

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: *(Include project number from DEP's existing list of submitted projects, if applicable.)*

W-3 Recreation Loss Projects: land acquisition and boardwalks and dune crossovers

Reference the "Coastal Dune Lakes Outfall Properties"

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

Santa Rosa Beach, Walton County

Eastern Lake: -86 5.79, 30 18.39

Oyster Lake: -86 14.84, 30 21.1

Little Redfish: -86 11.21, 30 20.06

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

This proposal is to purchase property in the historical sweep of three of the coastal dune lake outlets to the Gulf of Mexico in Walton County. The attached proposal package provides more detailed information and supporting documentation for this project. With loss of recreational opportunities for both local residents and tourists, this proposal is made to offset that loss and provide future public access and protection of dune habitat and coastal dune lakes as described in FNAI as rare and globally imperiled. Beach dunes around the lakes provide primary nesting habitat for numerous shorebirds, resting and foraging habitat for the migrating and over-wintering threatened piping plovers, and year-round habitat for the endangered Choctawhatchee beach mouse (CBM). The Walton County Land Development Code now enforces a 300 foot zone of protection for coastal dune lakes (Section 4.02.06(B)) and a 50-foot buffer around each of the coastal dune lake outlets. However, the identified sweep area for many of the dune lakes exceeds these protection areas. Acquiring coastal dune lake outfalls will help maintain these areas in a natural condition, and increase the amount of undisturbed, contiguous habitat for these threatened and endangered species.

Estimated Project Costs: *(Describe the costs of the project, including any assumptions for contingency and ongoing operations and maintenance. Identify other available funding sources such as matching funds, in kind contributions or state or federal dollars. If possible, attach a schedule of anticipated costs, by year, over the anticipated project life.)*

The value of the seven relevant properties at Oyster Lake, Little Redfish Lake and Eastern Lake is estimated to be \$4,546,165. This estimate was derived from the Walton County Property Appraiser data. No formal appraisals have been conducted. Additional closing costs at 10% of total value are approximately \$450,000, for a total cost of approximately \$5 million. There are no anticipated future costs for operations or maintenance since these properties are to remain undeveloped.

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.)*

No critical technologies are necessary for the purchase of this property. If appropriate, Walton County has entered into conservation easements in the past and is knowledgeable in developing a conservation management plan. Undeveloped property requires minimal maintenance.

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.)*

Coastal dune lakes are rare worldwide. In the U.S., they are almost exclusively found along the Gulf Coast. The three lakes in this project proposal have passes that open to the Gulf, as most coastal dune lakes do, which allow salt water and fresh water to continually exchange and flush out the lakes, creating some of the most distinct ecosystems in the world. They are characterized by the intermittent nature of this connection to the Gulf. The outfall areas are part of the dynamic ever-changing coastal environment. These areas are not stable and are continually subjected to storm and wave overwash and shifting sands. These coastal features are recognized by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory as globally rare and critically imperiled throughout the state of Florida. This proposal will protect the environmentally sensitive outfalls and associated beach dunes and habitat for endangered and threatened species such as piping plovers and beach mice.

Research has shown that the outfalls have migrated east and west for thousands of years and that they will likely continue to do so. Development restrictions at the coast have reduced but not eliminated the threat of structural damage due to migration of the outlet. But, any construction within the sweep area stands a high chance of structural damage at some undetermined time. Buildable lots and homes encroaching into the outfall area result in situations that conflict with property protection vs. natural outfall processes. The purchase of these lands will not only help minimize future structural damage but permit the outlets to function more naturally without the need to be mechanically opened/closed.

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.)*

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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.)*

In the days following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, Walton County constructed sand berms at the coastal dune lake outfalls to protect the lakes. The environmental impact from the oil and related construction activity around the lakes has yet to be determined, but this activity resulted in loss of use by humans and wildlife. This project will provide additional public access to the coastal dune lakes and adjacent beach while protecting and preserving important habitat and the natural processes of these rare coastal dune lakes.

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.)*

All Walton County beaches were impacted by tar balls and/or mats. The construction activity of installing and removing the sand berms were at these outfalls. The coastal dune lakes are immediately adjacent to the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico.

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.)*

No permitting is necessary. A minimal amount of time will be needed to acquire the property and prepare the necessary legal documents.

E4. Is cost effective: *(Briefly describe why you think the project is cost effective. Discuss whether this project is more cost effective than alternative projects which would provide similar resource or service benefits.)*

Purchasing beach-front property is historically expensive. At this time, the value of property is at historical lows. The environmental benefits to acquiring this property far exceed the costs. Leaving the property undeveloped will further reduce any future maintenance costs.

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).

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.)*

No critical methods or technologies are needed to implement this project. No development is proposed for this property.

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

Once the property is acquired by the County, it will not be subject to development and the natural processes of the lakes will be protected immediately.

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.)*

This proposal has already been publicly discussed and widely accepted at the County's Coastal Dune Lake Advisory Board (CDLAB) meetings and public workshops held following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The CDLAB formally recommended to the Board of County Commissioners on November 29, 2006 to pursue the purchase or obtain control of the historical outfall corridor of all the coastal dune lakes.

Around this time period, Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance worked with the CDLAB and approximately 50 stakeholders to develop a Lake Management Plan for the Coastal Dune Lakes. This Plan identified as one of its priorities the acquisition of outfall properties at the coastal dune lakes. In fact, "stakeholders who attended the August 25, 2008 lake management meeting embraced this option with the understanding that this is a long-term goal because it is a very expensive and time consuming option." The report also states, "the need for natural functioning of the outlets was one of the most often voiced opinions by the vast majority of stakeholders."

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:

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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").