

**Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council**  
**Summary of Funding Approval for Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline**  
**December 18, 2024**

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) has voted to approve \$1,564,636 in implementation and planning funds for the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline - Phase 1 project in Florida. Background on this funding approval is provided below. Before voting on whether to approve the funding, the Council requested stakeholder input during a 15-day public comment period which began on November 12, 2024 and concluded on November 27, 2024. The Council received no public comments.

**Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline - Phase 1 Project**

The Council has approved \$1,564,636 in implementation and planning funding for the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline - Phase 1 project, sponsored by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Most of this funding will be used by FDEP for implementation of this living shoreline project. Of this total, FDEP will use approximately \$43,800 to pay for the completion of planning activities necessary to move this project into the implementation phase. This funding comes from the RESTORE Act Council-Selected Restoration Component.

In 2015, the Council approved planning funds for this living shoreline project in Funded Priorities List (FPL) 1. These planning funds have been used by FDEP for engineering and design and permitting for the living shoreline project. FDEP is completing this planning work and is now in a position to initiate implementation of this project. The Pensacola Living Shoreline Phase I is a multi-phase living shoreline project that totals approximately 24,800 linear feet of rock and oyster reef breakwater and 205 acres of emergent marsh and submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) habitat. This component of the project is for the implementation and construction, engineering and inspections services for the project.

The environmental benefits of this living shoreline project include improved water quality, new oyster reef habitat, new emergent marsh habitat, and new SAV habitat for fish, shrimp, crabs, birds, sea turtles and other estuarine species. The shorelines will be stabilized with vegetation, wave energy will be attenuated by the offshore oyster reef breakwater, and shoreline erosion will be reduced to provide shoreline protection. Water quality benefits include reduced turbidity and increased water clarity resulting in increased light penetration for photosynthesis. Increased fishery production and increased fishery economic opportunities will be provided by the new fishery habitat created. The improvements to water quality will be important for ecotourism and recreational opportunities for visitors and local citizens. Additionally, socio-economic benefits include increased recreation and commercial fisheries production, increased shoreline and infrastructure protection, including protection of military assets at Naval Air Station Pensacola, increased property values for protected properties, and utilization of local engineering and construction work forces. Escambia County has identified an additional \$32.4 million to construct the project. Once underway, construction is expected to take 10 to 12 months to complete.

On October 24, 2024, the Naval Air Station Pensacola received Clean Water Act Section 404 and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act authorization under the Department of Army Permit SAJ-2019-01849. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council has adopted the October 9, 2024, Corps of Engineers Environmental Assessment (EA) for this permit. The permit and associated EA also address the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.