planners, technical experts, strategic advisors and construction management professionals. WSP USA designs lasting solutions in the buildings, transportation, energy, water and environment markets. With more than 12,000 employees in 200 offices across the U.S., we partner with our clients to help communities prosper. [wsp.com](http://wsp.com)

### **About Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium**

Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, based in Sarasota, Florida, has conducted marine research since its founding as a small, one-room laboratory in 1955. Since then, Mote has grown to encompass more than 20 research and conservation programs that span the spectrum of marine science: sustainable aquaculture systems designed to alleviate growing pressures on wild fish populations; red tide research that works to inform the public and mitigate the adverse effects of red tide with innovative technologies; marine animal science, conservation and rehabilitation programs dedicated to the protection of animals such as sea turtles, manatees and dolphins; and much more. Mote Aquarium, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is open 365 days per year. Learn more at [mote.org](http://mote.org) or connect with @motemarinelab on Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

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