PENSACOLA
& PERDIDO BAYS
ESTUARY PROGRAM

Colten Wright, Chair
Jared Moore, Vice Chair

Board of Directors Meeting

August 27, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. CT
City of Pensacola Council Chambers
222 West Main Street, Pensacola, FL 32502

1. **Call to Order**

2. **Roll Call**

3. **Public Comment**

4. **Approval of Board Agenda**
   Recommend the Board approve the August 27, 2025, meeting agenda.

5. **Action Items**
   a. **Approval of FY 2025-26 PPBEP Community Grant Program Project Proposals**
   Recommend the Board accept the Community Grant Review Committee's recommended project slate for the FY 2025-26 PPBEP Community Grant Program, in the amount of $250,000, and authorize the Executive Director to execute grant agreements with each grantee.

6. **Board Updates**

7. **Public Comment**

8. **Adjourn**

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Agenda Item 5.a.

Approval of FY 2025-26 PPBEP Community Grant Program Project Proposals

Background: Funded through PPBEP's annual Legislative Appropriation, the Community Grant Program is now in its sixth year of operation. To date, the Community Grant Program has awarded $1,175,000 across 42 projects, ranging from research to education to restoration.

For FY25-26, $250,000 has been allocated to the Community Grant Program from PPBEP's annual Legislative Appropriation. PPBEP issued a voluntary pre-application on March 3, 2025 with voluntary pre-applications due on April 1, 2025. PPBEP issued the Request for Proposals (RFP) on July 1, 2025 with submittals due on July 31, 2025. The RFP was announced through a press release, newsletter, website, and PPBEP social media channels. The RFP outlines specific categories, selection criteria, eligibility, etc. The award floor was set at $10,000 and award ceiling at $75,000.

Seventeen applications were submitted, and sixteen applications were deemed to be eligible. The Review Committee convened on August 22, 2025 to rank and recommend applications to the Board for award. The Review Committee was comprised of the following individuals: Kate Dawson (Technical Committee Chair; Moffatt & Nichol), Paul Looney (Technical Committee Vice Chair; WRA), Bethanne Edwards (Education and Outreach Committee; Innisfree Hotels), Shannon McGlynn (Education and Outreach Committee; Alabama Department of Environmental Management), Christian Wagley (Healthy Gulf), Alison McDowell (Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance), and PPBEP staff in an advisory capacity.

By unanimous consent, the Review Committee recommended the enclosed slate of projects. These projects will advance actions in PPBEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy, and Education and Outreach Strategy.

Please note, the Committee's recommendation for project selection will be distributed under separate cover on Monday, August 25th. Backup will include the recommended project slate, amounts, and the Committee's scoring rubric.

Recommendation: Recommend the Board accept the Community Grant Review Committee's recommended project slate for the FY 2025-26 PPBEP Community Grant Program, in the amount of $250,000, and authorize the Executive Director to execute grant agreements with each grantee.

Financial Impact: This action will encumber $250,000 in the Grant Account and is funded through Florida DEP Agreement No. L0099.

Legal Review: N/A

Organization	Project Name	Amount Requested	Project Location	Project Approach	CCMP Alignment
Bluffline	Bluffline Chimney Park Enhancement	$ 74,322.00	Pensacola, Escambia County	Restoration, Education & Outreach	Habitat Restoration, Watershed Awareness and Education, Resilience
City of Milton	University of West Florida and City of Milton Water Quality and Stream Remediation Partnership	$ 47,932.50	City of Milton, Santa Rosa County	Research, Education & Outreach, Participatory Science	Water Quality, Sedimentation, Watershed Awareness and Education, Resilience, Participatory Science
Escambia County - Acoustic Technology	Multi-Species Monitoring Through Acoustic Technology	$ 58,907.20	Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa counties	Research, Education & Outreach, Participatory Science	Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Participatory Science
Escambia County - Nursery	Jones Swamp Creek Heritage Center Greenhouse	$ 27,968.00	Pensacola, Escambia County	Restoration, Education & Outreach	Water Quality, Sedimentation, Habitat Restoration, Watershed Awareness and Education, Resilience
Escambia County - Waterways Access & Adventure Guide	The EscaRosa "Waterways Access and Adventure Guide"	$ 32,714.00	Escambia, Santa Rosa counties	Education & Outreach	Watershed Awareness and Education
Girl Scouts	STEM in the WILD!	$ 10,000.00	Pensacola, Escambia County	Education & Outreach	Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Watershed Awareness and Education, Participatory Science
Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation (IIPF)	Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation (IIPF) Shoreline Restoration	$ 75,000.00	Pensacola, Escambia County	Restoration, Education & Outreach	Habitat Restoration, Watershed Awareness and Education, Resilience
Mississippi State Univeristy	Voices of the Bay	$ 71,445.00	Escambia, Santa Rosa counties	Education & Outreach	Habitat Restoration, Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Watershed Awareness and Education, Participatory Science
NWFSC	Gaining Insights into Pensacola Bay's Emerging Snook Populations	$ 65,828.81	Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa counties	Research, Participatory Science	Habitat Restoration, Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Participatory Science
Pensacola MESS Hall	Walk in the Watershed Show and Exhibit	$ 13,574.00	Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Baldwin counties	Education & Outreach	Watershed Awareness and Education
Univeristy of Florida	ReSeed Pensacola Bay	$ 44,419.00	Pensacola, Gulf Breeze, Pensacola Beach, and Milton in Santa Rosa and Escambia counties	Research, Restoration, Education & Outreach, Participatory Science	Water Quality, Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Watershed Awareness and Education, Participatory Science
Santa Rosa Band of Lower Muscogee (SRBLM)	The Creek Heritage Center Nature Walk and Learning Grove	$ 15,730.00	Pensacola, Escambia County	Education & Outreach	Habitat Restoration, Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Watershed Awareness and Education, Resilience
Santa Rosa County Master Gardener Association (SRCMGA)	Water, Pollinators and a Food Forest!	$ 10,000.00	Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton Counties	Education & Outreach	Water Quality, Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Watershed Awareness and Education
UWF - Bogantes	Tracking Marsh Health with DNA: A Framework for Science, Education, and Coastal Resilience	$ 44,528.50	Pensacola, Escambia County and Santa Rosa County	Research, Education & Outreach	Habitat Restoration, Watershed Awareness and Education
UWF - Croteau	Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Ichthyoplankton and Larval Bivalve Distribution in the Pensacola Bay System	$ 65,644.16	Pensacola Bay system and Santa Rosa Sound in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties	Research	Water Quality, Habitat Restoration, Fish and Wildlife Conservation
Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida (WSNWFL)	The Shorebird Shelter: A Safer Space to Roost	$ 49,670.34	Pensacola, Escambia County	Restoration, Education & Outreach	Habitat Restoration, Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Watershed Awareness and Education

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PPBEP 2025-2026 Community Grant Applicant Summaries

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Bluffline Chimney Park Enhancement	Bluffline	$74,322

Summary: The Bluffline Chimney Park Enhancement Project will transform a small but highly visible waterfront park in Pensacola, Florida into a model for low-cost, community-driven restoration and education. Chimney Park is currently the only public access point to Escambia Bay along the Pensacola Scenic Bluffs Corridor—but it suffers from poor visibility, litter, invasive vegetation, and underinvestment.

This project will address those issues through four phases of work over 12 months. Bluffline, Inc., in partnership with the City of Pensacola and Halff Associates, will engage the public in co-designing and implementing a series of low-impact interventions. These include invasive species removal, installation of native vegetation, interpretive signage with QR code integration, pedestrian counters, and improved amenities such as recycling stations and bike infrastructure.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
University of West Florida and City of Milton Water Quality and Stream Remediation Partnership	City of Milton	$47,932.50

Summary: The City of Milton, in partnership with the University of West Florida, proposes a collaborative project to restore and enhance a stormwater connected tributary and stream system feeding into the Blackwater River, an Outstanding Florida Water. The project will address severe sedimentation, unmanaged street and recreational water runoff, and wetland overgrowth, which are degrading water quality and increasing direct untreated discharges into the river.

By leveraging academic expertise, local knowledge, and a science-driven approach, the project aims to identify sources and pathways of sediment, clarify ownership and maintenance responsibilities of the stream, perform comprehensive water and soil quality assessments of the stream, and develop a community-supported remediation and restoration plan for the Blackwater River associated stream.

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Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Multi-Species Monitoring Through Acoustic Technology	Escambia County	$58,907.20

Summary: The northwest Florida region offers a variety of ecosystems to serve as habitats for many threatened and endangered species and species of special interest. Multiple institutions have active research and monitoring projects to answer questions regarding population status, habitat use, ecosystem health, and movement ecology in this region. Understanding species movement ecology through telemetry monitoring can fill data gaps regarding habitat use, connectivity, population status, and provide insights into diet and ecosystem health. Acoustic telemetry projects are ongoing in Northwest Florida. Acoustic receivers have been deployed in multiple waterways as single receivers or as arrays for fine-scale monitoring. Despite the ongoing telemetry efforts, there are still significant gaps in the acoustic arrays for this region. A larger acoustic array will support multi-species projects, including the diamondback terrapin monitoring efforts. Continued efforts are needed to assess population status, habitat use, and movement ecology of diamondback terrapins. Monitoring efforts will be expanded through routine trapping stents for mark & recapture studies, genetic sampling, and telemetry tagging of terrapins. These efforts will continue to fill critical data gaps in the status of diamondback terrapins in this region.
Escambia County is requesting $58,907.20 to expand acoustic telemetry monitoring and support the Panhandle Terrapin Project in Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa counties in partnership with USGS and Florida Sea Grant/IFAS Extension. Grant funds will be used to fill critical data gaps for multiple species, support the Panhandle Terrapin Project monitoring efforts, and develop education and outreach materials for terrapins and acoustic monitoring.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Jones Swamp Creek Heritage Center Greenhouse	Escambia County	$27,968

Summary: Escambia County Natural Resources Management is seeking funding to restore a native plant greenhouse and construct an outdoor planting area to support shoreline restoration and native plant propagation. Located at the Creek Heritage Center on County-owned property leased to the Santa Rosa Band of the Lower Muscogee Inc., the greenhouse will be used to grow native vegetation for use in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Watersheds. Franklin's Promise Coalition, a regional AmeriCorps partner, will contribute labor, materials, and technical support. Through the Opportunity Youth Service Initiative, marginalized youth trained in plant propagation and ecosystem restoration will lead hands-on efforts in plant care and construction. The project will produce 10,000 native plants for the County over 3 years, with 2,000 produced in 2026. The greenhouse initiative will promote ecological resilience, environmental education, and workforce development across the region.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
The EscaRosa "Waterways Access and Adventure Guide"	Escambia County	$32,714

Summary: Numerous waterway resources, such as access points and various adventures, are available to the public within Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. These resources are provided by government agencies or businesses which are advertised on those organizations' own platforms. Here, we propose to establish a "Waterways Access and Adventures Guide" to highlight the many resources our waterways offer through an interactive online web version and through print versions to be distributed around the counties. Resources include access points (i.e. boat ramps, public beaches, kayak/canoe launches), adventures (i.e. fishing piers, snorkeling sites, artificial reefs), historical sites, safety consideration (i.e. water quality, no wake zones, vessel exclusion zones), and natural resources (i.e. wildlife, seagrass beds, critical habitats). Currently, there is no single comprehensive guide to the various adventures and resources our waterways offer. This guide would allow for locals and tourists to identify, plan, and safely participate in their adventure by providing the necessary information in one place. To encourage locals to learn about our waterways and their resources, an educational curriculum will be provided to local schools and youth organizations. The curriculum will be designed to target all age ranges including information on the health & safety, adventures, best practices for activities, research, restoration, wildlife, stewardship, historical and cultural significances and more. Escambia County Marine Advisory Committee will host a Waterway Resources Awareness Symposium inviting agencies and researchers to speak to the general public on topics for water quality, habitats, and wildlife (threatened & endangered species/ species of concern).

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
STEM in the WILD!	Girl Scouts	$10,000

Summary: Girl Scouts of Gateway Council will deliver a full-day, immersive environmental STEM experience for 50 girls in grades 4–8 during our annual regional STEM Camp. This hands-on program invites girls to step beyond the classroom and into nature, where they will explore local ecosystems, investigate environmental issues, and engage with real-world science through a series of interactive learning stations.

Through a structured rotation of activities led by STEM professionals, participants will examine the biological adaptations of native plants and animals, conduct water quality testing, observe estuarine habitats, and explore the interdependence of living systems. This experiential learning brings key scientific concepts to life, while deepening understanding of local conservation challenges and the role healthy ecosystems play in community well-being.

By the end of the day, girls will have developed a broader understanding of ecology, biodiversity, and human-environment interactions, as well as personal insight into how they can contribute to conservation in their own communities. This program supports multiple PPBEP action areas, including Fish and Wildlife Conservation, Watershed Awareness and Education, and Participatory Science, while advancing the goals of the Education & Outreach Strategy to provide equitable, high-impact environmental learning experiences. All program costs (transportation, meals, supplies) are covered to eliminate barriers to access. Girls will complete a field journal, earn a STEM badge and patch, and walk away inspired to care for—and protect—the natural world around them.

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Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation Shoreline Restoration	Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation	$75,000

Summary: This project will mitigate the effects of coastal erosion along the southern and western shorelines of Innerarity Island, centrally located and critical to the health of Perdido Bay.

Oyster reefs and vegetation sills as near shore breakwaters will be installed along 500 linear feet of Innerarity Island's shoreline to absorb wave energy and control shoreline erosion. The resulting creation of habitat for small fish and crustaceans will support game fish and shorebirds. The 500-foot reef of oysters will provide uninterrupted natural filtration service to Perdido Bay, our community's greatest natural gem, which is plagued by pervasive pollution from industrial plants, landfills, septic tanks, and more.

Installation of oyster reefs and vegetation sills as near shore breakwaters is a proven cost-effective intervention, offering a nature-based alternative to traditional hard structures like seawalls and improving the overall health of coastal ecosystems.

The shoreline area to be restored sits in the heart of Perdido Bay. It is home to many species of plant and animal life and features public beaches enjoyed by many boaters and community members. Over time, mature stock from the oyster reefs may be harvested, their shells used as material to extend or construct other reefs, while offering research and educational opportunities to local scientists and nutrition to community members through partnerships with local restaurants. This project will protect the biodiversity and environmental health of Innerarity Island and the entire Perdido Bay for generations to come.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Voices of the Bay	Mississippi State University	$71,445
Summary: A series of short documentary films will be produced to increase public awareness of actionable conservation activities in the Pensacola and Perdido Bays system watersheds, the individual motivations of those who volunteer their time and effort engaging these actions, and the connections between individual actions and collective results among the issues that impact the watersheds and their rich ecosystems.		

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Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Gaining Insights into Pensacola Bay's Emerging Snook Populations	Northwest Florida State College	$65,828.81

Summary: The project will focus on expanding our knowledge of the range expansion of Common Snook, hereafter Snook, into the Pensacola Bay system. It will focus on four main aspects including a community science fin clip program, angler survey, juvenile habitat sampling, and acoustic tagging of larger individuals. The community science fin clip portion will expand an ongoing program utilizing local anglers to collect fin clips for genetic samples, increasing our overall number of genetics samples collected from the region. These samples may help identify the source population(s) of our local Snook (e.g., Texas vs west Florida). The angler survey will assess the knowledge and perceptions of local anglers regarding Snook in the region. It will include questions related to local Snook distributions, Snook regulations, and perceptions of a developing Snook fishery. The juvenile habitat sampling aims to better define what areas of the Pensacola Bay system are being utilized by juvenile and sub-adult Snook. This will be done by using bag seines and cast nets to target likely juvenile nursery habitat (tidal creeks, ponds, residential canals, and other backwater areas). Acoustic tagging and telemetry will help uncover annual movement patterns (into open water areas for potential spawning, overwintering areas, etc.) of larger individuals in the Pensacola Bay system. Hook-and-line, electrofishing, cast nets, and other methods will be used to target fish for tagging. Collectively this will improve the overall knowledge of this species in our region and aid in their management.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Walk in the Watershed Show and Exhibit	Pensacola MESS Hall	$13,574

Summary: The Pensacola MESS Hall proposes to share the importance of our local estuaries with public audiences. To reach a broad audience, we will travel to summer library programs to present the Walk In The Watershed show. Through this effort we will engage children and their caregivers in understanding the flora and fauna and how humans impact the environment. We will present the program at rural and urban libraries, reaching across the community, reaching about 900 people.

In addition, we will install an immersive exhibit at the MESS Hall. We will upgrade some of our existing exhibits to enhance the learning as well as convert some facilitated activities into exhibits. We will engage local artists to install elements to enhance the sense of place, to include images of local life. We anticipate that during the first summer of the grant 3500 will engage with the exhibit. During the school year, we expect 6000 visitors, including students who come on a field trip.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
ReSeed Pensacola Bay	University of Florida	$44,419

Summary: Historically, the bay scallop (Argopecten irradians) was abundant in the lower Pensacola Bay system. However, populations collapsed approximately 60 years ago, leading to the closure of recreational harvest in the region. Similar declines occurred across other estuaries along Florida's Gulf Coast, restricting harvest primarily to the Big Bend counties. Increasing pressure on remaining populations has sparked renewed interest in restoring scallops to estuarine systems where they once thrived.

Despite this collapse, anecdotal sightings of A. irradians in Pensacola Bay have persisted. In response, Florida Sea Grant launched the Scallop Search in 2015, a participatory science program that enlists trained volunteers to survey historical seagrass habitats. Over a decade, the program has consistently documented low scallop densities, with a notable increase observed in 2024.

The ReSeed Pensacola Bay initiative aims to accelerate natural recovery using locally sourced A. irradians. Scallops collected from the bay will be spawned in a regional hatchery to produce pediveliger larvae. These hatchery-reared scallops will be released into suitable seagrass habitats to enhance recruitment. A subset of the seed will also be held in predator-exclusion cages at private docks to monitor growth and survivorship.
Genetic analysis of scallops collected by Scallop Search volunteers will inventory haplotype diversity in both hatchery-released and naturally occurring individuals. These data will help determine if haplotypic changes occur over time, providing insight into restoration success. If successful, this project could mark a turning point in the ecological recovery of A. irradians in Pensacola Bay and support future discussions on sustainable recreational harvest.

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Project Name	Applicant	Requested
The Creek Heritage Center Nature Walk and Learning Grove	Santa Rosa Band of Lower Muscogee	$15,730

Summary: The Creek Heritage Center Nature Walk and Learning Grove Project will create an immersive outdoor educational experience that blends Native American perspectives on environmental stewardship with modern ecological science. Designed for school-aged children, the project will deepen understanding of the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary, a watershed sacred to Creek ancestors.

Grant funding will support the design and installation of interpretive signage, benches, native plantings, a walk-over bridge, and an outdoor classroom known as the Learning Grove. A split rail fence will be installed around the pond to ensure the safety of students and visitors while maintaining the site's natural aesthetic.

The Nature Walk will illustrate the interconnectedness of humans and the estuarine ecosystem, emphasizing how plants and animals sustain both environmental and human health. Culturally relevant signage will integrate Creek traditional ecological knowledge, tracing the historical shift from sustainable use to overexploitation and today's efforts to restore resilience and balance.

The Learning Grove, shaded by majestic Oaks, will host guided tours, cultural demonstrations, and hands-on conservation activities. Students will engage with native plants, wildlife, and watershed processes, reinforcing Creek values of respect, reciprocity, and care for land and water.

By presenting history and ecology together, the project will show that conservation is not new but a continuation of ancestral Creek values. This immersive experience will inspire students to see themselves as part of the earth's living systems, encouraging future generations to protect the estuary while honoring Native stewardship.

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Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Water, Pollinators and a Food Forest!	Santa Rosa County Master Gardener Association	$10,000

Summary: The Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) provide education to County residents regarding lawns, landscape, and gardens using the Florida Friendly Landscaping model developed by The University of Florida (UF).

Butterflies in Motion (BIM, $5,000) and World of Water (WOW, $1,500) are mobile interactive learning environments reaching large audiences of approximately 4,000 people of all ages each year. Their curriculums were developed in conjunction with Extension agents and are already proctored by MGV's.

Purchase of these programs by the Santa Rosa County MGV brings those learning environments under the auspices of UF's Extension Service. Expanding audience reach for MGV's, and providing institutional backing to BIM/WOW.

The intent is to combine these programs as the "Pollinator Roadshow." Under this curriculum, all pollinator species will be highlighted emphasizing habitat creation. Additionally, landscape best management practices will taught, utilizing the Enviroscape model as a visual representation of their affects to waterways.

Program management including transport, financial support, and maintenance will be handled via the MGV program and Residential Horticulture Agent position.

The remainder of the grant ($3,500) will provide improvement to our demonstration gardens with the addition of a "Food Forest". This project means to demonstrate how forest ecology may be used to produce wood and food products. The secondary purpose being a demonstration of forest management where fire is unavailable.

All these programs are aimed at educating the public to maintain healthy environments capable of utilizing excess nutrition, creating habitat for wildlife species, and providing stormwater mitigation to protect our local watershed.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Tracking Marsh Health with DNA: A Framework for Science, Education, and Coastal Resilience	University of West Florida	$44,528.50

Summary: Salt marshes are essential to coastal health, supporting wildlife, protecting shorelines, and filtering water. While restoration projects are expanding across the Pensacola and Perdido Bay region, a key question remains: to what degree do restored marshes mirror the biodiversity and resilience of natural systems? This project will use cutting-edge DNA techniques to evaluate how well restored salt marshes compare to natural ones. By studying tiny sediment-dwelling organisms like marine worms and clams who are important indicators of ecosystem health, we will assess biodiversity and identify signs of functional recovery. A total of 96 sediment samples will be collected from three restored and three natural marshes across two seasons. Both traditional and DNA-based methods will be used to analyze community structure and identify species that can serve as long-term indicators for restoration success. In addition to generating data that can improve wetland monitoring and management, this project will engage the public through education and outreach. Two short video lectures, aligned with Florida science standards, will be created for use in middle and high school classrooms. In-person school visits will provide hands-on experiences with marine invertebrates and scientific tools, while public talks will share findings in accessible formats for community members and local decision-makers.

By combining innovative science with education and outreach, this project supports data-driven restoration and builds public understanding and stewardship of our coastal ecosystem.

Project Name	Applicant	Requested
Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Ichthyoplankton and Larval Bivalve Distribution in the Pensacola Bay System	University of West Florida	$65,644.16

Summary: Estuarine ichthyoplankton, the early life stages of fish (larvae and eggs) found in estuaries, and larval bivalves (oysters, mussels, clams, etc.) are important components of estuaries. These stages are crucial to understanding the health and resiliency of estuarine ecosystems as they are highly sensitive to environmental change and their survival and recruitment into the adult population is necessary for thriving fisheries. The abundance and distribution of ichthyoplankton and larval bivalves can vary significantly, both spatially and temporally due to factors such as currents, connectivity barriers, tidal cycles, salinity, and spawning seasons. Our proposed project has three main components: an ichthyoplankton survey, larval bivalve survey, and water quality sampling. We will conduct monthly paired net tows at seven locations throughout the bay system for larval dispersal into the upper reaches of the estuary. One of the paired samples will be used for visual identification of larval fish and the other will be used for bivalve monitoring. At each sampling location we will conduct an ambient vertical water profile and collect a surface and bottom water sample for the analysis of nutrients, chlorophyll-a, total suspended solids and color. No previous studies on larval fish distributions have been published within the Pensacola Bay system. This study would provide a baseline for the community assemblages of ichthyoplankton and larval bivalves. This is important information for understanding recruitment dynamics, establishing a baseline for assessing change, and may also provide evidence for local spawning of species of concern and range expanding species.

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Project Name	Applicant	Requested
The Shorebird Shelter: A Safer Space to Roost	Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida	$49,670.34

Summary: Our shorelines tell stories of resilience, renewal, and the delicate balance between people and place. At our wildlife sanctuary, a small group of permanently injured native shorebirds, including Brown Pelicans and a Great Blue Heron, serve as storytellers and ecosystem ambassadors. With support from the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program, we seek to transform their existing enclosure into a naturalized habitat that not only enhances their welfare, but also deepens public understanding of the ecosystems that sustain them.

This project will expand and restore the enclosure to better reflect the coastal environment these birds once called home. Native plantings will provide shelter, enrichment, and a living demonstration of the role native vegetation plays in shoreline health and estuarine resilience. The habitat will become a year-round teaching tool and public-facing restoration effort that fosters environmental literacy and inspires stewardship.

In addition, this investment will support the removal of invasive tilapia from the pond adjacent to the enclosure, a section of Bayou Chico isolated by a weir. Volunteers will humanely remove the fish using cast nets, with samples sent for toxicology testing to determine suitability as a supplemental food source for the sanctuary's resident birds. This effort restores ecological balance, enhances sustainability, and deepens the project's relevance to watershed health.

Rooted in sound ecological practices, this project supports PPBEP's mission by restoring habitat, removing invasives, and connecting the community to the science and story of estuarine systems. We're building more than an exhibit, we're building a pathway for coastal ecosystem guardianship.

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Community Grant Program
2025-2026 Funding Opportunity

VOLUNTARY PRE-APPLICATION DATES

- **Voluntary Pre-Application Opening:** March 3, 2025
- **Informational Webinar:** March 10th 4:00-5:00PM CT
  Click here to register for the webinar. If you are unable to attend, the recording will be available on our website 24-48 hours after the webinar.
- **Voluntary Pre-Application Closing:** April 1, 2025
- **Voluntary Pre-Application Feedback to Applicants:** May 15, 2025

FULL APPLICATION DATES

- **Full Application Opening:** July 1, 2025
- **Informational Webinar:** July 8th 4:00-5:00PM CT
  Click here to register for the webinar. If you are unable to attend, the recording will be available on our website 24-48 hours after the webinar.
- **Full Application Closing:** July 31, 2025

Award Range: $10,000 to $75,000, contingent on budget availability and authorization from the PPBEP Board of Directors (available on reimbursement basis only)

Anticipated amount to be awarded: $250,000

Eligibility: Local governments (including special districts) or nonstate entities (educational institutions and 501(c)3s). An eligible entity must serve as the fiscal host agency.

Location: Project must be located within the Perdido and/or Pensacola Bay watershed within the counties of Escambia, Santa Rosa, and/or Okaloosa. Please refer to the attached map for project area. Proposed monitoring activities that are in Alabama and within the Perdido and/or Pensacola Bay watershed could be permissible if the main proposed project components are in Florida.

SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION DATES:

- Committee Review: August 2025
- Committee Recommendation to Board of Directors: August 27, 2025 *(tentative)*
- Public Awards Ceremony: September 25, 2025 *(tentative)*
- Anticipated Implementation Period: October 1, 2025 - December 31, 2026
- Final Reports and Reimbursement Requests due by February 26, 2027

Introduction:

The Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program (PPBEP) is pleased to announce the release of the 2025-2026 Community Grant Program funding opportunity. This program will fund action projects that serve to restore, preserve, connect, inform, and educate.

The PPBEP is a stakeholder-driven, science-based organization charged with restoring and preserving the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Systems and their associated watersheds. PPBEP is guided by a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which serves as a blueprint for the restoration and preservation of the area and waterways. Through these actions, PPBEP's vision is to create a healthy and sustainable environment, economy, and community. The funding opportunity includes seven eligible project categories that align with the Estuary Program's CCMP.

The Community Grant Program is made possible through the support of the Florida Legislature. The Estuary Program offers our deepest appreciation to Representative Andrade for sponsoring our legislative appropriation.

How to Apply:
Go to https://www.ppbep.org/what-we-do/communitygrants to download a Voluntary Pre-Application and/or Full Application.
Voluntary Pre-Applications must be submitted to PPBEP (info@ppbep.org) by 11:59 PM CT on April 1, 2025.

Full Applications must be submitted to PPBEP (info@ppbep.org) by 11:59 PM CT on July 31, 2025.

Voluntary Pre-Application Process:
A Voluntary Pre-Application will give interested applicants an opportunity to receive feedback from PPBEP staff before the full application period opens for the 2025-2026 Community Grant Award Cycle. While submission of a Voluntary Pre-Application does not guarantee funding or selection, it can help applicants strengthen their proposal by incorporating staff feedback in their full application.

Priority Consideration:
Priority consideration will be given to “shovel ready” action projects that align with PPBEP’s CCMP Action Plan. Projects that leverage funding will also receive priority consideration. Please see the provided Action Plan documents:
Main Action Plan
Education and Outreach Action Plan

Proposal Categories:
Water Quality: Achieve water quality improvement in one or both bay systems and/or their associated waterways to reduce nutrients and bacteria.
(Examples: "best management practices" for agriculture or development; innovative retention/filtering techniques)

Sedimentation: Reduce sediment loading by identifying and/or addressing root causes and sources. *(Examples: sedimentation monitoring or fingerprinting; erosion impact assessment)*

Habitat Restoration: Restore and/or enhance native habitat(s) to achieve sustainable and healthy systems.
(Examples: restoration of natural shorelines/enhancement of seawalls; planning/action projects addressing oysters, seagrasses, coastal and freshwater wetlands, and other estuarine habitats)

Fish and Wildlife Conservation: Reduce threats to native fish and wildlife through the protection of natural resources; monitoring to fill data gaps.
(Examples: protection of seagrass beds; education on fish and wildlife habitat; wildlife monitoring)

Watershed Awareness and Education: Promote watershed awareness and environmental education by engaging all age groups and demographics; provide access to natural resources.
(Examples: programs that directly involve youth in solutions to bay problems; programs directed at disadvantaged youth, homeowner education around smart fertilizer use)

Resilience: Promote capacity building and/or construct pilot resilience demonstration projects, such as green infrastructure or low impact development.
(Examples: projects that address historical and/or persistent challenges in underserved communities related to water resources and/or local water quality; green infrastructure demonstration projects)

Participatory Science: Engage community members through hands-on science to provide data on watershed conditions.
(Examples: Water quality monitoring; habitat monitoring; or field research that engages community members)

Project Approach: *Projects should use one or more of the approaches below to implement the proposed work.*
Research *(that informs management and restoration efforts)*
Restoration
Education & Outreach
Participatory Science *(involvement of community members in scientific monitoring/research)*

Match:
Match is not required but is strongly encouraged. Projects that include cash or in-kind match, to include volunteer labor, will receive greater consideration.

Ineligible Costs:
- Land acquisition
- Lobbying expenses
- Conference registration
- Travel expenses (local mileage to complete project work is an allowable expense; lodging, air fare, per diem, etc. are not allowed).
- Contingency funds
- Fines and penalties
- Insurance
- Food and Drink
- Maintenance (funds cannot be used to supplant general operating and maintenance of equipment and facilities, e.g. vessels, vehicles, and trailer maintenance)
- Improvements not accessible to the general public

Selection Criteria:
CCMP Action Plan Alignment (20 points)
The proposed project should align with the PPBEP's CCMP Action Plan. The proposal should explicitly state which Goals and Actions will be supported through the proposed work. Proposal categories are based off the CCMP Action Plan.

Project Approach (20 points)
Applicant should describe in detail the project scope of work, need, objectives, and deliverables. The project's goal and objectives must explicitly state how the project will target watershed and/or bay issues that result in the restoration, enhancement, and/or protection of the bay systems and associated watersheds.
Specifically, the strength of the program will be evaluated on the organization and clarity of the proposal, likelihood that the project will be successfully implemented, and identification of clear metrics to assess progress.

Estuary/Watershed Impact (25 points)
Applicant should describe in detail the anticipated short-term and long-term impacts that the project will have on the estuary/watershed. These impacts should be quantified when feasible. Additionally, applicant should note if their project supports or enhances any ongoing or existing measures/initiatives to benefit the estuary/watershed.

Demonstration of Applicant Ability (10 points)
The project team must have adequate education and/or experience to carry out the project design. The team must include the necessary personnel and expertise for the project as proposed. Responsibilities and division of labor should be designated. For projects planned on public lands or facilities, applicants must obtain permission for access to or use of those lands or facilities. Permission for use of private property not controlled by applicant is also required.

Community Impact (15 points)
Projects must demonstrate the community impact for the project. All proposals, regardless of scope, should reflect some measure of community support. Greater consideration will be given to projects that demonstrate clear impacts within underrepresented communities.

Cost Justification (10 points)
Cost justification requires that the proposal and the budget give enough detail to show that costs are appropriate to the scope of work. Reimbursement will be based on expenses assigned to cost categories in a budget that must be approved by the Estuary Program before a project begins.

Selection Process:
A Selection Committee comprised of one member of Estuary Program staff and at least six members from the Program's Committees, will review and rank submitted proposals based on the selection criteria outlined above. To fund a variety of projects that cover multiple areas of the PPBEP Action Plan and geographic territory, the Selection Committee may select lower ranked projects over higher ranked projects based on the numeric ranking criteria as outlined above. The Committee retains the discretion to consider past performance of grant recipients.

Any individual whose organization is a fiscal partner on a proposal (receives grant funding) is ineligible to serve on the Selection Committee. Any member serving on the Selection Committee whose organization is listed as a non-fiscal partner (partner that will not receive funding) will be recused from reviewing the proposal that they are a partner on and will be asked to leave the room during discussion of the associated project.

The Selection Committee will make a formal recommendation, by way of staff, to the Board of Directors for final approval of recommended proposals. Any applicant that lobbies the Board of Directors, Selection Committee, or Staff regarding their proposals will be disqualified.

Contact Us:
Inquiries about the 2025-2026 Community Grant Program can be emailed to info@ppbep.org.

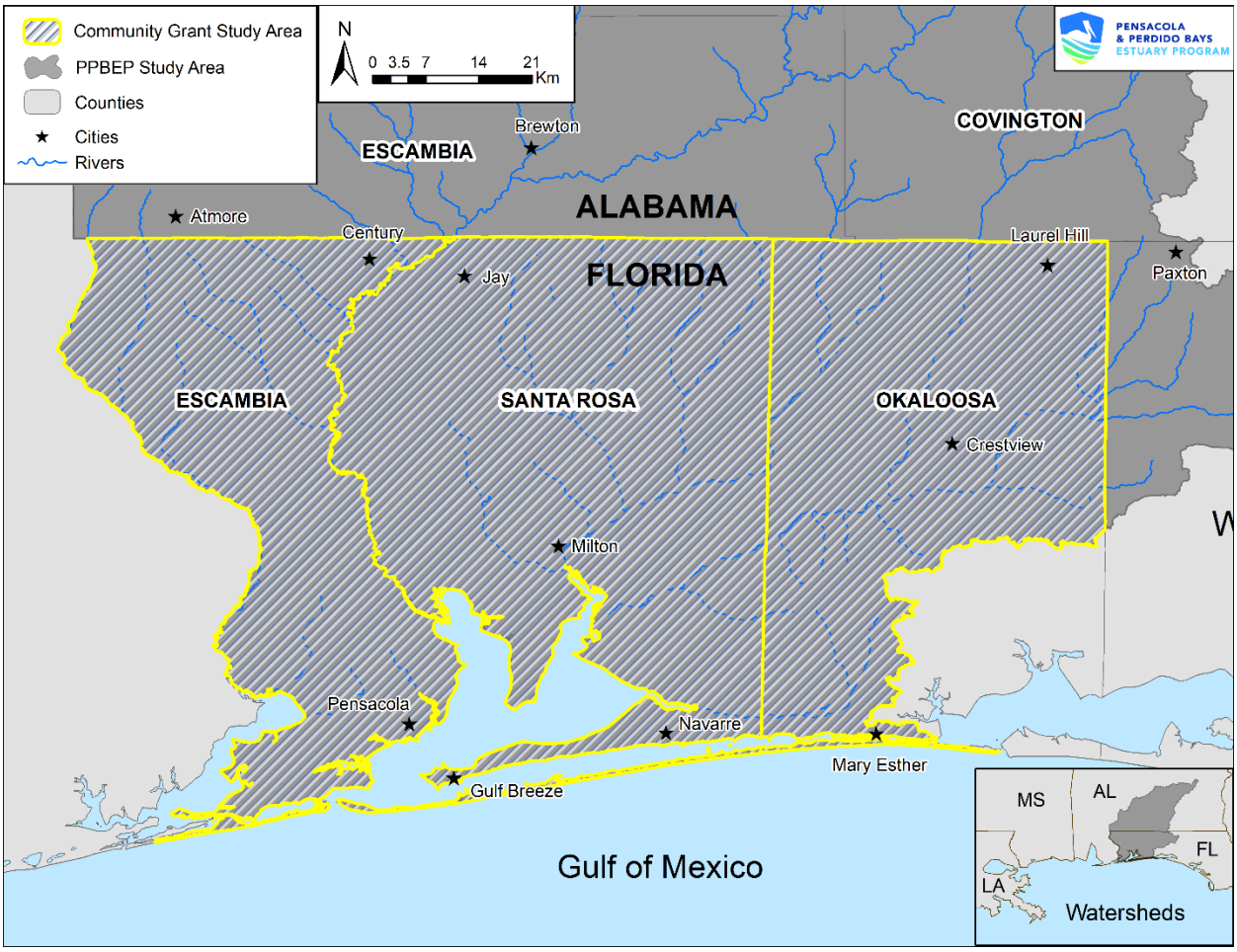

Figure 1: Projects located in the Pensacola or Perdido Bays Watersheds within Escambia, Santa Rosa, and/or Okaloosa counties are eligible