



A PROUD PAST
A BRIGHT FUTURE

**BOARD OF COUNTY
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www.baycountyfl.gov

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PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

840 W. 11th Street
Panama City, Florida 32401
(850) 248-8302

January 17, 2013

Ms. Jessica Kanes
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Apalachicola NERR/FDEP
108 Island Drive
Eastpoint, FL 32328

Dear Ms. Kanes:

Attached for Board of Trustee's consideration is the Bay County project to open the East Pass to St. Andrews Bay. Attached is the NRDA application for this project which enumerates the environmental restoration potential that exists with opening the East Pass. Under a DEP experimental project a test opening was dredged in 2001 the results of which indicated improved water quality and an anticipated improvement of sea grass beds and aquatic life in general.

If we can provide any further information or if there are any questions regarding this project please contact myself or Josee Cyr, P.E., County Stormwater Engineer, at 248-8301.

Sincerely,

Ken Schnell, P.E.
Public Works Director

KS/sr

Attachments (2)

cc: Dan Shaw, Assistant County Manager
Josee Cyr, P.E., County Stormwater Engineer

POTENTIAL DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL RESTORATION PROJECTS:

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO ASSIST WITH PROJECT ASSESSMENT

To help you propose projects to the State of Florida's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), we developed this project submission form. You are not required to complete this form to submit a project. However, completion of the form will help DEP gather the information required to completely and accurately evaluate a project against the selection and evaluation criteria. Where appropriate in the form, please provide references to any additional supporting information.

Project Name:

East Pass Restoration Project

NRDA-NOAA Project Confirmation Number:

Location for Project Implementation: *(For example, city and county, GIS coordinates if known.)*

The proposed project is at the location of the historic pass between St Andrew Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. It is located in Bay County, Florida approximately seven miles east of the Panama City Harbor Entrance Channel.

Brief Project Narrative: *(Describe what the project will do.)*

The proposed project is to re-open East Pass along the path of the historic channel linking St Andrew Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The proposed project is expected to result in improved water quality and clarity for 4,000 or more acres of St Andrew Bay lying between Shell Island and Tyndall Air Force Base. In addition, the proposed project will also enhance habitat for endangered species such as the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse, sea turtles, and the piping plover. Creating additional sand dunes with the spoil material will enhance habitat the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse and the channel will create a barrier making it more difficult for predators to reach the mice on Shell Island. Creating additional beach with the spoil material will enhance nesting habitat for endangered sea turtles and will make ideal habitat for the piping plover.

Estimated Project Costs: *(Describe the costs of the project, including any assumptions for contingency and ongoing operations and maintenance. If possible, attach a schedule of anticipated costs, by year, over the anticipated project life.)*

The proposed project has total initial cost of \$18,242,500 for construction with an estimated \$1,200,000 every 4 years maintenance cost.

Cost of Proposed Project

Item Description	Cost
Environmental Impact Statement	\$ 760,000
Engineering Design and Specifications	\$ 1,350,000
Beach and Inlet Management Plan	\$ 100,000
Regulatory Permitting	\$ 337,500
Mitigation Plan and Operation	\$ 200,000
Environmental Monitoring	\$ 225,000
Channel Construction Cost	\$15,000,000
Project management	\$ 270,000
Total	\$18,242,500

Anticipated Project Outcome with Respect to Screening Criteria

S1. Technically and administratively feasible: *(Briefly describe the critical technologies involved and any relevant past experience with similar projects.)*

The County Public Works Departments routinely engage engineers and contractors for civil works projects and marine activities similar to the proposed project.

S2. Provides environmental benefits: *(Briefly describe the nature, magnitude, and timing of any environmental benefits attributable to the project and any potential environmental costs associated with implementing or maintaining the project, e.g., loss of a habitat or conversion of habitat from one type to another during implementation.)*

The environmental benefits resulting from the proposed project include improved water quality and clarity for 4,000 or more acres of St Andrew Bay between Shell Island and Tyndall AFB. The proposed project will also enhance habitat for an endangered beach mouse, sea turtles and the piping plover. Creating additional sand dunes will enhance habitat for the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse and the channel will create a barrier making it more difficult for predators to reach the mice on Shell Island.

Seagrasses are extremely important components of the St Andrew bay ecosystem and will benefit from the proposed project. Their relative scarcity and declining acreage makes it ever more important to protect the existing seagrass beds. Seagrass beds provide spawning, feeding, nursery, and protective habitat for a wide range of aquatic organisms including many of recreational and commercial value. Although estimates vary widely, up to 98 percent of the total commercial fisheries catch in the gulf is made up of species that are dependent on estuaries during some part of their life cycle. Up to 90 percent of the fisheries value is estuarine dependent. Many commercially and recreationally important species spend all or part of their lives in estuaries, especially salt march and seagrass habitat. It is well known that growth and distribution of sea grasses are dependent on a variety of environmental factors with light and water clarity having the greatest influence. The proposed project will benefit Essential Fish Habitat by restoring water quality and clarity for 4,000 or more acres of this portion of St. Andre Bay.

In addition, benefits from the proposed project include enhancing habitat for endangered species including the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse, sea turtles and the piping plover. Creating additional sand dunes will enhance habitat for the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse. Beach expansion will create additional habitat for nesting sea turtles and provide a protective barrier to the sand dunes. The separation of Shell Island from the mainland would also have beneficial impact on the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse and sea turtles by reducing access to the island by predators. The pass will make it more difficult for predators such as cats, dogs, coyote, fox, raccoon, and snakes to reach the beach mice from the mainland. Re-opening the pass will restore suitable habitat for wintering piping plover.

S3. Does not conflict with any ongoing or planned response or remediation work: *(Briefly describe ongoing response activities in the project implementation area, if any, and why the project does or does not interfere with that work.)*

No response activities are anticipated to be scheduled in the project area.

S4. Complies with applicable and relevant federal, state, local, and tribal laws and regulations: (No information is needed for this screening criteria.)

The project will be designed and permitted to comply with applicable and relevant federal, state, local and tribal laws and regulations.

Anticipated Project Outcome with Respect to Evaluation Criteria

E1. Will restore, rehabilitate, or replace a natural resource or service¹ believed/demonstrated to have been injured as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill or associated response activities: (Briefly describe the nature of any relationship between the new/improved resources or services and those adversely impacted by the oil spill.)

The original pass historically supported a healthy seagrass-based estuarine ecosystem. With the creation of the Panama City Harbor Entrance Channel in 1934, East Pass progressively shoaled in and completely closed in 1998 causing a decrease in water quality and clarity degradation, larval exchange in St Andrew Bay and decrease of habitat. Although not directly damaged by the DWH incident, The East Pass restoration affords one of the best opportunities to achieve valuable environmental offsets to benefit the efforts to restore the greater Gulf of Mexico ecosystem of which the St. Andrew Bay system provides an important nursery function.

E2. Is located in, or nearby, resources or services injured by the deepwater horizon spill: (Briefly describe where the project would be implemented with respect to past/ongoing remediation work.)

The DWH period of oil release from the MC252 well coincided with the peak spawning and larval development cycles of numerous Gulf species. Due to the lengthy larval phase of many species, Gulf currents transport them eastward around the Big Bend coastline of Florida. Recruitment into the adult populations of fish, shellfish and other organisms was severely impacted by surface oil slicks and dissolved pollutants. The proposed project for the East Pass Restoration intends to directly restore a degraded aquatic nursery within the resource area damaged by the DWH incident.

The proposed East Pass project is located approximately seven miles east of the Panama City Harbor Entrance in Panama City, Florida. All offshore response activities have ended in the project area. The working space for project construction activities in the Gulf are minimal and of short duration. No interference with response activities is anticipated from the project's limited Gulf-side construction work.

¹ In this form, "Services" (or "natural resource services") refers to the functions performed by a natural resource for the benefit of another natural resource and/or the public. Services can be "ecological services" – physical, chemical or biological functions that one natural resource provides for another (such as provision of food) – or "human services" – the use of natural resources used by humans that provide value to the public (such as hunting and fishing).

E3. Is ready for implementation, e.g., design, permitting, and necessary impacts assessments have been completed:

(Briefly describe where in the permitting process the project stands along with an estimated date of when the project can be implemented if it is not currently ready.)

Key players have all participated in preliminary discussion regarding the project and its benefits. However, due to limited funding the project has not been designed or permitted.

E4. Is cost effective: *(Briefly describe why you think the project is cost effective.)*

The construction cost of the project is estimated to be \$18,242,000. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection determined the annual economic benefit value of healthy seagrasses to be approximately \$20,500 per year. Therefore, the approximately 1,000 acres of seagrass have an economic value of approximately \$20,500,000 a year with a Benefit: Cost Ratio is 1.12 a year. This benefit accrues over the 20-year operation-monitoring period with a life project cost of \$20.94 million compared to a life EBV of \$311.85 million resulting in a Benefit: Cost Ratio of 14.89.

Presently, the annual EBV of the bay is only a fraction of that as a functioning nursery and the benefit of providing protection for the endangered species present.

E5. Has a high potential for long-term success as demonstrated by incorporating established/reliable methods and technologies: *(Briefly describe if/how critical methods and technologies that will be used to implement the project could be considered reliable or proven.)*

E6. Is likely to provide benefits rapidly following implementation: *(Briefly describe the anticipated change in benefits anticipated over time.)*

When Bay County performed the experimental reopening in 2001, the water quality of the bay improved and there was a resurgent in scallops and improved submerged grass beds.

E7. Has a high likelihood of public acceptance: *(Briefly describe evidence to support the given answer based on surveys or results and assessments from past projects. Known or likely opposition to a project should be recognized.)*

Survey results that substantiate the public's desire to preserve and restore coastal environments, including estuaries are numerous and published results reside in the libraries of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida universities, the National Marine Fisheries Service and within the USEPA-National Estuary Program (Clean Water Act Section 320).

Citizens and environmental organizations within Bay County have been petitioning the Board of County Commissioners for their continued support for reopening the East Pass. In addition, Commissioners have been personally involved in meeting with environmental regulatory agencies to obtain support.

WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

Submit this form via email to Rebecca Wintering at Rebecca.Wintering@dep.state.fl.us . If you have any questions or concerns about the process for submitting a project, please contact Rebecca Wintering at:

Rebecca Wintering
Environmental Specialist III
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 235
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Rebecca.Wintering@dep.state.fl.us

A current summary of projects is accessible through the Florida DEP's website at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/projects.htm> (click on "View the list of restoration project ideas").

Paperwork Reduction Act Information

Natural Resource Damage Assessment Restoration Project Information Sheet

Responses to this collection are voluntary. Collection of restoration project information will be undertaken in order to provide information to Natural Resource Trustees to develop potential restoration alternatives for natural resource injuries and service losses requiring restoration during the restoration planning phase of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 20 minutes including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspects of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, Restoration Center, Louisiana State University, Sea Grant Building, Room 124C Baton Rouge, LA 70803.

Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

The identity of respondents will not remain confidential. The information collected will be reviewed for compliance with the NOAA Section 515 Guidelines established in response to the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, and certified before dissemination.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

Restoration Project Information Sheet

Guidelines for Completion

Please complete all of the information requested with the best information that you have available. Limited attachments are acceptable if they are necessary to adequately describe the project, however every effort should be made to have all pertinent information included on the Restoration Project Information Sheet. Below are specific guidelines for completion.

A. General Information

Organization: The name of the organization or agency submitting the information.
If you are applying as an individual indicate by filling this section with "N/A".

Contact Name: The first and last name of a person who can be contacted for additional information.

Title: The title (or position) of the above individual.

Address: The mailing address of the above individual.

Phone number/Email: The phone number and email of the above individual.

Organization Website: The web page of the above organization or agency.

B. Project Information

Project name: The common name of the project, usually a combination of location and restoration activity (e.g., Cross Bayou Mangrove Restoration).

Location: The location where the restoration activity will take place (e.g., East Timbalier Island).

State: Two-letter abbreviation of the state (s) where the project will take place.
If the project occurs across several states list all states separated by commas.

County/Parish: County or Parish where the project will be completed. If the project occurs across multiple counties or parishes list only the primary county or parish name.

Watershed/Basin: The watershed where the project will be completed. If the project occurs across multiple watersheds list only the primary watershed.

Latitude/Longitude: Provide a latitude/longitude of the central location of the project activity. If the activity occurs over a large area you may also attach a map of the area of the activity.

Project Size: The size of the area where project activities will occur; designated by linear miles, acres, or tonnage (e.g., area of plantings in a riparian buffer).

Affected Area: The area affected or influenced by the project activity; designated by acres (e.g., area of water quality improvement as a result of riparian buffer plantings).

C. Project Description

A description of the project objectives, activities to be completed and expected outcomes; including information on the benefits of this project to the public and environment. If applicable, use this section to provide additional refinement to habitat and/or resource benefit (e.g., cypress wetland, barrier island). In addition, feel free to attach other information, maps, or diagrams concerning your project.
Maximum 2,750 characters.

D. Project Type(s)

The type of activity the project will complete to address the impacts to priority resources or habitats. Check all that apply.

Restoration: Activities conducted to create, enhance, or restore an injured resource or habitat.

Protection: Activities conducted to protect a resource or habitat by removing the threat to that resource or habitat (e.g., shoreline stabilization, buoys or markers, nest protection).

Debris Removal: Removal of debris to restore and protect a resource or habitat.

Land Acquisition: The acquisition and conservation of land in perpetuity to protect priority resources or habitats.

Maintenance/Management: Activities conducted to maintain or manage the quality of a resource or habitat (e.g., prescribed burns).

Education: Education of a targeted audience to restore or protect priority resources or habitats.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

Restoration Project Information Sheet

Guidelines for Completion *(continued)*

E. Project Habitat(s)

The type of habitat that the project activities are located within or will benefit. Check all that apply.

<i>Upland:</i>	Regions located away from coastlines and the floodplains of rivers, streams, and other bodies of water.
<i>Riverine:</i>	Regions located within or adjacent to open freshwater areas that occur within a defined channel.
<i>Marine/Estuarine Wetlands:</i>	Regions that are inundated or saturated by saltwater on a consistent basis.
<i>Freshwater Wetlands:</i>	Regions that are inundated or saturated by freshwater (e.g., surface or groundwater) on a consistent basis to support saturation tolerant plant species.
<i>Beach/Dune:</i>	Regions along a sandy shoreline that include the area from the mean low tide through the dune system.
<i>Subtidal (nearshore/offshore):</i>	Coastal regions that are permanently inundated with salt water (e.g., ocean).

F. Resource Benefit(s)

Primary resources that would benefit from the project. Check all that apply.

<i>Marine Mammals:</i>	Whales (dolphin), Manatees, Otters, etc.
<i>Birds:</i>	All birds
<i>Reptiles/amphibians:</i>	Sea turtles, alligators, snakes, lizards, frogs, etc.
<i>Fish:</i>	Nearshore and offshore fish
<i>Shellfish:</i>	Oysters, shrimp, crabs, etc.
<i>Terrestrial Wildlife:</i>	All upland animals
<i>Corals:</i>	Shallow and deep water corals
<i>Vegetation:</i>	All plants (e.g., submergent, emergent, and terrestrial)
<i>Water column:</i>	Water quality and plankton
<i>Sediment / Benthos:</i>	Sediment permanently inundated with water, and organisms associated with the sediment (e.g., worms)
<i>Shoreline:</i>	Land area adjacent to water (e.g., beaches, marsh)
<i>Human Use:</i>	Improved recreation, infrastructure, community resilience, etc.
<i>Status Species:</i>	Will this project directly benefit State or Federally listed threatened and/or endangered species? If so, please list them. If not, please indicate N/A.

G. Project Status

<i>Property/Resource Acquisition:</i>	Acquisition of the property, resource, or landowner agreements (e.g., easements) in which the project activity will occur. Indicate the status by selecting NOT STARTED, IN PROGRESS, COMPLETED, or N/A.
<i>Planning/Design:</i>	Project planning and engineered design of the project activity. Indicate the status by selecting NOT STARTED, IN PROGRESS, COMPLETED, or N/A.
<i>Permitting:</i>	Acquisition of all local, state, and federal permits needed to implement the project activity (e.g., NEPA). Indicate the status by selecting NOT STARTED, IN PROGRESS, COMPLETED, or N/A.
<i>Time to Implementation:</i>	Number of months required to prepare for the start of project activity.
<i>Time to Completion:</i>	Following the start of the project, number of months required to complete the project activity.
<i>Regional Planning:</i>	Is this project included under a regional or statewide plan/initiative? (YES or NO) If yes, please list the plan/initiative in the space provided.

H. Project Cost

<i>Estimated Cost:</i>	The total cost of the project including any funds contributed by the applicant or other organizations (e.g., match funds).
<i>Funding available:</i>	Monies (from the applicant or partnering organizations/agencies) already committed for partial funding of the project activity. Indicate amount in the adjacent box.

H. Project Partners

Please provide the name, contact, and involvement (equipment, matching funds, design, etc.) of other organizations or agencies with the project activities.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

Restoration Project Information Sheet

A General Information

Organization Bay County Board of County Commissioners			
Contact Name (First Last) Josee Cyr, P.E.		Title County Stormwater Engineer	
Address 840 W. 11th Street		City Panama City	State FL
Phone Number 850-248-8301 ext.		Email jcyr@baycountyfl.gov	
Organization Website www.baycountyfl.gov			
ZIP 32401			

B Project Information

Project Name East Pass Restoration Project			
Location (e.g. John Smith National Wildlife Refuge) The project is located at the historical pass between St Andrew Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.			
State(s) (Use 2-letter abbreviations separated by commas) FL	County/Parish Bay	Watershed/Basin St Andrew	
Latitude (decimal degrees) 30.617	Longitude (decimal degrees) 30.05	Project Size (Choose one) miles 100 acres	Affected Area tons 4,000 acres

C Project Description

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

The proposed project is to re-open East Pass along the path of the historic channel linking St Andrew Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The proposed project is expected to result in improved water quality and clarity for 4,000 or more acres of St Andrew Bay lying between Shell Island and Tyndall Air Force Base. In addition, the proposed project will also enhance habitat for endangered species such as the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse, sea turtles, and the piping plover. Creating additional sand dunes with the spoil material will enhance habitat the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse and the channel will create a barrier making it more difficult for predators to reach the mice on Shell Island. Creating additional beach with the spoil material will enhance nesting habitat for endangered sea turtles and will make ideal habitat for the piping plover.

The environmental benefits resulting from the proposed project include improved water quality and clarify for 4,000 or more acres of St Andrew Bay between Shell Island and Tyndall AFB. The proposed project will also enhance habitat for an endangered beach mouse, sea turtles and the piping plover. Creating additional sand dunes will enhance habitat for the Choctawhatchee Beach Mouse and the channel will create a barrier making it more difficult for predators to reach the mice on Shell Island.

Seagrasses are extremely important components of the St Andrew bay ecosystem and will benefit from the proposed project. Their relative scarcity and declining acreage makes it ever more important to protect the existing seagrass beds. Seagrass beds provide spawning, feeding, nursery, and protective habitat for a wide range of aquatic organisms including many of recreational and commercial value. Although estimates vary widely, up to 98 percent of the total commercial fisheries catch in the gulf is made up of species that are dependent on estuaries during some part of their life cycle. Up to 90 percent of the fisheries value is estuarine dependent. Many commercially and recreationally important species spend all or part of their lives in estuaries, especially salt march and seagrass habitat. It is well known that growth and distribution of sea grasses are dependent on a variety of environmental factors with light and water clarity having the greatest influence.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

Restoration Project Information Sheet (continued)

D	Project Type(s)	(Check all that apply)	
		☒ Restoration	☐ Debris Removal
		☒ Protection	☐ Land Acquisition
			☐ Maintenance/Management
			☐ Education
E	Project Habitat(s)	(Check all that apply)	
		☒ Upland	☐ Marine/Estuarine Wetlands
		☐ Riverine	☐ Freshwater Wetlands
			☒ Beach/Dune
			☐ Subtidal (Nearshore/Offshore)
F	Resource Benefit(s)	(Check all that apply)	
		☐ Marine Mammals	☒ Shellfish
		☒ Birds	☒ Terrestrial Wildlife
		☐ Reptiles/Amphibians	☐ Corals
		☐ Fish	☒ Vegetation
			☒ Water Column
			☒ Sediment/Benthos
			☒ Shoreline
			☐ 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.	
G	Project Status		
	Property/Resource Acquisition	N/A	Time to implementation
	Project Planning/Design	In Progress	Time to Project Completion
	Project Permitting	Not Started	
	Is this project included under a regional or statewide plan? If so, please list:		
H	Project Costs		
	Estimated Cost	Funding Available	
	\$18,242,500.00		
I	Project Partners		
	Partner 1 Organization		
	Partner 1 Contact	Partner 1 Involvement	
	Partner 2 Organization		
	Partner 2 Contact	Partner 2 Involvement	
	Partner 3 Organization		
	Partner 3 Contact	Partner 3 Involvement	

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.