

## **State of Florida**

### **Northwest Florida Watershed**

Northwest Florida's major riverine-estuarine watersheds encompass 16 Florida counties, including the entirety of Florida's eight counties disproportionately affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Seven of the eight watersheds are interstate in character, and the overall drainage area extends over portions of 86 counties in Alabama and Georgia. This region encompasses a series of estuaries, including Perdido, Pensacola, Choctawhatchee, St. Andrew, St. Joseph, Apalachicola, Ochlockonee, and Apalachee bays and Santa Rosa Sound. These waterbodies support significant habitat diversity and productivity and include extensive seagrass communities, shellfish beds, and salt marshes, among other habitat types. The region also supports a series of unique coastal dune lakes and other endemic habitats. These resources and their watershed functions provide an array of important public benefits and help define the character and economies of the surrounding communities. This proposal will accomplish high priority near-term restoration and protection actions benefitting the region's estuaries and coastal watersheds while building an enduring foundation for continuing cooperation to protect and further restore watershed resources. These actions will directly enhance water quality, aquatic ecosystems, and associated wetland and riparian habitats within and along the northern Gulf of Mexico. This proposal includes four major components:

- 1) Comprehensive updates to watershed management plans for each of the region's major estuarine/riverine watersheds (\$645,000);
- 2) Design and permitting of identified priority projects (\$3,000,000);
- 3) Project implementation (\$12,000,000); and
- 4) Project monitoring (\$1,200,000).

Implementation will include urban stormwater retrofits and best management practices; restoration and enhancement of wetland, riparian, and floodplain habitats and functions; public outreach and engagement; and associated monitoring. The updated watershed plans will also assist in identifying and prioritizing needed improvements to wastewater treatment and management. An ongoing community-based watershed planning process will continue, building upon recent efforts of The Nature Conservancy and regional stakeholders to establish holistic watershed-based initiatives and identify priority issues and project options. This proposal leverages and builds upon the more than \$175 million in projects currently funded through other Deepwater Horizon funding sources that address water quality, habitat restoration, wildlife recovery and lost recreational uses (coastal resiliency) in the Panhandle. Requested funding amount: \$16,845,000.