

# 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.

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

Wk-12 MASHES SANDS AMENITIES– BOARDWALK, OBSERVATION PLATFORMS, WALKING PATHS & PED-BRIDGE

**Contact Information:**

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

Mashes Sands Beach, Wakulla County, Florida

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

This project would provide a myriad of year-round nature experiences for all visitors to the Mashles Sands Beach area by providing a series of potential connected observation platforms through boardwalks and walking paths with informative/educational signage. It would protect the environment, native vegetation and wildlife by providing safe but unobtrusive opportunities for visitors to view the area for multiple purposes including viewing wildlife, photography or just simply enjoying the beauty of the area. This project will help to stabilize and beautify the area making it more attractive to all visitors, encouraging tourism, nature enthusiast and stabilizing the environment for native vegetation, wildlife and marine life.

Mashes Sands is the collective name for a complex of low dunes, sandy beach and a shallow offshore flat of rippled, sandy shoals. It is surrounded by three bodies of water; the Apalachee Bay, Dickerson Bay, and the Ochlockonee Bay, offering both salt and fresh water access. Due to its proximity to other surrounding counties, people venture out to the Park for outdoor recreational activities. Nature observation for marsh and shore birds and waterfowl is ideal year round. Fish commonly caught in the area are mullet, redfish, speckled trout, white trout, and flounder, fishing in the Ochlockonee River offers many freshwater species. While no records of marine turtle nesting have been found for the Park, it is not impossible that should proper beach conditions be present, a marine turtle nest might occur. Vegetation is diverse due to the salt and fresh water bodies. Wildlife can be observed feeding on the many different species of fruits and flowers. The Park is a State owned property leased to Wakulla County since 1983, for the purpose of outdoor recreation. Local and Regional Impact: The Park is included in what is known as the "Ochlockonee Barriers" a 22.1 mile stretch of beaches extending from Turkey Point, Franklin County to the St. Marks River, Wakulla County. Within this area is an important regional network of federal, state and private conservation lands including the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Apalachicola National Forest, Tate's Hell State Forest, Ochlockonee River State Park, and Phipps Preserve. This chain of parks and conservation lands provides a regional variety of resource-based recreation opportunities and represents nearly every outdoor recreational user.

This application is for observation platforms, boardwalks, a wooden pedestrian bridge, walking paths and signage because there are numerous areas of the Park are not accessible due to terrain and, allowing foot traffic could endanger the vegetation, wild- and marine life. Boardwalks, walking paths, observation platforms and education kiosks would enhance visitors experience to the Park and provide protection/education of the environment. At a minimum this project will require site locations, design, surveying, permitting and construction.

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**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.)*

It is estimated that this project could cost \$897,000 however it could be more or less since cost estimates are based on using cost from professional consultants volunteering their services and costs for recent unrelated projects.

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**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.)*

Wakulla County has a great amount of experience with this type of project. In fact, the County constructed the existing boardwalks in Mashles Sands Park which will be very similar in construction techniques and permitting. The County plans to use a professional engineer to design and permit the new launch facilities in two locations as depicted on the Conceptual Master Plan for Mashles Sands Park. This will involve design, permitting and CEI to support the construction services.

**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.)*

This project would provide a dedicated paths and observation platform providing visitors dedicated paths and viewing areas while visiting the Mashas Sands Beach area. It would provide a way of steering visitors away from and off of sensitive or unsafe areas as they explore and take in the total experience that Mashas Sands Beach has to offer. It will work toward stabilize entire area, providing for better experience for all visitors as well as helping to improve the native vegetation and wildlife habitat.

**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 it does not.

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

N/A.

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#### **Anticipated Project Outcome with Respect to Evaluation Criteria**

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**E1. Will restore, rehabilitate, or replace a natural resource or service<sup>1</sup> 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.)*

Wakulla County, like the other 7 counties from Escambia County to Wakulla County, experienced negative perceptions leading to a decline in tourism, sports fisherman, and seafood sales. The County continues to experience some negative perceptions and concerns for the health and of its seafood, including that of the ecosystems/habitats required for local species to live and thrive.

**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.)*

These projects are located in the area of the deepwater horizon spill.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.)*

Much in-kind work has been completed for this project by volunteers, County staff and its elected officials. Some of the County's consultants volunteered to provide information and planning services to assist with visioning future improvements and to determine the planning-level costs for the project. The Conceptual Master Plan (enclosed) depicts much of this body of work. Currently, the County does not have the funding to move forward with the boardwalks, observation platforms and walking paths projects as outlined in this application. It is the hope of the County that funds from this application be used for engineering design, permitting and construction. Cost estimates for this project, as stated above were done through volunteers and costs for recent unrelated projects.

**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.)*

This project is highly cost effective since this area represents one of the most high-profile beach access points in Wakulla County. Mashas Sands Park represents the County's attempt at ecosystem and environmental restoration since this area was originally intended for residential development. Due to the efforts of the County and through previous funding and grant opportunities, Wakulla County was able to make significant strides in restoring the area closer to its original condition. Much of the beach areas, wetlands, marsh areas and tributaries are in much better condition than they were some years ago. Efforts to improve access to the beaches and limited impervious surfaces have resulted in very low impact to the natural environment. This project is very cost effective since it will be partially maintained as a result of relatively low cost user fees, and low maintenance facilities. However, this area will have a very high benefit to the community as it will foster opportunities for interactions with the unique natural environment. These facilities are needed since the County does not have any other similar facilities nearby.

**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.)*

Prior to the oil spill, this park was used widely by boaters, fisherman and people using the existing board walks and beaches. As a result of the oil spill, much of those users went away. The boardwalks, observation platforms and walking paths project improvements will bring those users back and with the new bike trail and an increase in ecotourism, there will be a need to charge a user fee. There are many similar facility projects that were completed in Wakulla County. These similar projects were used for estimated project costs and they are very similar in permitting requirements. In summary, these types of projects have been completed recently in Wakulla County and there are multiple contractors who would be expected to bid on such a project.

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

It is believed that this project will have immediate results and benefits to the economy of County as well as the environment. The County has a new and ongoing program of advertising and promoting the County as an ecotourism destination. Recently, the County produced the first smart phone app for use to promote the County's ecotourism and recreational facilities. This effort has resulted in increased visitors. The County expects that with the improvements to Mashas Sands Park, it will then have a new beach destination that will be a major attractor to the surrounding counties and the region. For the metropolitan area of Tallahassee which is to the north, the closest beach right now is nearly two hours away by car. This recreational and beach area would only be about 40 minutes by car. This project would have a significant and immediate positive impact on Wakulla County and the surrounding region. It should also be noted that this launch facility project is just one component of the overall plan for Mashas Sands Park. As depicted in the Conceptual Master Plan there are many other facility improvements that are ongoing which further emphasizes the need for this project.

**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.)*

Through community visioning efforts and a community survey that was conducted, there is a high-level of support for this project. Ecotourism opportunities are a key component to the County's vision of creating the County as a National and International destination. The County desires to improve all aspects of its natural environment and the citizens of Wakulla County know that this is its greatest resource. It is believed that this project will greatly benefit the overall park and because of the immediate results to increasing visitors to the beach for the beach, wildlife and the total nature experience offered at Mashas Sands Beach area.

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## WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

Submit this form via email to Jessica Kanes at [Jessica.Kanes@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:Jessica.Kanes@dep.state.fl.us) . If you have any questions or concerns about the process for submitting a project, please contact:

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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").