




PENSACOLA
& PERDIDO BAYS
ESTUARY PROGRAM

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024



Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program serves as a trusted source for residents, businesses, industry, and the community on issues relating to preserving, restoring, improving and maintaining the natural habitat and ecosystem of the bays, estuaries and watersheds of Pensacola and Perdido Bays.

PPBEP strives to achieve a healthy and collaborative environment by:



Elevating and increasing the **importance, awareness and understanding** of environmental quality.



Employing **rigorous, unbiased and scientifically sound science** to inform and guide decisions, policies, and initiatives.



Funding programs and projects that protect the environment, increase ecological resilience.



Building a network of **inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships** that takes into account factors affecting the environment, the economy, and the community-at-large for the benefit of improving the quality of life for all.

Photo: Darryl Boudreau, NFWFMD

Executive Director's Message

Friends,

On behalf of the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program (PPBEP), I'm pleased to present the PPBEP Impact Report for Fiscal Year 2024. As you'll find in the stories and metrics to follow, our team has been incredibly busy. 2024 was a year marked with transition, growth, and achievement.

In October 2023, PPBEP transitioned its organizational structure into a fully independent organization following five years of administrative support provided by Escambia County, FL. We are grateful for the support and services provided by Escambia County since the Program was established in fall 2018. The new structure, a Not-for-Profit Corporation operating as an instrumentality of government, allows PPBEP to be efficient and effective with its resources while supporting expanding partnerships and programs across the vast Pensacola and Perdido Bay Watersheds.

In 2024, we welcomed three new additions to our team – Paige, Chloe, and Zach – bringing our team to eight highly effective and motivated scientists, educators, communicators, and project coordinators. This growth is necessary to keep up with demand to implement the PPBEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), our ten-year roadmap for the restoration and preservation of our natural resources, adopted in October 2022.

There have been so many achievements over the last year, we hardly have room to cover them all. In February, our team convened 50 practitioners at our Comprehensive Monitoring Workshop to identify key data gaps and monitoring priorities. The results of

the workshop have led to the development of two grant proposals to implement key priorities – reestablishing fisheries independent monitoring to inform future fisheries management and restoration and reestablishing a comprehensive water quality monitoring network. Stay tuned in 2025!

As you'll read in our report, our team also had a significant presence in the community through our Panhandle Manatee Program, Seagrass Sleuths, and Restoration Rambles outreach programming. Our Community Grant Program also entered its fifth year, funding over \$1 million across 35 projects to date.



I'd be remiss if I didn't highlight the most significant news of all. On December 17th, President Biden signed Senate Bill 50, Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuaries of National Significance Act, into law. **This designation is a generational investment into our communities and environment, and we're just getting started.**

In a word – I'm grateful. Grateful for our team, board, committee members, partners, funders, and the community at-large. Each one of you has an impact on our community more than you know. We, collectively, have laid a fantastic foundation in 2024, and look forward to working with all our partners in 2025 to protect what matters most. ■

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt J. Posner", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Matt Posner, Executive Director

Chairman's Message

On behalf of the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Board of Directors, I'd like to thank our team, partners, committee members, and funders for a successful year implementing the priority actions of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. We have seen tremendous advancement in implementing these priority actions while simultaneously growing and evolving the Estuary Program over the last year. Thanks to these collective actions, we are well on our way to ensuring fishable and swimmable waters for all.

Respectfully,
Mike Kohler, Chairman



Photo: Darryl Boudreau, NFWFMD

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Logan McDonald, Community Outreach Coordinator

Haley Gancel, Ph.D., Environmental Scientist

Bailey Walkinshaw, Community Outreach Assistant

Zach Schang, Restoration Project Coordinator

Paige Lansky, Coastal Restoration Coordinator

Chloe Ray, Environmental Technician

Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Earns National Designation

New Law Recognizes Pensacola and Perdido Bays as Estuaries of National Significance

On December 17th, 2024, President Biden signed Senate Bill 50, *Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary of National Significance Act*, into law. The bill, approved by the U.S. Senate on March 12th and by the U.S. House of Representatives on December 9th, designates Pensacola and Perdido Bays as “Estuaries of National Significance” and directs the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to formally enroll the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program (PPBEP) into the National Estuary Program.

U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Rick Scott (R-FL) introduced the legislation to federally designate the PPBEP to leverage



This is an overdue recognition of the economic and environmental importance of Pensacola and Perdido Bays to Northwest Florida and our nation. The National Estuary Program designation will supplement current local and state investments that are already generating regional water quality improvements and enhancing the resilience of surrounding local communities.”

– Florida’s Chief Resilience Officer
Dr. Wes Brooks




I am grateful for the House’s passage of my bill to designate the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program. The EPA’s National Estuary Program has a successful track record of cooperative federalism across the nation, including with the four existing Florida programs. Enrolling the PPBEP into this program will provide critical support for restoration, conservation, and monitoring efforts in Pensacola and Perdido Bays while enhancing economic activity in the Florida Panhandle.”

– Senator Marco Rubio

federal, state, and local government resources to improve water quality, habitat, and community resilience, and expand and coordinate monitoring, research, and outreach and education in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Watersheds.

EPA’s National Estuary Program was established by Congress in 1987 to support non-regulatory, science-based, and locally-driven programs across the U.S. to address resource management challenges. Regional partners have been preparing for this designation for over 30 years, first with the establishment of the Bay Area Resource



Council in 1987 and later with the transition and establishment of PPBEP in 2018. Senator Rubio first introduced legislation to design Pensacola and Perdido Bays as Estuaries of National Significance in the 117th Congress in June 2021, and later reintroduced the legislation during the 118th Congress in January 2023. The PPBEP will be the first new National Estuary Program added to the existing 28 programs in over 28 years.

The health and resilience of Pensacola and Perdido Bays are critical to the regional economy. Through the National Estuary Program, local communities are empowered to identify natural resource challenges and implement solutions through science-based, community-driven actions.

The designation ensures a commitment to improving water quality and enhancing community resilience in Northwest Florida and southern Alabama through strategic partnerships and investments.



Designation as a National Estuary Program is a generational investment in the restoration and conservation of our estuaries and watersheds. Children growing up in Northwest Florida today enjoy much of the same quality of life their parents and grandparents grew up with: access to fishing, swimming, and exploring our area's beautiful natural resources. Thanks to Congress, and the leadership of Senator Rubio and Senator Scott, this designation will allow us to build on existing efforts to ensure investments and decisions made today supports our way of life for generations to come."

– Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Executive Director Matt Posner

Since creation in 2018, PPBEP and its partners have secured over \$30 million to implement priority restoration, resilience, and conservation projects in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Watersheds. This action ensures funding and policy decisions made today support the long-term sustainability of the region's natural resources and economy.

Many local and national partners have worked for years to secure National Estuary Program designation, recognizing working at the watershed-scale through partnerships is a far more effective and efficient approach to improving water quality, restoring habitat, and supporting community resilience. ■



On behalf of the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Board of Directors, we are grateful Congress has acted on the legislation introduced by Senator Rubio and Senator Scott, with the support of Congressman Dunn and Congressman Bean, to designate Pensacola and Perdido Bays as Estuaries of National Significance. This designation represents a transformational opportunity for our communities to support continued growth while improving water quality and ensuring the long-term stewardship of our natural resources."

– Escambia County Commissioner and Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Board of Directors Chairman Mike Kohler



We welcome the increased prioritization of the Pensacola and Perdido Watersheds. The watersheds connect Alabama and Florida's lands and waters, and the human and natural species that depend on them. With the passage of S.50, we celebrate and look forward to bigger and better partnerships in the future."

– The Nature Conservancy in Alabama Executive Director Mitch Reid

Hope on the Half Shell

Restoring Pensacola Bay Oysters, Reviving a Legacy

Oysters have always been the **unsung heroes of the Gulf**, their reefs bustling with life. Shell middens scattered along our coasts signify their importance to indigenous tribes. Shrimp dart among the reefs while fish find shelter and birds forage. These oyster reefs don't just support other creatures—they support a healthy ecosystem, filtering water and holding sediment in place. The salty air carries with it stories of livelihoods built on oysters and of the meals that brought families together.

But beneath the water, the once-thriving reefs are now shadows of their former selves. Over decades, pollution and sedimentation clouded the waters where oysters once thrived. Overharvest chipped away at their populations. By the 1960s, reefs began to decline, and now, more than 70% are gone. With each vanishing oyster, the community, economy, and ecosystem are left struggling. Yet, all hope is not lost. Initiatives to improve water quality and restore oyster reefs are gaining momentum.



East Bay oysters, people would drive 100 miles just to get a bag of them. **They're known to be one of the best in the country.** That's a fact."

– Tommy Pugh, Oysterman

The Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative has an ambitious goal to restore 600-hectares (1,482 acres, – that's the area of approximately 1,140 football fields!) of oyster habitat in the Pensacola Bay System over the next ten years.

To make this dream a reality, PPBEP and partners secured a \$10.9 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to restore oyster reefs and address factors that contributed to their decline. This funding will support the design and permitting for the bay-wide initiative and jumpstart the restoration of the first 250 acres of oyster reef.

This year an engineering firm was selected to design and permit the reefs. With construction of the reefs slated to begin in late 2026, Jacobs Engineering, staff, and partners have been working diligently behind the scenes to prepare for public engagements in 2025 and to acquire funding to build reefs. ■



Watch **The Humble Oyster** to learn more about the history of Pensacola oysters:
youtu.be/ZW3I-Usp8B0





Potential Restoration Areas

Locations within these areas may be selected for restoration.

Escambia Bay

Blackwater Bay

East Bay

Pensacola Bay

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↑ Mi



The bay system has changed pretty drastically over my 50 years working on it. When I was a young feller with my grandfather, I'd see **20-25 boats oystering every day** in Escambia Bay."

– Pasco Gibson, Oysterman

Off to a Shucking Good Start

It's no secret—Pensacola is passionate about oysters! But now, your love for these coastal treasures is fueling something even greater. This year marked the launch of an exciting new partnership working to revitalize local oyster populations.

With funding from Restore America's Estuaries, The Oyster Alliance is partnering with local restaurants to transform discarded oyster shells into new oyster habitat in Pensacola and Perdido Bays. Oyster shell is an ideal natural oyster reef building block, and each recycled shell can provide a home for oyster larvae to attach and grow. On your table today, restoring our reefs tomorrow.

Officially launched in August 2024, The Oyster Alliance already collected over 41,000 pounds of oyster shells in two months. That's more than the weight of eight adult male elephants! Moving that amount of shell is no small feat. OysterCorps, a youth workforce program that combines environmental restoration with hands-on skills training, plays a vital role in collecting the recycled shell.

As The Oyster Alliance continues to gain momentum, we plan to partner with additional restaurants to expand our oyster shell collection in 2025. ■



This story isn't just about oysters—it's about hope, determination, and a united vision for a brighter, more sustainable future. Together, we'll craft the next chapter for Pensacola Bay—a chapter where **oysters flourish, ecosystems thrive, and our communities prosper.**

Saving Manatees, One Boater at a Time

Making Strides to Safeguard Manatees

There are few moments as magical as spotting your first manatee. Whether you call them floaty potatoes or sea cows, these gentle giants captivate all of us with their curiosity and friendly nature. Yet, those same qualities we adore can also put manatees at risk of being hit by boats.

"I have known about manatees since the late 70s when, as a pre-teen, I accidentally ran into one with a 14ft aluminum boat in south Florida. My family laughed at my shocked expression, but I don't remember anyone saying that it could be hurt, or how to spot them, or that they need advocates. Fast forward to today, and I'm grateful to be able to volunteer as a Manatee Ambassador and share education about manatees that I did not know about nearly 50 years ago," said dedicated Manatee Ambassador, Diane Bolter.

Once considered a rare sighting in our region, manatees are being spotted with increasing frequency. The Panhandle Manatee Program was launched to help collect reports of manatee sightings from the community and to raise awareness about our seasonal manatee visitors. The partnership was established thanks to the efforts of Jessica Bibza, a fierce manatee advocate. ■



2,600+ people
educated at 50 events



120 hours
logged by 42
Manatee Ambassadors



700+ boater kits
distributed to promote
manatee and seagrass
safe boating practices



150+ youth
engaged at summer camps
and library programs

Photo: DISL MSN
Contributor John Starrett

The **Jessica Bibza Manatee Outreach Internship** carries on Jessica's legacy of protecting manatees and providing career development opportunities to the next generation of conservationists.

By educating boaters, coastal residents, and visitors about manatees and seagrass, we aim to prevent manatee collisions and damage to seagrass beds, a staple of their diet. "Seagrass beds are like a big salad buffet for manatees. If we want to keep seeing manatees in our area, we need to make sure we protect this critical food source they depend on," said Logan McDonald, PPBEP Community Outreach Coordinator.



A team of passionate Manatee Ambassadors, led by our Manatee Outreach Intern, visit boat ramps, fishing piers, summer camps, and community events during our peak manatee season from Spring to Fall. Boaters receive kits with polarized sunglasses to help spot manatees, maps highlighting local seagrass beds, and information on how to report sightings. ■

How to Prevent Seagrass Scars:

If you run aground, **turn off your motor** and push or pole to a safe depth

Utilize polarized sunglasses and **designate a spotter** to look out for seagrass beds

Don't drop your anchor over seagrass beds

Avoid seagrass when possible, if over seagrass in shallow areas, trim up your motor and idle to a safe depth

Let's Show Our Visitors True Southern Hospitality:

- ✓ Give manatees space, keep at least 100 ft away
- ✓ Properly discard used nets, fishing lines, and trash
- ✓ Do not feed or water manatees, well intentioned interactions can attract them to boats and put them in harm's way

You have the power to help protect manatees!

Remember to assign a manatee spotter and wear your polarized sunglasses the next time you're out boating, and you might be lucky enough to spot your own manatee soon! With every boater we educate, we are helping to turn the tide for manatees.



Report manatee sightings:
PanhandleManatee.org



Seagrass Sleuths

Young Scientists Discover the Hidden Life in Seagrass Beds

When you hold up a blade of seagrass and ask someone what it is, a common answer is seaweed, often followed by “I hate when it touches my feet!” Often mistaken for seaweed, seagrass is an aquatic plant that grows in calm, coastal waters like Santa Rosa Sound, Lower Perdido Bay, and Big Lagoon. These grasses can form dense underwater meadows, teeming with life. Despite being a critical habitat here in the Pensacola and Perdido Bays, seagrass goes unnoticed by many.

We are on a mission to give seagrass the attention it deserves. PPBEP believes an educated and passionate community is critical for restoring and protecting habitats like seagrass beds for generations to come. This summer we launched a new family-friendly summer program, Seagrass Sleuths. Through this immersive program families can run a seine net and learn about many of the unique animals that call seagrass beds home.

“Initially, some young learners and adults are hesitant to get in the water or to touch the seagrass. Once the first seine net is pulled in, the thrill of discovery sets in and you get to watch kids and adults alike overcome their fears, connect with nature, and by the end of the program they often want to stay and keep exploring,” said Logan McDonald, PPBEP’s Community Outreach Coordinator.



I enjoyed using the nets to study the tiny creatures that live in the seagrass. **I will never forget this day.** It was such an amazing experience.”

– Program Participant



I loved watching how **excited** the kids (and adults) were to catch the fish.”

– Program Participant

“The best part is the thrill of never knowing what we’ll discover in the seine nets. Every catch is full of surprises and unique finds that make the experience truly exciting and educational – especially when we find a seahorse!” said Tara Turk, a PPBEP Critter Catcher and Observation Tank Ambassador.

After young learners participate in pulling a seine net and collecting their catch, they put on their detective hats for inquiry-based learning. Families gather around the observation tank to learn about the species they caught and use critical thinking skills to answer questions like “Why do you think this fish has eyes on top of its head? Where do you think it would live?” or “Can you find all the pipefish in the tank? Why are they hard to find with the seagrass?”

At PPBEP, we’re in the business of making memories. Memories of catching your first fish, watching a crab in the process of molting, or inspiring a family to develop a tradition of exploring nature together. Memories can transport us to different worlds, evoke emotions, and spark imagination. We believe these memories have the power to shape future stewards of our estuaries that will help preserve our waterways for generations to come. ■



PPBEP programs such as Seagrass Sleuths, are a fantastic way to share my experience and love for the environment with our youth. Through their activities, PPBEP is **ensuring future generations will respect and work to preserve our environment.**”

– Ricky Stackhouse, Volunteer



2024 Volunteer of the Year Ricky Stackhouse

Ricky has volunteered with the Estuary Program over the past two years as a Critter Catcher and Observation Tank Ambassador. From Earth Day events to Gallery Night to field trips, Ricky could be found rocking a wetsuit while pulling a seine net to teach young learners or representing the Program at events.

This year, we launched a new Summer Seagrass Sleuths Program. This program allows families to discover the wildlife our seagrass beds support and experience our estuaries up close and personal. This program would not have been possible without Ricky's dedication.

Despite the sweltering summer, Ricky remained steadfast in his support of our cause. His grit and determination are a testament to his character.

Because of these efforts, Ricky has not only earned our 2024 Volunteer of the Year Award, but also the respect and gratitude of the whole team. ■



Photo: Troy Glasgow



2024 Jessica Bibza Partner of the Year Award Judy Haner, The Nature Conservancy in Alabama Coastal Programs Director

Jessica Bibza was akin to the Energizer Bunny, she just kept going. Jessica dedicated her life to environmental conservation, ranging from Gulf Coast restoration to manatee research and awareness campaigns to environmental policy.

Jessica was our biggest cheerleader, as she was for many across the Gulf Coast. Everyone had a seat at Jessica's table to join the conversation and be part of the solution. The Jessica Bibza Partner of the Year Award recognizes the outstanding dedication and passion of one individual that has had an immeasurable impact on our community by bringing people together to ensure a better tomorrow for all.

Judy has achieved a remarkable career and compiled an unmatched record of leading partnerships, fund-raising prowess, and nearly continuous implementation of restoration projects in Alabama and North Florida. Her

vision for Perdido Bay has fostered a remarkable level of collaboration between a diverse array of partners to support this complex and expansive watershed initiative. Recently, she secured a \$12 million NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grant to make this vision a reality.

We know Judy as a force to be reckoned with. Judy doesn't know the word no, if there's a problem she is going to find a solution. Because of these efforts, Judy has earned the 2024 Jessica Bibza Partner of the Year Award. ■



Photo: Troy Glasgow



2024 Project of the Year Award University of West Florida

The Project of the Year Award recognizes the completion of an outstanding project that stands out for their excellence in completing a conservation, restoration, and/or outreach project, fostering collaboration and community engagement, and building on or establishing new partnerships.

The University of West Florida's Estuarine Echoes Exhibit serves as a remarkable example of how innovative public engagement, thorough historical ecology research, and community collaboration can come together to create a meaningful and impactful educational experience.

The exhibit is free and open to the community five days a week, where visitors, community members, school children, and lifelong learners will continue to enjoy it for years to come. Featuring interactive elements like wall graphics, exhibit mounts, digital microscopes, and a sensory activity with Mvskoke language interpretation

provided by the Santa Rosa Creek Band of the Lower Muscogee, the exhibit offers a dynamic, engaging experience for visitors of all ages. Their collaboration with local tribal leaders added an invaluable cultural and linguistic component, fostering stronger community relationships and enriching the exhibit's educational value.

Because of these efforts, project leads Niccole Grinnan and Mike Thomin on behalf of UWF have earned the 2024 Project of the Year Award. Congratulations! ■



Photo: Troy Glasgow

Tracking the Bays' Vital Signs

Monitoring our Meadows



101 seagrass stations
monitored

Casting a Net on the Next Generation of Fish



25 species
caught during juvenile trawling surveys



5,867 total fish
counted in juvenile trawling surveys

Working Together to Expand Monitoring Partnerships



57 participants
in comprehensive monitoring workshop

\$3,515,181 secured

to monitor our waterways

Project	Amount
Microbial Source Tracking	\$2,857,999
Living Shoreline Effectiveness Monitoring	\$324,321
Septic to Sewer	\$281,077
Seagrass Monitoring	\$36,903
Juvenile Fish Trawling Survey	\$14,881

Gaining Ground for Restoration



I love seeing an area that shouldn't have been changed in the first place, being brought back, **it's going to be great for the wildlife.**"

– Program Participant



41,160 lbs of oyster shell recycled that will serve as a building block in recovering Pensacola oysters



\$6,485,000 to design 1,500 American football fields worth of critical oyster habitat in Pensacola Bay



\$1,750,000 secured to protect our vulnerable coasts by launching a Living Shoreline Assistance Program



\$2,200,000 secured for design of 2.5 miles of stream restoration to address extreme erosion in beloved Carpenter Creek



\$800,000 to create safe access and habitat by designing approximately 1.5 miles of shoreline restoration, 10 acres of estuarine habitat creation, and approximately 1 mile of hydrologic reconnection to Tarkiln Bayou at Bronson Field

Cultivating Coastal Stewards

4,200+ people educated about our local waterways through programs and presentations

2,600 people educated about manatees

8,600 households educated on flood risks and insurance options

600 lbs of Mardi Gras beads recycled and diverted from local waterways

300 volunteer hours invested in the community



10,000 ECUA residential recycling can stickers distributed to promote recycling best practices



260,000+ reached through digital platforms



50+ features in digital, radio, and TV news advancing awareness of watershed issues and news



1 Trash Free Waters short film produced



I loved everything about it. Being able to help create tools for restoring oyster beds was super rewarding. I've told SO many people about the reproductive cycles of oysters."

– Navy Federal Volunteer



Watch the **Trash Free Waters** short film:
youtu.be/BxPX4dcpWh8



Powering Positive Change

Community Grant Program Highlights

Community collaboration is at the heart of the Estuary Program. The PPBEP Community Grant Program funds action projects that serve to restore, preserve, connect, inform, and educate.

This year, we worked with local researchers to fund studies on water quality and ecology in Perdido Bay, fish communities in understudied tidal creeks in Santa Rosa Sound, and modeling that will help inform compound flood models, sedimentation assessments, stormwater planning, restoration efforts, and future development scenarios.

Together, we highlighted our historical connection to our estuaries, brought hands-on marine science education to underserved communities and local high schools, and communicated the benefits of living shorelines through an interactive website highlighting underwater videos of fish and wildlife found at restoration sites. ■

The Community Grant Program is made possible through the support of the Florida Legislature. The Estuary Program offers their deepest appreciation to Senator Broxson and Representative Andrade for sponsoring the Program's legislative funding request.

Photo: Satori Foundation



As these students gain confidence in their knowledge of water quality, **they become voices in the community**, speaking up for the marine environment in Santa Rosa Sound.”

– Charlene Mauro, Navarre Beach Marine Science Station



\$275,000 awarded

for 9 Community
Grant Projects



2,000+ youth

engaged through hands-on
estuary education



7 tidal creeks

surveyed in Santa Rosa Sound



70 species

detected in Santa Rosa Sound,
Perdido Bay, and Pensacola Bay



Photo: Satori Foundation



Photo: Joe Vinson



1 new **Estuarine Echoes**
exhibit created



1 new **interactive web**
platform highlighting fish
communities at living shorelines



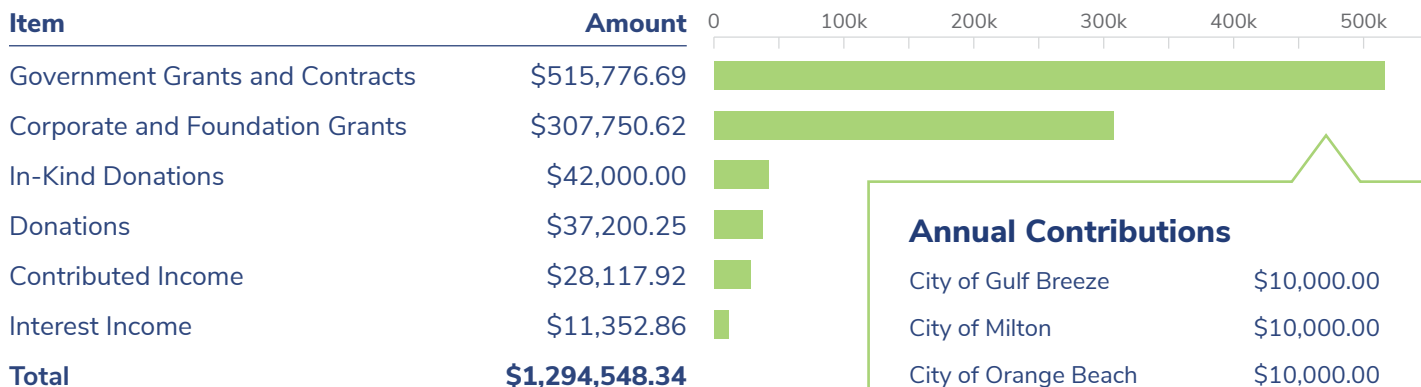
Take a **virtual snorkel**
tour of Pensacola Bay:
[disl-pdavid.gitlab.io/
greenshores-web](https://disl-pdavid.gitlab.io/greenshores-web)



Financials

Fiscal Year 2023–2024

Revenue



Annual Contributions

City of Gulf Breeze	\$10,000.00
City of Milton	\$10,000.00
City of Orange Beach	\$10,000.00
City of Pensacola	\$30,000.00
Escambia County	\$126,350.00
Okaloosa County	\$5,000.00
Santa Rosa County	\$86,000.00
Total	\$277,350.00

Local government contributions serve as match for implementing PPBEP's mission, allowing our team to leverage state, federal, and private sources. Suggested contribution rates from our interlocal government partners are based on population size.

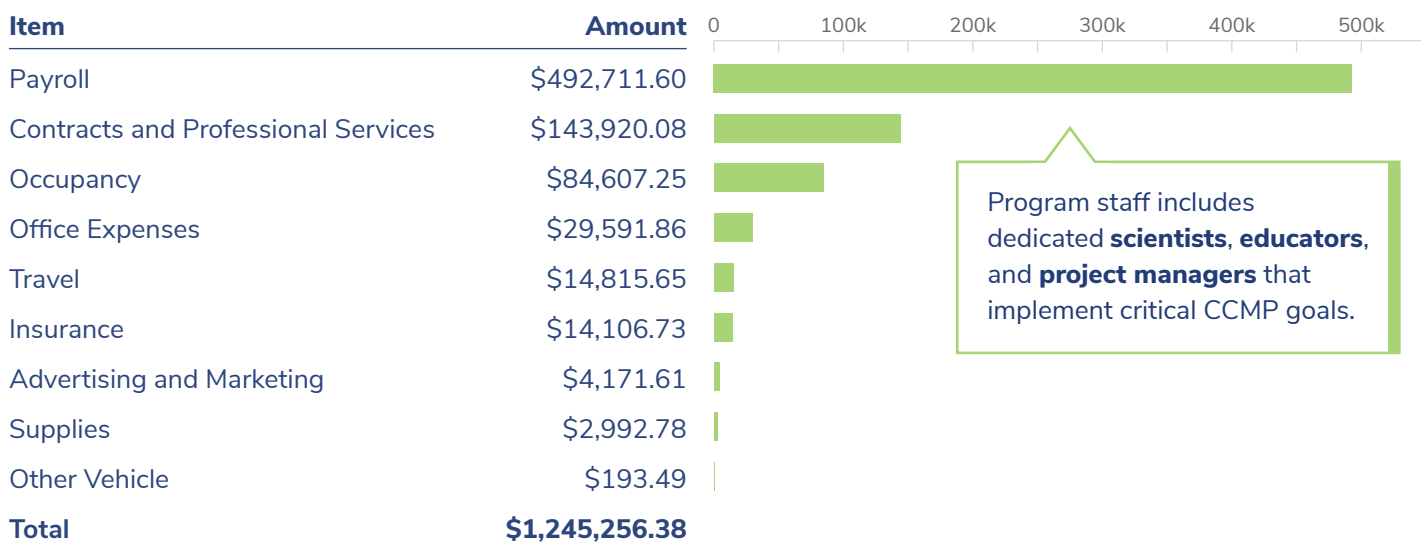


4 grant applications submitted
~\$54 million in grant requests



2 grants awarded
~\$5.4 million received

Expenditures



Program staff includes dedicated **scientists, educators,** and **project managers** that implement critical CCMP goals.



Business Sponsors

Guardians of the Gulf – \$10,000

Aero Air Charters
Great Southern Restaurant Group
International Paper

River Giver – \$2,500

Anfield Consulting
Intracoastal Outfitters
Moffatt & Nichol

Creek Keeper – \$1,000

Baskerville-Donovan, Inc.
Dr. Noah Barnes, DMD
Friends of Perdido Bay
WRA
WSP

Individual Memberships

Pelican Level – \$1,200

Susan Bastajian
Toshiya Miyatsu

Oyster Level – \$120

Dalton Brister
Caine O'Rear
Margo Stringfield
Nate Sweigert
Kay Thompson

2025 Outlook

What's the state of our bays? Find out in the 2025 State of the Bays!

The biennial State of the Bays Report will be released in spring 2025. Originally launched by PPBEP in spring 2023, the State of the Bays Report is the first and only digital resource developed for the community to provide a comprehensive overview of the status of our natural resources and waterways. State of the Bays includes four key indicators and includes everything from water quality to oyster and seagrass habitats. Learn more at stateofthebays.org. ■

Give Back at the 3rd Annual Evening for the Estuaries Gala

The Third Annual Evening for the Estuaries Fundraising Gala is set for October 16, 2025 from 6 to 9 pm at the Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach! Mark your calendars for an evening of live music, awards, drinks, hors d'oeuvres (including oysters!), a silent auction, and giving back to the waters we call home. ■



Photo: Troy Glasgow

Living Shoreline Assistance Program Launches to Stabilize Shorelines Using Green Infrastructure Best Practices

The Living Shoreline Assistance Program (LSAP) will help landowners, HOAs, neighborhood associations, and community groups to address shoreline erosion in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Watersheds. The program aims to promote nature-based solutions for shoreline stabilization by providing financial, technical, labor, and permitting support. The program will launch in early 2025 in the Perdido Bay Watershed! ■

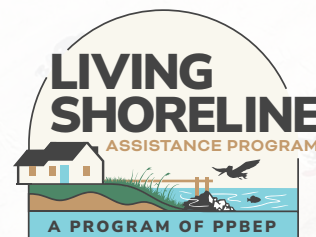


Photo: Darryl Boudreau, NFWFMD

Community Supports Restoration through Vertical Oyster Gardens

PPBEP is working with partners to launch a vertical oyster garden (VOG) program in 2025 where community members can help make VOGs out of recycled oyster shell, adopt a VOG to hang and watch grow from their own dock, and participate in citizen science by monitoring growth and colonization by wildlife. ■



Getting to the Source of Bacteria Pollution

PPBEP, Escambia County, Santa Rosa County, City of Pensacola, and the Emerald Coast Utilities Authority will launch the Microbial Source Tracking Project in 2025, seeking to identify sources of bacteria throughout nine impaired waterbodies in Escambia and Santa Rosa County. ■

Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative Design Accelerates

Through the Pensacola Bay Oyster Restoration Initiative, PPBEP has established a goal to restore the equivalent of 1,500 football fields of oyster habitat over the next ten years – the largest oyster restoration program along the Gulf Coast! Design and community engagement will occur throughout 2025. ■

Carpenter Creek Restoration Design to Kick Off in Summer 2025

PPBEP, in partnership with the City of Pensacola and Escambia County, will kick off design of a stream restoration project in Carpenter Creek in summer 2025. Funded by a RESTORE Component 2 grant through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the project will stretch from Interstate 110 to 12th Avenue to stabilize Carpenter Creek, improve water quality and habitat, and improve community resilience. Community engagement will kick off in late 2025! ■



**PENSACOLA
& PERDIDO BAYS
ESTUARY PROGRAM**

226 S. Palafox Place, Pensacola, FL 32502

ppbep.org ■ info@ppbep.org

