Priority & Commitment To Plan Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Apalachicola Bay Watershed Restoration

PROPORAL NUMBER

FL-2

LOCATION

Apalachicola Watershed within Florida

SPONSOR(S)

Florida

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

Planning/Technical Assistance/Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

Ebonye T. Allen

DATE:

05 February 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 this proposal is restore and conserve habitats, with the complementary goal to restore water quality. The primary corresponding objective is to restore, enhance, and protect habitats, but the proposal will also restore, improve, and protect water resources. The six projects propose to collectively replenish and protect coastal and marine resources by restoring key coastal habitats and restore water resources by reducing excessive nutrients. These actions in turn can 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

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:

As articulated in the table in the "Other" section of the proposal on page 32, the proposed projects meet the Council's 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 detailed in the proposal, the six projects should cumulatively contribute to the restoration and conservation of coastal ecosystem health, diversity, and resilience in the Apalachicola Bay estuary and watershed. Apalachicola Bay, located in the panhandle of Florida, lies at the terminus of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River system. The bay serves as a nursery for ecologically and commercially important species, producing about 90% of the oysters harvested in the state of Florida (10% of the national total) as well as large catches of shrimp and blue crabs. 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

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 submission, the six projects in this proposal support restoration activities identified in adopted restoration plans for Apalachicola Bay system, including Apalachicola River and Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan (Northwest Florida Water Management District, 1996), the Tate's Hell State Forest Hydrologic Restoration Plan, and Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve management plan (ANERR 2014). The implementation methodology for each of the six projects in the proposal cite peer reviewed literature for the basis of project design and implementation (20 sources cited). All of the six proposals achieve science-based decision-making as discussed in each of the projects' background and implementation methodology section of the Proposal Narrative.

2. Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, because estuaries are so important to the health of Florida's Gulf Coast, and align with the criteria and goals of the RESTORE Act directly, Florida used an estuarine restoration and watershed theme as a guide to developing the FL proposals. This watershed based proposal combines water quality, water quantity, and habitat restoration projects.
The proposal represents a large-scale, regional approach to solving water resource and habitat threats to the Florida Gulf Coast by improving water quality and quantity in the bay through hydrologic improvements by reconnecting flow pathways

3. Engagement, Inclusion, and Transparency

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As described in the submission, Florida's proposals involved extensive 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). FL notes that each one of the projects in this proposal had its genesis from a submission to the portal.
FDEP indicates in the proposal that it will provide a central location to access data and other information related to all of

4. Leveraging Resources and Partnerships

◉ YES ◯ NO ◯ Not articulated

Notes:

As stated in the submission, this proposal leverages and builds upon the more than $12 million in oyster related projects for the Bay that will be implemented with other Deepwater Horizon funding and Federal Disaster Assistance funds. It also leverages investment made by the Northwest Florida Water Management District and the Florida Forest Service to improve the hydrology on portions of Tate's Hell State Forest. To date more than $1.57 million in hydrologic improvements have been made, including installing 49 low water crossings, modifying 51 culverts, removing 13.4 miles of roads, blocking 106 ditches and installing 3 bridges. The proposed Agriculture Water Quality Improvement project is a cost-share with landowners.
Specific partnerships for each of the six projects in this proposal are included in the narrative portion of the proposal

5. Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts

◉ YES ◯ NO

Notes:

As described in the proposal, each of the projects have monitoring, success criteria, and reporting tailored to the project. For the living shoreline project measures of success will be judged based on the linear feet of shoreline constructed and acreage of marsh restored. The three hydrologic restoration projects success criteria propose to include improved water levels and hydroperiods; re-establishment of historical surface water drainage patterns; and enhanced estuarine water quality. Vegetation success criteria include parameters to gauge the increase in desirable vegetation or target species and decreases in undesirable vegetation. For the Agriculture Water Quality Improvement project measure of success

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:

See notes in Section D5 above; also see the Proposal Narrative sections on Monitoring and adaptive management for each proposal project.

As noted in the Data / Information Sharing Plan section of the proposal, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection will provide a central location to access data and other information related to all of the projects in the proposal. In addition, all data and information developed and compiled through the Northwest Florida Water Management District's SWIM program is publicly available. Completion reports and monitoring data will be made available to the Gulf Coast

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 stated in the proposal, the projects will improved water quality and habitats that help preserve priority habitats that multiple living resources rely on. The six projects propose to support restoration activities identified in adopted restoration plans for Apalachicola Bay. The projects can protect high quality onsite coastal wetlands which are nationally declining types. Hydrologic improvements will reconnect flow pathways severed by past forestry, rehydrate significant acreage of altered wetlands, restore a mix of native ecological communities, and improve water quality and estuarine habitat conditions. This proposal leverages and builds upon the more than $12 million in oyster related projects for the Bay that

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

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As the individual project summaries describe, each one is founded on scientific principles or other proven actions and methods that have achieved successful, measurable results. Five of the six projects in the proposal will take place entirely on public lands. Each proposal project identifies the implementation methodology, monitoring and adaptive management, measures of success, and risk and uncertainties. The identification of these elements increases the sustainability of the projects over time.

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

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the submission, each project extends the benefits of projects and programs already proven successful in the watershed. As with any project there is a certain amount of uncertainty. However, the projects proposed use known and accepted methods, including monitoring and adaptive management practices.

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 detailed in the submission, the proposal projects would benefit the human community by protecting water quality and healthy, diverse, sustainable living coastal marine resources required to have a productive oyster reef habitat. This will realize economic benefits through harvesting, processing, and marketing fishery products. The local economy should benefit from the use of local work forces and businesses for planning, design, construction and future maintenance.