

State of Florida

Apalachicola Bay Watershed Restoration

Apalachicola Bay, located in the panhandle of Florida, lies at the terminus of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River system and is one of the most undeveloped and productive estuaries in the United States. Because of their importance, ecologically and economically, the river and bay have been designated in recognition of their status as environmentally sensitive resources, including: a National Estuarine Research Reserve, an Outstanding Florida Water, a Florida Aquatic Preserve, a Class II Shellfish Approved Waters, and an International Man and the Biosphere Program waterbody. This proposal includes six projects that will collectively replenish and protect coastal and marine resources by restoring key coastal habitats. In addition, the projects will restore water resources by reducing excessive nutrients, which will mitigate adverse impacts resulting from freshwater flow reductions and will also remediate local, historical alterations that, heretofore, the River and Bay ecosystem has been able to tolerate. These actions in turn will revitalize the local economy, which depends on oystering and other marine-based products as well as tourism, and promote resilience and sustainability of local communities throughout the Apalachicola Bay Watershed. These communities are defined by their oysterman families, who built the industry in the early twentieth century and are struggling to continue this heritage. Shellfish harvesting connects these communities to the Gulf, and oystermen continue to pass their skills on to the next generation. The six projects are:

1. Lower Apalachicola River Basin Restoration – Tate’s Hell State Forest (\$8,084,700)
2. Hydrological Restoration of the Apalachicola River and Box-R Wildlife Management Areas (\$7,642,383)
3. Money Bayou Wetlands Restoration (\$1,174,169)
4. Marsh and Oyster Reef Restoration at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (\$2,340,000)
5. Apalachicola Watershed Agriculture Water Quality Improvement (\$2,219,856)
6. Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration (\$4,680,000)

Three of the projects would improve the quality, quantity and timing of fresh water flows to the hydrologically impacted Apalachicola Bay watershed. A fourth project would construct over one mile of living shorelines within the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, using trained volunteers to assist in the activities associated with this restoration. A fifth would provide cost share funds to landowners to implement Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service water-quality-focused best management practices to improve the quality of discharge from agricultural operations to tributary streams and groundwater that drain to the Apalachicola River. The sixth project includes an expansion of the *Deepwater Horizon* NRDA Phase III early restoration oyster population rebuilding project that will restore more acres of natural oyster reefs through the addition of suitable substrate to support successful oyster spat settlement, and ultimately to provide adult oysters. These projects all leverage or build upon more than \$12 million in projects for the Bay that will be implemented with other Deepwater Horizon funding and Federal Disaster Assistance funds. Requested funding amount: \$26,141, 107.