South Florida universities are well represented in an effort to research the impact of the BP oil spill on the Gulf of Mexico.

Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University, Nova Southeastern University and the University of Miami have all received part of a $10 million block grant from BP.

FAU, NSU and FIU will be involved in four projects each and UM will be involved in three. The projects were selected by the Florida Institute of Oceanography, a consortium of 20 educational institutions throughout the state. Twenty-seven projects in total were funded.

Among the projects selected:

• FIU and Nova will use sharks and scavengers to assess the impact of oil exposure on sea ecosystems.

• FAU will research the impact of crude oil on three Gulf species. Resolving chemical properties and extent of crude oil and dispersant distribution in the Deep Horizon Oil Spill

• FAU, FIU and Nova will study the impact on marine sponge microbial communities.

• UM will join a team of institutions developing early warning remote sensing systems to assess threats to ecosystems.

"Given the magnitude and seriousness of the Deepwater Horizon spill, I'm very pleased that [Nova Southeastern University] researchers have had successful proposals funded by the BP block grant," said Richard E. Dodge, dean and executive director of NSU's National Coral Reef Institute. "We are making concerted efforts to better understand potential and actual impacts to our economically and biologically valuable marine ecosystems, such that we can be better prepared when spills reoccur."

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