

Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program

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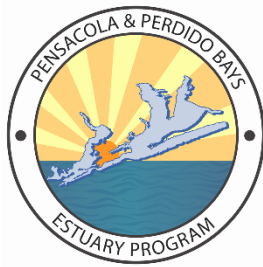
\$3 Million Awarded to Projects in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay Watersheds

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded over \$3 million to fund three projects in the Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds. Santa Rosa County, in collaboration with the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program, received a National Coastal Resilience grant to develop a living shoreline habitat suitability model and master plan for the Pensacola Bay System. The project will assess approximately 175 miles of shoreline to evaluate land use, water depth, habitat type, wave dynamics, sediment transport, and the presence or absence of hardened coastal infrastructure (i.e. sea walls).

Living shorelines are softer, greener alternatives to stabilize shorelines from erosion, sea level rise, and other damage through the installation of native plants, oyster shells, and other organic materials. They protect and restore natural shoreline habitat, trap sediments, improve water clarity, filter pollutants, provide recreational opportunities, and provide important fish and wildlife habitat. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sally, our communities are seeing the success of existing living shoreline projects over hardened infrastructure such as sea walls. The Pensacola Bay System project will create a model to characterize and prioritize living shoreline opportunities across local government jurisdictions, as a comprehensive coastal resilience strategy.

“This model will serve as a tool public and private property owners can utilize to identify suitable sites to install living shorelines throughout the Pensacola Bay System, attracting investment into future living shoreline projects, and enhancing coastal resilience throughout our communities,” says Matt Posner, Interim Director of the Estuary Program.

Escambia County also received a National Coastal Resilience grant to support partial construction of the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline Project. The grant will fund the construction of approximately 5,300 linear feet of emergent and submerged offshore reef breakwaters, 9 acres of sandy beach habitat, and create conditions to support natural recruitment and colonization of up to 22 acres of submerged aquatic vegetation habitat at Sherman Inlet located in southwestern Pensacola Bay. The project also has the unique benefit of protecting the military mission of Naval Air Station Pensacola.



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The Perdido Bay Watershed will also benefit from a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund award. Wolf Bay, located on the western end of the Perdido Bay Watershed, drains into Perdido Bay. The Wolf Creek Headwaters Restoration Project will complete the engineering and design phase of a project to improve water quality within the Wolf Creek headwaters. This project area is the largest source of artificially high sediment runoff to Wolf Bay, an Outstanding Alabama Water. The project would consist of approximately 7,000 linear feet of stream restoration/stabilization, 36 acres of riparian wetland restoration, and a constructed wetland with floodplain enhancement encompassing the major headwaters of Wolf Creek. The headwaters restoration, stabilization, floodplain and wetland enhancement will reduce pollutant and stormwater impacts to Wolf Bay from increased stormwater runoff that is the result of rapid development of the City of Foley over the past two decades. Increased floodplain functionality during storm events will facilitate improved hydrologic function and prevent the harmful effects of future erosion within the watershed. The reduction in erosion and runoff from Wolf Bay will directly benefit Perdido Bay as a whole.

The Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program (PPBEP) is a stakeholder-driven, science-based organized charged with restoring and preserving the Pensacola Bay System and Perdido Bay System, 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 area waterways. Through these actions, PPBEP's vision is to create a healthy and sustainable environment, economy, and community. The PPBEP is a coalition of local, state and federal stakeholders from Baldwin, Escambia (FL), Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa counties and the cities of Pensacola, Gulf Breeze, Milton, Orange Beach and the Town of Century. Join us to ensure fishable, swimmable waters for all. Dive in at ppbep.org or follow us @ppbepflal on Facebook and @ppbep_flal on Instagram.