

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Summary of Council Funding Approval Vote
July 29, 2026

On July 29, 2026, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) voted to approve additional funding for the ongoing Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline Phase 1 implementation project in Escambia County, Florida. Specifically, the Council voted to approve \$748,010 in additional funding to cover construction, engineering, and inspection costs associated with sand excavation and signage requirements for this living shoreline project. Background on this approval is provided below.

Before voting on whether to approve the funding, the Council requested public comment over a 15-day period beginning on June 18, 2026 and concluding on July 3, 2026. The Council received three public comments, all supporting the living shoreline project. The Council appreciates the public support for this project. One commenter recommended the Council consider alternative funding sources to cover the budget shortfall. The Council strongly supports maximizing restoration impact through leveraging multiple funding sources. RESTORE Council funding for the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline project is extensively leveraged through investments from the Naval Air Station Pensacola, State, and other federal partners. In the present case, however, the most expedient way to complete ongoing project construction is to use readily available Council funding from the Florida Gulf Coast Resiliency Program, which was specifically established to fund projects such as this living shoreline.

Background:

Pursuant to the *Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012* (33 U.S.C. § 1321(t) and *note*) (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. Under this funding program, the Council votes to approve Gulf ecosystem restoration projects and programs proposed by the Council members. Council-Selected Restoration Component projects and programs approved for funding by the Council are included in what is referred to as a Funded Priorities List (FPL). Separate FPLs may be numbered, as in the FPL referred to here as FPL 3b.

FPLs include activities in two categories. Category 1 activities are approved for 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).

Description of Funding Approval

Prior to the July 29, 2026 vote, the Council had approved \$1,795,950 in FPL funding for planning and implementation of the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline Phase 1 project, 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. At the time of the July 2026 vote, construction of this project was nearing completion, but there were additional expenses not covered in the existing budget. Florida, the sponsor of this project, requested an additional \$748,010 to cover construction, engineering, and inspection costs associated with sand excavation and signage requirements at one of the project's three sites (i.e., Site B- Naval Air Station Eastern Shore/Magazine Point). The Council voted to reallocate the above amount from FPL Category 2 funds originally budgeted for the FPL3b Florida Gulf Coast Resiliency Program, a program which is designed to fund projects such as this living shoreline. The Council has addressed [environmental compliance requirements](#) for the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline Phase 1 project; thus no additional environmental compliance documentation was needed for this approved funding reallocation.

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