

RESTORE Act Ecosystem Restoration Project Proposals
for consideration in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Comprehensive Plan
2012

Contact Information: Sean Byrne, Director of Land Protection Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast Sean@ConservationFoundation.com	Date of Submittal: 11/01/12
Name of Project: Strategic Coastal Land Acquisition Project: Facilitating Coastal Ecosystem Adaptive Response to Sea Level Rise	Org and Rank: CFGF, Rank 1
Project Description: Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast is requesting up to \$90,000,000 for a multi-year, regional land conservation project designed to conserve and improve the types of rare coastal habitats that were negatively affected by the BP oil spill, which are critical to southwest Florida's long-term resiliency and vitality. The primary tool for accomplishing the goal will be the acquisition of fee-simple or conservation easement interests on strategically identified properties that comprise and extend ecological corridors consisting of rare coastal habitat. Corridor protection ensures that the coastal habitat will be able to migrate upslope as sea levels rise. One hundred high priority properties, or 3,579 acres, that comprise the strategic corridors have already been identified by the applicant using a scientifically rigorous, spatially explicit selection process, utilizing Geographic Information Systems and the available data regarding the properties' habitat quality (figure 1). Also considered is the properties' likelihood to be a transitional bridge to new habitat as climate change results in sea level rise along the Gulf of Mexico. The project will focus on the coastal landscapes of four contiguous counties in southwest Florida. The properties are privately owned and not already protected by a conservation plan, although some are adjacent to other protected conservation lands owned by county, state, and non-governmental organization entities. The requested amount of \$15,000,000 per year will conserve the types of rare coastal habitats negatively impacted by the BP oil spill, such as coastal mangroves, that are critical to Florida's ecological and economic well being. The most important properties, with the most motivated sellers, will be prioritized and protected in order to retain the greatest coastal value and impact at the least acquisition cost. Should fewer dollars per year be available, Conservation Foundation will protect as many high-priority properties as funding will allow. Conservation Foundation's proposed project will benefit from the technical assistance of conservation partners including Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council and The Nature Conservancy, as well as from collaboration with landowners of parcels adjacent to the 100 priority properties. Various government agencies and other quasi-governmental entities in the region have devised plans to address the effects of climate change, including sea level rise and its impact on wildlife habitat. This project would put action to those and other plans by non-governmental organizations and serve as a pilot project showcasing the use of land conservation as a tool to mitigate the effects of climate change and sea level rise.	
Project Location: Coastal Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, and Lee Counties in Florida	

Responsible Party: Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast				Partners:			
NEP: Sarasota Bay, Charlotte Harbor		Project Cost: \$90,000,000			Dollars Needed: \$90,000,000 over 6 years		
Start: 2013				Completion: 2018			
Status of Project Design and Permitting: 100 high priority properties, or 3,579 acres, that comprise strategic adaptation corridors have already been identified by the applicant using a scientifically rigorous, spatially explicit selection process, utilizing Geographic Information Systems and the available data regarding the properties' habitat quality. Furthermore, the applicant has already identified the landowners for each property, and has begun discussions with them. Conservation Foundation has protected over 8,000 acres on 29 properties in this area, and is uniquely capable of completing this project. Negotiations for the conservation and acquisition of properties are already underway, so acquisition funding could be put into action immediately.							
What Date or Year could Construction Feasibly Begin: 2013							
Your Proposed Timing of Funding (given permits, phasing, staging, etc.)							
FY	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	Total
	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$90,000,000
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quantify Environmental Results and How to Measure Them:							
Economic Benefits (including ecosystem services):							
Estimated number of Jobs Created or Preserved:							
How much Habitat will be restored and conserved?: Up to 3,579 acres. Conservation Foundation believes that it can reasonably conserve 597 acres per year.							
Quantify pollutant reductions: The magnitude of pollutant reductions will depend on the characteristics of the properties protected.							
What living coastal/marine resources will be improved and by how much?: Coastal natural communities such as sea grass, oyster reefs, mangrove swamps, salt marshes, maritime hammocks, and floodplain swamps will be preserved in perpetuity. The magnitude of the improvement, when compared with alternative land-use scenarios, will depend on the characteristics of the properties protected.							
How will community resilience be enhanced? All coastal natural communities will protect coastal infrastructure from storm damage and sea level rise. This is true both now, and in the future, where land protection prevents the addition of at-risk infrastructure. Additionally, this project will conserve ecological corridors that will facilitate upslope migration of critical coastal habitats during sea level rise.							
Additional Justification: The proposed conservation acquisition sites can also be utilized as staging areas for cleanup and treatment of injured wildlife in response to future oil spills along the southwest Florida gulf coast.							

Add any photos or maps that explain project:



Figure 1: A map of southwest Florida, spanning from Sarasota Bay to Charlotte Harbor. Properties identified for acquisition are located within the red project areas.