



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.



2025 Cohort 3 FINAL REPORT



Gulf Blue Navigator Cohort 3

The Gulf Blue Navigator is a late-stage blue technology accelerator led by Gulf Blue and The University of Southern Mississippi, in partnership with Jackson State University (JSU). The program supports companies developing solutions in marine aquaculture, food security, climate resilience, and ocean and coastal technologies, with a focus on real-world demonstration and deployment along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Gulf Blue Navigator Cohort 3 took place over a five-month period beginning in late 2024 and concluding in spring 2025 with a public Demo Day. Throughout the cohort, participating companies engaged in structured programming, mentorship, and hands-on demonstrations designed to move proven technologies closer to market and real-world adoption.

Cohort Focus and Selection

Cohort 3 focused on later-stage blue technology companies working in food security, marine aquaculture, fisheries, and environmental data systems. The cohort selection process included broad outreach to potential applicants, a competitive review process, and final approval by an advisory committee. Selected companies registered to do business in Mississippi and committed to participating in both accelerator programming and applied demonstration activities.

Gulf Blue executed the program in partnership with JSU, with small business, Tek Annoa, supporting cohort management and startup engagement.

Program Activities and Demonstrations

During the cohort period, companies participated in a structured accelerator program while advancing demonstration projects tailored to Gulf Coast conditions. These activities emphasized operational testing, data collection, and engagement with potential end users, including industry partners, researchers, and public agencies.

Demonstration efforts focused on real-world applications in areas such as:

- Marine aquaculture production systems
- Autonomous and uncrewed surface vessels for meteorological and oceanographic data collection
- Digital tools for fisheries data and management
- Imaging and artificial intelligence applications for aquaculture operations

Rather than remaining in a classroom setting, cohort companies tested and refined their technologies in real environments, reinforcing Gulf Blue Navigator's focus on applied innovation.

Gulf Blue Innovation Week and Demo Day

The culmination of Cohort 3 activities took place during Gulf Blue Innovation Week, a multi-day series of events that brought together startups, university partners, government leaders, and ecosystem stakeholders on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Innovation Week included on-the-water demonstrations, site visits, and collaborative meetings designed to showcase Gulf Blue Navigator technologies and strengthen regional innovation partnerships. A key component of the week was Demo Day, where cohort companies shared their progress and experiences with a public audience.

Demo Day featured remarks from state and federal leaders, university leadership, and program partners, highlighting the role of applied research and entrepreneurship in advancing Mississippi's blue economy. Cohort companies presented summaries of their work and engaged directly with attendees, providing a clear picture of how their technologies address real-world challenges.

Partnerships and Ecosystem Development

Cohort 3 activities were closely tied to broader ecosystem-building efforts led by USM and its partners. During the same period, USM advanced significant investments in marine aquaculture and innovation infrastructure, including the development of a Marine Aquaculture Demonstration Center under the Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center.

The cohort and Innovation Week also strengthened collaboration among USM, JSU, and national partners, reinforcing shared approaches to translational research, mentorship, and workforce development. These partnerships help ensure that Gulf Blue Navigator companies are supported not only during the cohort period, but as they continue to grow and deploy their technologies.

Looking Ahead

Gulf Blue Navigator Cohort 3 demonstrated the value of combining accelerator programming with real-world demonstration, strong institutional partnerships, and public engagement. By the conclusion of the cohort and Demo Day, participating companies had advanced their technologies, built regional connections, and laid the groundwork for continued deployment and growth.

The Gulf Blue Navigator program continues to build on this momentum, supporting future cohorts and strengthening Mississippi's role as a hub for the blue economy, marine aquaculture, and coastal innovation.