Priority & Commitment To Plan Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Pensacola Bay Watershed Restoration

PROPORAL NUMBER

FL-1

LOCATION

Pensacola Bay Watershed within Florida

SPONSOR(S)

Florida

TYPE OF FUNDING REQUESTED (Planning, Technical Assistance, Implementation)

Planning/Technical Assistance/Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

Ebonye T. Allen

DATE:

27 January 2015

A. Comprehensive Plan Goals

Of the goals addressed by the proposal, which is the single primary goal?
Proposals should discuss how the proposed activity is designed to address the primary goal.
Check one:

- ○ Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity and resilience of key coastal, estuarine and marine habitats.
- ◉ Restore Water Quality – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine and marine waters.
- ○ Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse and sustainable living coastal and marine resources.
- ○ Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes.
- ○ Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

Notes:

The primary Comprehensive Plan goal addressed by the Pensacola Bay Watershed Restoration proposal is to restore water quality, with a complementary goal to restore and conserve habitats. This submission proposes to accomplish these ends by reducing excessive nutrients, and replenishing and protecting coastal and marine resources through restoration of key coastal and estuarine habitats.

The table in the "Other" section of the proposal (page 35) further describes the manner in which the proposal meets the RESTORE Council's Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives.

B. Comprehensive Plan Objectives

Proposals must clearly identify which objectives the proposal will address

1. Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated
- ( ) N/A

2. Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated
- ( ) N/A

3. Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated
- ( ) N/A

4. Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated
- ( ) N/A

Notes:

The table in the "Other" section of the proposal (page 35) further describes the manner in which the proposal meets the RESTORE Council's Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives.

8. Of these objectives which is the single primary objective the proposal addresses?

Check one:

- ○ Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats
- ◉ Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources
- ○ Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources
- ○ Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines
- ○ Promote Community Resilience
- ○ Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education
- ○ Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes

C. RESTORE Act and Comprehensive Plan Priority Criteria

All proposals must explain if the proposal addresses one or more of the priority criteria as established by the RESTORE Act and Initial Comprehensive Plan and, if so, how.

1. This project is projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

2. This is a large-scale project/program that is projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

3. This project is contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.

(●) YES ( ) NO

4. This project will restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

(●) YES ( ) NO

5. Promote Community Resilience

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

6. Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

Notes:

As stated in the proposal, the five projects will cumulatively contribute to the restoration and conservation of coastal ecosystem health, diversity, and resilience in the Pensacola Bay estuary – which covers over 144 square miles. The proposal will accomplish high priority water quality and habitat restoration actions identified in adopted restoration plans. These actions should directly enhance water quality, aquatic ecosystems, and associated riparian habitats to support the watershed's diverse habitats that support more than 200 species of fish and shellfish, including 70 identified rare, imperiled, or threatened animal species, including the Gulf sturgeon; and 68 rare, imperiled, or threatened plant species. While each individual project is relatively small in scope, collectively they contribute to large scale water quality and habitat restoration by reducing

D. Comprehensive Plan Commitments

All proposals must demonstrate how the proposal will achieve any or all of the commitments in the Comprehensive Plan. The commitments in the Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

Does the proposal articulate how it will achieve the following commitments in the comprehensive plan?

1. Science-based Decision-Making

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, the five projects proposed support restoration activities identified in adopted restoration plans for Pensacola Bay system, including the Pensacola Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan (Northwest Florida Water Management District, 1988), the Pensacola Bay Watershed Management Plan (West Florida Regional Planning Council, 2005), and the Bayou Chico Watershed Basin Management Action Plan (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2011). The implementation methodology for each of the five projects cite peer reviewed literature for the basis of project design and implementation.

2. Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, estuaries are important to the health of Florida's Gulf Coast, and align with the criteria and goals of the RESTORE Act directly. The sponsor notes that an estuarine restoration and watershed theme was used as a guide to developing these proposals. The five interrelated projects in this proposal seek to restore the Pensacola Bay ecosystem. It is a watershed based proposal combining both water quality and habitat projects. The projects leverage the extensive regional restoration work already underway including the Pensacola Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan, and Bayou Chico Watershed Basin Management Action Plan.

3. Engagement, Inclusion, and Transparency

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As described in the submission, Florida's proposals involved outreach activities including two public webinars, individual calls with the 23 Gulf Coast Counties, visits with state and federal agencies, discussions with nongovernmental organizations and other input received at numerous meetings hosted by others. Over 1200 project ideas have been submitted through a project submission portal maintained by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). The sponsor notes that each one of the projects in this proposal had its genesis from a submission to the portal and that FDEP will also provide a central location to access data and other information related to all of the projects in the proposal.

4. Leveraging Resources and Partnerships

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the submission, the proposal leverages and builds upon the more than $30 million in projects currently funded by Deepwater Horizon funding sources that address water quality and habitat restoration in this watershed. It also leverages more than $25 million in local funds invested in Bayou Chico. The Northwest Florida Water Management District will provide $425,000 to the Emerald Coast Utilities Authority to construct a ground storage tank, pump station, and associated piping, valves, and other system components to assist in expansion of the Pensacola Beach reclaimed water system. This proposal reflects the priorities and partnering of local governments, the Northwest Florida Water Management District and other stakeholders.

5. Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts

(●) YES ( ) NO

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, each of the projects have monitoring, success criteria, and reporting tailored to the project. For the living shoreline project measures, success will be judged based on the linear feet of shoreline constructed, acreage of marsh restored, water quality improvement, habitat extent, and habitat utilization. Success of the wastewater reuse project will be reflected by the decrease in pollutants discharged to Santa Rosa Sound and the increased use of reclaimed water. For Bayou Chico, project success will mean a reduction in excess levels of nitrogen, phosphorus discharged and a solidly planned, designed and permitted project to remove contaminated sediments. The proposal indicates that each project includes a monitoring plan to measure success and impacts.

E. Meeting Commitments and Tracking and Measuring Progress

1. Does the proposal articulate how it will meet and achieve its commitments?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

2. Does the proposal have a plan for tracking and measuring progress?

(●) YES ( ) NO

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, each of the projects have monitoring, success criteria, and reporting tailored to the specific project. For the living shoreline project measures, success will be judged based on the linear feet of shoreline constructed, acreage of marsh restored, water quality improvement, habitat extent, and habitat utilization. Success of the wastewater reuse project will be reflected by the decrease in pollutants discharged to Santa Rosa Sound and the increased use of reclaimed water. For Bayou Chico, the sponsor notes that project success would mean a reduction in excess levels of nitrogen, phosphorus discharged and a solidly planned, designed and permitted project to remove contaminated sediments. The proposal indicates that each project includes a monitoring plan to measure success and impacts.

F. Proposal Emphasis Areas

Does the submission describe how the proposed project or program addresses the following four considerations:

1. Is the proposed activity **foundational** in the sense that the project or program forms an initial core step (or steps) in addressing a significant ecosystem issue, and can future activities be tiered to substantially increase the benefits?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the submission, improved water quality and habitats help preserve priority habitats that multiple living resources rely on. The five projects in this proposal support restoration activities identified in adopted restoration plans for Pensacola Bay system, including the Pensacola Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan (Northwest Florida Water Management District, 1988), the Pensacola Bay Watershed Management Plan (West Florida Regional Planning Council, 2005), and the Bayou Chico Watershed Basin Management Action Plan (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2011). This proposal leverages and builds upon the more than $30 million in projects currently funded by Deepwater Horizon

2. Will the proposed activity be **sustainable** over time?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As the individual project summaries detail, each one is founded on scientific principles or other proven actions and methods that have achieved successful, measurable results. Each proposal project identifies the methodology, monitoring and adaptive management, measures of success, and risk and uncertainties. The two living shoreline projects will take place entirely on public lands. The risk of oyster harvesting at the living shoreline sites are low due to the intertidal location of the reefs. Weather conditions such as storm activity, high winds, and extremely low winter tides are factors that could affect project implementation and timeframe, as well as accessibility, but has been accounted for in the proposal. Both living shoreline

3. Is the proposed activity **likely to succeed**?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As described in the proposal, each project extends the benefits of projects and programs already proven successful in the watershed. For example, the lessons learned from the successful Project Greenshores are reflected in the two living shoreline projects, and project oversight will be performed by scientists that have experience with planning, construction, and monitoring of other successful living shoreline projects in the watershed. The wastewater reuse, stormwater and septic tank abatement projects will utilize existing technologies and designs that have been successfully utilized before.

4. Does the proposed activity **benefit** the human **community**?
(examples of benefits may include, but are not limited to: how a project will utilize local workers, how a project will benefit geographically or socially vulnerable communities, how a project will benefit the natural resources critical to natural-resource dependent industries such as fisheries, tourism, etc.)

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As indicated in the proposal, the local economy will benefit from the use of the local workers and businesses for planning, design, construction and future maintenance.