

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

Contact Information: Roland Ottolini					Date of Submittal: 1/7/2013		
Name of Project: South Lee County Surface Water Plan					Org and Rank: 6		
Background: The Estero Bay watershed includes all of Estero Bay, most of which lies within the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve, and the adjacent barrier islands. Hendry Creek, Mullock Creek, the Estero River, areas of Corkscrew Swamp, Flint Pen Strand, Spring Creek, and the Imperial River are major surface water features in the watershed. Hendry Creek, Mullock Creek, Estero River, Spring Creek, and the Imperial River experience some degree of tidal influenced. The portion of the Estero River east of U.S. 41 is a slow conveyance system and is considered a recharge area along with the Imperial River east of I-75 (SWFRPC, 1995). Local drainage canals tend to provide some regional flood protection during wet periods, but also lead to over-drainage during dry periods. Estero Bay has long been recognized as one of Florida's significant natural resources. The Bay was designated as the State's first Aquatic Preserve. The area in and around the Estero Bay watershed has undergone dramatic increases in the rate of residential and commercial development as well as population growth during the past 30 years. There are several documented, predicted, and perceived problems in the Estero Bay watershed. The problems are primarily related to: 1.) conversion of natural habitats to agricultural, commercial, and residential land uses; 2.) the construction of canals, ditches, and road beds; and 3.) filling, dredging, and draining of wetlands waterbodies that occur in association with the previous two factors. The watershed problems include: increased watershed size, increased freshwater inflows, increased nutrient and total suspended solids loading, lowered water tables, altered wetland and aquatic hydroperiods, loss of wetland, upland, and aquatic habitats, downstream flooding. Project Description: Connect I-75 outfall to headwaters of north branch of Estero River, acquire adequate right-of-way for north connection, remove rip-rap weir, evaluate structures in Country Creek, and evaluate adjustable control structures at Three Oaks Parkway to improve hydroperiods and increase residence time for water quality improvement and groundwater recharge.							
Project Location: Fort Myers, FL Lat/Long = 26 26'21.46", -81 49'13.309"							
Responsible Party: Lee County				Partners: SFWMD, FDEP, CREW Trust Board, City of Bonita Springs			
NEP: CHNEP		Project Cost: 20,373,000			Dollars Needed: 20,373,000		
Start: TBD				Completion: TBD			
Status of Project Design and Permitting: Conceptual plan.							
What Date or Year could Construction Feasibly Begin: TBD							
Your Proposed Timing of Funding (given permits, phasing, staging, etc.)							
FY	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	Total

Quantify Environmental Results and How to Measure Them: Meet target flows developed for the South Lee County Watershed Plan and the Southwest Florida Feasibility Study (Project Group 34).
Economic Benefits (including ecosystem services): Flood protection, improved water quality, improved habitat within the Estero River.
Estimated number of Jobs Created or Preserved: 230
How much Habitat will be restored and conserved?: 47,899 acres
Quantify pollutant reductions: TBD
What living coastal/marine resources will be improved and by how much?: Estero Bay
How will community resilience be enhanced? Improved flood control in the current landscape will prolong the period of habitability in the residential corridors of the Estero Bay tributaries as climate change and sea level rise occur. Habitat improvements due to restored historical flows will also mitigate the current effects of degradation on fisheries and improve the period of time these fisheries can be sustained during the onset of sea level rise.
Additional Justification: Lee County has entered into a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in 2012. The BMAP was promulgated due to TMDLs for total nitrogen in the Hendry Creek Basin, a tributary to the Estero Bay. The County is required to restore and protect water quality under this watershed restoration plan. In addition, the Estero Watershed is part of a system that has been designated Outstanding Florida Waters as well as discharging into State Aquatic Preserve and National Wildlife Refuges. The Estero Bay Watershed has been identified by numerous local, state and federal studies as an area of critical concern due to hydrologic disconnection resulting from development pressure in the region.

Add any photos or maps that explain project: