

JEFFERSON COUNTY RESTORE ACT PROJECT

Project Name:

Cost Share Program for Implementing Best Management Practices for Agriculture

Submitting Entity:

I. Eligible activities:

1. Restoration and protection of our natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of Jefferson County and the Gulf Coast counties.
2. Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife and natural resources.

II. Executive Summary of the Project

Problem Statement:

Jefferson County historically and presently has a large farming community in nursery, row crops, cattle and dairy, hay and fruit/nut production. There are also a large number of horses for work and leisure purposes throughout the county. All these endeavors use large amounts of water and produce commensurate waste and runoff that effects the water quality draining into the streams, creeks and lakes, and ultimately to the aquifer or Gulf of Mexico.

The aquifer directly under Jefferson County is on a decline slope and alternate means of conservation and slowing the decline curve are needed, as well as maintaining water runoff quality.

Proposed Solution:

This project involves the development of a cost share program to implement best management practices (BMPs) for farming water usage. This entails education, planning and implementation of mini-projects on individual enterprises to reduce the amount of water consumed and to improve the quality of groundwater and water runoff from agricultural operations.

These techniques and program already have been proved to work and deliver the desired benefits. Two very successful programs can be expanded into Jefferson County. They are: 1) the Suwannee River Partnership, operated by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) and 2) Basic Management Action Plan conducted by the SRWMD and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in conjunction.

One full time staff member dedicated to this project is anticipated for the County Extension office to run the program and assist with the implement on individual farms, ranches and dairies.

Project Scope and Technical Description:

The educational component is anticipated to be held at the Jefferson County Extension Office (part of the University of Florida) where the best practices of water and soil management will be explained in detail. This would include the costs / benefits, technical materials, and installation and maintenance.

The scope of the agricultural operations for the proposed project would include but not be limited to container nursery, fruit and nut, equine, dairy and cow and calf, and row crop. In shot any operation that has a relatively large water usage. Some of the techniques to be employed are expected to be micro-irrigation, holding ponds with aquatic vegetation for filtration and water purification, cover crop and rotation, cover crop flattening, small damns for flowing water runoff and recycling water for multiple usage.

Dependencies and Constraints:

Interagency coordination and cooperation are required including sharing of physical and staff resources. The availability of appropriately trained and experienced staff is required for implementation success.

The number of operations to benefit from project implementation funds is dependent on the cost share for the sum of each individual implementation.

III. Cost summary/budget, matching/cooperative funds, cooperative support from governmental or other agencies.

The planning-level cost estimate for this project:

Planning and start-up	\$9,000
Staff member for 3 years	\$210,000
Facilities and supplies	\$9,000
Cost of share for farm implementations (10 implementations per year)	<u>\$120,000</u>
Planning level estimate total	\$348,000

Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) is expected to make financial contributions and provide technical support for the water usage best practices.

IV. Timeline for project, technical and environmental feasibility

It is anticipated that this project will be initially funded for a three year period after which it will be re-evaluated to see if the objectives of the project has been satisfied.

The project phases are anticipated to be:

- Inter agency agreement and mobilization
- Outreach activities and Education
- Technical implementation
 - Engagement and assessment

- Design and planning
- Acquisition and implementation
- Follow-up and maintenance
- Periodic check-up and reinforcement
- Annual reporting and program review

V. Qualifications of the Submitting Entity, the financial feasibility/sustainability and the economic feasibility and sustainability of the project (probability of success, etc.)

The financial and technical feasibility of this project and program of water and soil management has been proven in two already functional share programs.

The organizations engaged in this undertaking are engaged in this field full time and have vested interests in the success of both the farm operator and the technology to achieve the higher level objectives to protect and improve the environment, specifically its soils and water. These are namely: Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Jefferson County Extension Office (part of the University of Florida system)

VI. Anticipated results of the project:

The anticipated benefits of this project are:

- (1) Improved quality of runoff water from agricultural operations which ultimately flows into the Gulf of Mexico
- (2) Improved quality of water infiltrating into the aquifer and ultimately flowing into the Gulf of Mexico by way of the spring-fed streams of this area, and
- (3) Reduced use of groundwater from the aquifer
- (4) Lower operating costs for farming operations
- (5) More broadly educated farming, ranching and dairy operators to the benefits of employing proven best practice