

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

Restoration Project Information Sheet

A General Information

Organization Bay County, FL c/o West Bay Preservation Advisory Committee			
Contact Name (First Last) James Muller		Title Consultant	
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Organization Website			

B Project Information

Project Name West Bay of the St. Andrew Bay Estuary and Ecosystem			
Location (e.g. John Smith National Wildlife Refuge) West Bay, St. Andrew Bay, Bay County			
State(s) (Use 2-letter abbreviations separated by commas) FL		County/Parish Bay County	Watershed/Basin St. Andrew Bay
Latitude (decimal degrees) 30.26	Longitude (decimal degrees) 85.78	Project Size (Choose one) miles 40,000 acres tons	Affected Area acres

C Project Description

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

The West Bay of the St. Andrew Bay Estuary project offers the unusual opportunity to protect an almost undeveloped estuary in Florida. Located in the Panama City, FL area, the St. Andrew Bay Ecosystem is one of the most diverse estuarine ecosystems in North America, reportedly supporting more than 3600 species in its watershed.

The St. Andrew Bay Estuary, consisting of West Bay, North Bay, East Bay and St. Andrew Bay, is believed to contain the largest amount of seagrass in the Florida panhandle – more than 9800 acres, as well as 9200 acres of saltmarsh and 900 acres of tidal flats. The system supports commercially harvested oyster reefs in West, North and East Bays. The uplands surrounding the estuary support at least 15 natural communities.

West Bay is the western-most arm of the St. Andrew Bay. Almost all of the more than 30 miles of the West Bay shoreline and 40 miles of creek and tributary frontage/buffer lands are undeveloped. Most of the uplands are undeveloped and are in silviculture, owned by the St. Joe Company.

The 2003 Nature Conservancy study of the West Bay watershed identified the most sensitive lands, totaling approximately 40,000 acres – the West Bay Preservation Area (WBPA). According to the report, "Protection of the WBPA would preserve the majority of the coastal lands encompassing a near-pristine - and within Florida's panhandle, a unique – estuarine ecosystem. Few opportunities with the significance of protecting a substantial portion of a nearly self-contained watershed and estuary it helps to feed have ever been made available by a single owner."

About 14,500 acres in the WBPA are already protected through mitigation agreements, and additional lands are protected by easements. At least 4500 other acres are available for conservation purchase or easement. Acquisition of these lands would complement other conservation efforts in the region, such as the Econfinia Creek Water Management Area and the Pine Log State Forest.

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Restoration Project Information Sheet (continued)

D Project Type(s)

(Check all that apply)

- ☒ Restoration
☒ Protection

- ☐ Debris Removal
☒ Land Acquisition

- ☒ Maintenance/Management
☒ Education

E Project Habitat(s)

(Check all that apply)

- ☒ Upland
☒ Riverine

- ☒ Marine/Estuarine Wetlands
☒ Freshwater Wetlands

- ☐ Beach/Dune
☒ Subtidal (Nearshore/Offshore)

F Resource Benefit(s)

(Check all that apply)

- ☒ Marine Mammals
☒ Birds
☒ Reptiles/Amphibians
☒ Fish

- ☒ Shellfish
☒ Terrestrial Wildlife
☐ Corals
☒ 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.

Anticipated to benefit approximately 15 listed plant spp & at least 5 listed animal spp

G Project Status

Property/Resource Acquisition In Progress

Project Planning/Design In Progress

Project Permitting. In Progress

Time to Implementation

0-3 months

Time to Project Completion

1-5 years

Is this project included under a regional or statewide plan? Yes

If so, please list:

West Bay Preservation Area/Bay County Optional Sector Plan/FL Forever applic in prep

H Project Costs

Estimated Cost

Funding Available

I Project Partners

Partner 1 Organization

Bay County, County Manager, 840 West 11th Street, Panama City, FL 32401

Partner 1 Contact

(850) 248-8140, boccc@baycountyfl.gov

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.