

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

Restoration Project Information Sheet

A General Information

Organization Okaloosa County			
Contact Name (First Last) John Hofstad		Title Public Works Director	
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B Project Information

Project Name Choctawhatchee Bay Oyster Reef and Salt Marsh Restoration			
Location (e.g. John Smith National Wildlife Refuge) South Okaloosa County - Choctawhatchee Bay & Tributaries			
State(s) (Use 2-letter abbreviations separated by commas) FL		County/Parish Okaloosa	Watershed/Basin Choctawhatchee Bay
Latitude (decimal degrees)	Longitude (decimal degrees)	Project Size (Choose one) 5 miles acres tons	Affected Area 37,000 acres

C Project Description

Please provide more information about the proposed project. (Limit 2,750 characters.)

The Choctawhatchee Bay Restoration project is designed to re-establish natural oyster reefs, salt marsh, and improve water quality within the inshore waters in and around the Choctawhatchee Bay watershed.

Choctawhatchee Bay is an impaired Florida water body that outlets to the Gulf of Mexico. Covering an area of approximately 37,000 acres in Okaloosa County, this water body serves a vital economic and recreational role for the County. The Bay and its tributaries (Santa Rosa Sound, Cinco Bayou, Garniers Bayou, and Rocky Bayou) provide a valuable recreation source for County residents and area tourists, while the watershed supports recreational fishing and limited shellfish harvesting. For these reasons, it is important to safeguard the Bay against harmful pollutants.

Okaloosa County has water access to Choctawhatchee Bay at multiple shallow-water points that are suitable to oyster reef construction. Oysters are native to the Choctawhatchee Bay watershed and are an indicator of a healthy ecosystem and important for sustaining good water quality. Oysters are natural aquatic filters and reduce suspended solids thereby increasing water clarity. This project would not be intended to produce oyster beds for harvest as a food source and economic catalyst. In contrast, the project is intended as a water quality improvement for ecosystem health and recreational benefit.

The County proposes constructing multiple oyster reefs and salt marsh restorations at a series of locations along the Choctawhatchee Bay shoreline in coastal Okaloosa County. This effort will include an educational component for oyster gardening with instruction on how to construct oyster cages and raise oyster "spat" for propagating new oysters to replenish each reef site. The target audience for this effort will be waterfront property owners along the Bay watershed. The project will be coordinated with the Northwest FL Water Management District, Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance, and the City of Fort Walton Beach. Regional coordination is also ongoing with Walton County to the east to provide the greatest ecological benefits and natural resource protection.

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Restoration Project Information Sheet (continued)

D Project Type(s)	(Check all that apply)		
	☒ Restoration	☐ Debris Removal	☒ Maintenance/Management
	☐ Protection	☐ Land Acquisition	☒ Education
E Project Habitat(s)	(Check all that apply)		
	☐ Upland	☒ Marine/Estuarine Wetlands	☐ Beach/Dune
	☐ Riverine	☐ Freshwater Wetlands	☐ Subtidal (Nearshore/Offshore)
F Resource Benefit(s)	(Check all that apply)		
	☐ Marine Mammals	☒ Shellfish	☒ Water Column
	☐ Birds	☐ Terrestrial Wildlife	☐ Sediment/Benthos
	☐ Reptiles/Amphibians	☐ Corals	☐ Shoreline
	☒ Fish	☐ Vegetation	☒ Human Use (Recreational, Cultural)
Will the project directly benefit State- or Federally-listed species? If so, please list them. If not, please indicate N/A.			
Manatees			
G Project Status	Property/Resource Acquisition Not Started		Time to Implementation
	Project Planning/Design Not Started		7-12 months
	Project Permitting. Not Started		Time to Project Completion
			1-5 years
Is this project included under a regional or statewide plan? If so, please list: No			
H Project Costs	Estimated Cost \$3,000,000.00		Funding Available \$0.00
I Project Partners	Partner 1 Organization		
	City of Fort Walton Beach		
	Partner 1 Contact	Partner 1 Involvement	
	Michael Beedie	Collaboration with Construction	
	Partner 2 Organization		
	Northwest FL Water Management District		
	Partner 2 Contact	Partner 2 Involvement	
	Ron Bartel	Collaboration with Design, Construction and Monitoring	
	Partner 3 Organization		
	Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance		
	Partner 3 Contact	Partner 3 Involvement	
	Allison McDowell	Collaboration with Design, Construction and Monitoring	

Disclaimer:

The submission of project information does not guarantee project funding. Projects will be evaluated using criteria identified in OPA, NEPA, implementing regulations, and related laws. Selection and funding determinations will be made by the Trustee Council.