

Florida Gulf of Mexico Restoration
Project Submittal Form

Project Name:

Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan

Contact Information

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Project Location (include map, if possible, and the city, county, long/lat, and watershed)

The *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* includes 26 freshwater flow restoration projects, located in 7 counties stretching from Hillsborough County south to Collier County on Florida's west coast. The projects span the Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay, Charlotte Harbor and Rookery Bay watersheds. Information on the location of individual projects included in the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* (with city/county, latitude and longitude) is included in the individual project descriptions from the *Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan* in the FDEP database. Project locations are shown on Map 2 (page 12) of the attached *Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan* (SWFRERP).

Project Description (describe all aspects of the project)

The *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* directly supports the State's Priority Area 2 (Community resilience/living shorelines), Priority area 3 (Water quality projects including those which achieve water quality benefits provided by the preservation of buffer lands around military bases) and Priority Area 5 (Fish and wildlife habitat and management).

The *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* includes 26 restoration projects, 13 of which are priority projects (listed on page 20 of the SWFRERP). The 26 projects are designed to "improve the quality and quantity of freshwater flow into priority estuaries to

protect their health and resiliency," as specified in the December 2011 *Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy* and the January 2013 document, *The Path Forward to Restoring the Gulf Coast*. Combined these projects will result in more natural timing and distribution of freshwater flows into the Gulf of Mexico. Projects include:

- Reassert historic basin boundaries, both reducing excess flows and increasing insufficient freshwater flows to estuaries and the Gulf of Mexico,
- Sheetflow restoration, and
- Holding excess freshwater flow during the rainy season to meet minimum flows and levels (MFLs) in the dry season.

Estimated Project Costs (describe the estimated costs of the project, including any assumptions for contingency and ongoing operations/maintenance. Identify other secured funding sources such as matching funds, in-kind contributions or state/federal dollars. In addition, if possible, complete and submit the Cost Appendix Sheet associated with this form):

Estimated needed total project costs for the 26 freshwater flow restoration projects included in the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* is **\$507,926,250** (see pages 38-40 of the SWFRERP).

Of the 26 proposals, the attached *Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan* (SWFRERP) identified 13 project priorities recommended for the first 3 years of the program, see SWFRERP page 20.. The requested amount of these projects in the first 3 years is \$343,571,000. However, the plan further suggests a cap of \$10,000,000 placed on each individual component project, or a first three year funding request of \$36,471,000.

Other funding (indicate if the project is submitted for any potential funding or if it may be used to leverage additional funding, of so please describe the funding source (e.g. State/Federal Grants):

Total cost of all 26 projects comprising the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* is \$733,090,650. The needed cost is \$507,926,250, with \$225,164,400 additional funding from grants, municipalities and other funding sources. Individual project descriptions included estimated funds needed and for the total project, with the difference between these two being the other funding amounts.

Technical feasibility (describe the technologies involved and any relevant past experience or proven success with similar projects):

Individual project descriptions include technical approach (see database descriptions). Freshwater flow restoration techniques have been refined and adjusted over many years in Southwest Florida by the SWFWMD SWIM program and others, and environmental benefits are expected to meet or exceed estimated values.

Environmental Benefits (Describe the nature, magnitude, and timing of any environmental benefits attributable to the project. If possible, describe potential environmental performance measures [e.g. pollutant reduction]. Please address any potential environmental impacts associated with implementing or maintaining the project [e.g., loss of a habitat or conversion of habitat from one type to another during implementation]).

Environmental benefits resulting from the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* totals **312,523 acres** (153,507 in 3-year priority projects and 159,016 additional acres in the 10-year projects). Individual project descriptions include habitat restored and additional information on each (see FDEP database for individual project descriptions).

Economic and Social Benefits (describe the economic and social benefits including those related to the project's improved ecosystem services and any estimates on jobs created or preserved).

Jobs created or preserved by the 13 3-year Priority *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* alone equals an estimated 8,495 jobs. The additional 10-year plan projects total jobs increases the total to 876 jobs. The entire *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* would create an estimated 9,371 jobs.

Though ecosystem service benefits could be estimated for only a fraction of the projects, they are estimated at over \$417,000,000.

Community Resilience (describe if the project assists Florida's ability to anticipate, withstand, or recover from hazards or threats [e.g. hurricane preparedness, establishing living shorelines]).

Freshwater flow restoration provides a number of the community resilience functions including:

- reducing excessive flooding
- increasing freshwater flows where needed
- delivering the appropriate timing distribution and flow of clean water to the biotic systems, and
- improving climate change resiliency.

Conflicts or Complements to Existing Efforts (describe any ongoing activities in the project implementation area, if the project is part of another plan, and why the project does or does not interfere with that work. Please consider how the project may complement existing local, regional, and state efforts/plans/objectives).

Projects in the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* occur within one or more of the National Estuary Program boundaries (see Map 5 of the SWFRERP, page 34) can assist in implementing the NEPs federally-approved Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans. The two Water Management Districts develop Surface Water Improvement

and Management (SWIM) Plans, of which many of the projects would assist in implementing. In addition, all of these projects are elements of the *Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan*, adopted on March 8, 2013.

Complies with Federal, State, Local and Tribal Laws/Regulations (describe any concerns or potential conflicts).

This project helps to implement NEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans.

Readiness for Implementation (describe if the project has had any design or permitting work started or completed [attach permits or design work]. Please address any issues that may delay start or finish of the project).

Three projects in the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan* have completed permits as of July 2012, but have not yet been fully implemented (page 30 in the SWFRERP). In addition, several other projects are in design and permitting phases (see individual project descriptions in the FDEP database). After rules are provided by the Treasury Department regarding RESTORE Act funding, more will be understood regarding definitions of "previously authorized projects". At that point, the southwest Florida NEPs can assist the State in identifying such projects within *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan*.

Public Acceptance (describe any known or potential public approval or opposition to the project).

All projects contained in the *Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan*, including the 26 included in this *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Plan*, were reviewed and ranked through publicly-noticed meetings of a Work Group (January 28-29 and February 11, 2013), followed by a Joint NEP Management Board on Feb 20, 2013. The Joint NEP Policy Board, consisting of 39 elected officials, Water Management Governing Board members, and agency leads (listed on page 8 of the SWFRERP) approved the process and resulting plan on March 8, 2013. All meetings were noticed (1) in the Florida Administrative Register; (2) through direct notice to the three National Estuary Program Board members and all applicants; and (3) on the websites of the three NEPs.

Additional Information you may wish to provide (Please include any maps, designs, drawings, photos, or background resources that may assist in completely and accurately understanding the project):

Two documents are attached:

- Attachment 1- Map showing locations of the 26 projects included in the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan*.

- Attachment 2- A listing of the 26 projects included in the *Southwest Florida Regional Freshwater Flow Restoration Plan*.

The Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan (SWFRERP), approved by the Joint NEP Policy Board members on March 8, 2013 has been previously provided to FDEP.