

**Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Summary of Council Funding Approval
Highway 297a Retrofit Pond Project
September 25, 2024**

On September 25, 2024, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) voted to approve \$1,000,000 in implementation funds for the Highway 297a Retrofit Pond project, a component of the FPL 3b [Florida Water Quality Improvement Program](#). Background on this funding approval is provided below. Before voting on whether to approve funding, the Council requested stakeholder input during a 30-day public comment period which began on July 18, 2024. A summary of comments received, and the Council's responses can be found [here](#).

Background:

Pursuant to the *Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012* (RESTORE Act), the Council is responsible for administering portions of *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill settlement funds for the purpose of restoring the environment and economy of the Gulf coast. The Council administers two funding programs, one of which is the Council-Selected Restoration Component, or "Bucket 2." Under Bucket 2, the Council votes to approve Gulf ecosystem restoration projects and programs proposed by the Council members. Bucket 2 projects and programs approved for funding by the Council are included in what is called a Funded Priorities List (FPL).

FPLs include activities in two categories. Category 1 activities are approved for Bucket 2 funding. Such approval requires a Council vote as set forth in the RESTORE Act. To be approved in Category 1, a project or program must have documentation demonstrating that all applicable environmental laws have been addressed. For example, a construction project would need documentation demonstrating compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable laws.

Category 2 activities are Council priorities for potential future funding but are not currently approved for funding. As appropriate, the Council reviews the activities in Category 2 in order to determine whether to move the given activity to Category 1 and approve it for funding via a Council vote. Such funding approvals are done via amendments to the FPL containing the given project(s) or program(s). FPL amendments are also required for other changes to listed projects (e.g., material changes in scope or cost, transfer of sponsorship to another Council member). The project that is the subject of this FPL amendment is described below.

Highway 297a Retrofit Pond Project Summary

The Council has approved \$1,000,000 for implementation of the Highway (HWY) 297a Retrofit Pond project, located in Escambia County, Florida and sponsored by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). These implementation funds were budgeted in Category 2 of the Council's FPL 3b as part of the Florida Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP).

The HWY 297a Retrofit Pond Project is consistent with the WQIP goal of improving water quality and quantity by funding the construction of a retrofit stormwater pond in the Eleven Mile Creek Watershed which covers approximately 22,000 acres in west central Escambia County. The HWY 297a Retrofit Pond is one of multiple stormwater retrofit ponds identified in the watershed. It is an existing dry detention pond which serves the Glenmoor Trail Subdivision. The existing dry detention pond was designed to accommodate the 25-year 1- and 2-hour storm events under a now obsolete Escambia County stormwater management requirement. The HWY 297a Retrofit Pond will be expanded to provide a total of 145,461 cubic feet of treatment volume representing a 40% increase in stormwater quality over the current pond conditions. Biosorption Activated Media (BAM), such as Bold and Gold, are engineered filtration media developed to remove total nitrogen, total phosphorus, total suspended solids, and pathogens from polluted water. BAM was added in the pond retrofit design and maintains an anaerobic environment to activate the biological reaction that is needed to remove nitrogen, and the adsorption process to remove phosphorus. The proposed expansion of the Glenmoor Trail subdivision pond will allow the pond to better attenuate stormwater discharge rates to Eleven Mile Creek and brings the facility into alignment with current Escambia County stormwater management requirements. The project is expected to provide water quality improvements, reduced downstream flow rates, reduced flooding, and coastal flood protection.

To comply with NEPA, the Council is using a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Categorical Exclusion which covers activities such as this project. FDEP has also completed additional environmental compliance coordination for the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Division of Historical Resources. This environmental compliance documentation can be found [here](#).

To learn more about the RESTORE Council visit us at www.restorethegulf.gov or send questions to restorecouncil@restorethegulf.gov.