

The Apalachicola Regional Restoration Initiative (ARRI)

Landscape Scale Ecosystem and Hydrologic Restoration on Public and Private Lands in the Apalachicola Region of Florida: Strategies 2 and 3

Project Description

The Apalachicola Regional Restoration Initiative (ARRI) is a long term, collaborative, landscape-level project focused on restoring the ecosystems surrounding the Apalachicola River and Apalachicola Bay in the Florida Panhandle. The Apalachicola River, Bay and adjacent upland forests are vital for the local and regional economy, sport and commercial fisheries, recreation, and ecotourism. Additionally, the Apalachicola region is one of highest ranked biodiversity hotspots in North America rivaling many tropical countries.

This project will restore upland and wetland ecosystems that provide critical habitat for many rare and federally listed species and serve as a vital natural filter to reduce nutrient and sediment loads entering the Apalachicola Bay and Gulf of Mexico. Restoration will also increase the quantity of freshwater entering the Apalachicola River and Bay (through reduced evapotranspiration).

Restoration Actions

As part of ARRI Strategy 2, the Apalachicola National Forest and the Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance (ARSA) Ecosystem Restoration Teams (ERTs) will implement a range of ecological restoration activities including: 1) thinning of dense pine forests to restore longleaf pine habitat and increase groundwater recharge, 2) hydrologic restoration in high priority areas, 3) increased prescribed fire, 4) control and eradication of invasive species and 5) restoration of critically imperiled wetlands. In ARRI Strategy 3, the Florida Forest Service will lead an effort to engage and advise private forest landowners in the active management and restoration of their lands. During this 5-year project over half a million acres will be treated across federal, state and private lands (Figure 1).

Benefits

- Restoration of critical longleaf pine ecosystems, improved wetland, aquatic and coastal habitat.
- Enhanced groundwater recharge and increased freshwater inflows.
- Hurricane Michael recovery.
- Greater community resilience.
 - Reduced wildfire risk.
 - Improved flood control.
 - Revitalized economy related to fisheries, tourism and forest products.
- Recruitment and training for minority students.

Partnerships and Leveraging Opportunities

- Florida A&M University (FAMU)/US Forest Service Center for Spatial Ecology & Restoration (CSER) leading ARRI Strategy 1 to identify restoration needs/priorities, monitor effectiveness, and train the next generation of natural resource professionals through public, land-grant, and historically black colleges and universities.
- ARSA - National Fish & Wildlife Federation support for planning, coordination (federal, state, local government and NGO (>15-year record of success)).
- USFS Southern Research Station - Florida Forest Watershed Research Program at FAMU
- TNC Northwest Florida Program - Mentorship of disadvantaged youth through SCA.

Estimated Cost and Options

\$15.5M or approximately \$3.1M per year for 5 years. Strategy 2 estimated costs are \$9.5M (\$1.9 M/year) for planning and implementation. Strategy 3 estimated costs are \$3M (\$600,000/year) for implementation. Overall project monitoring, coordination and outreach estimated costs are \$3M (\$600,000/year). *



RESTORE Project Summary for Florida Trustee Implementation Group

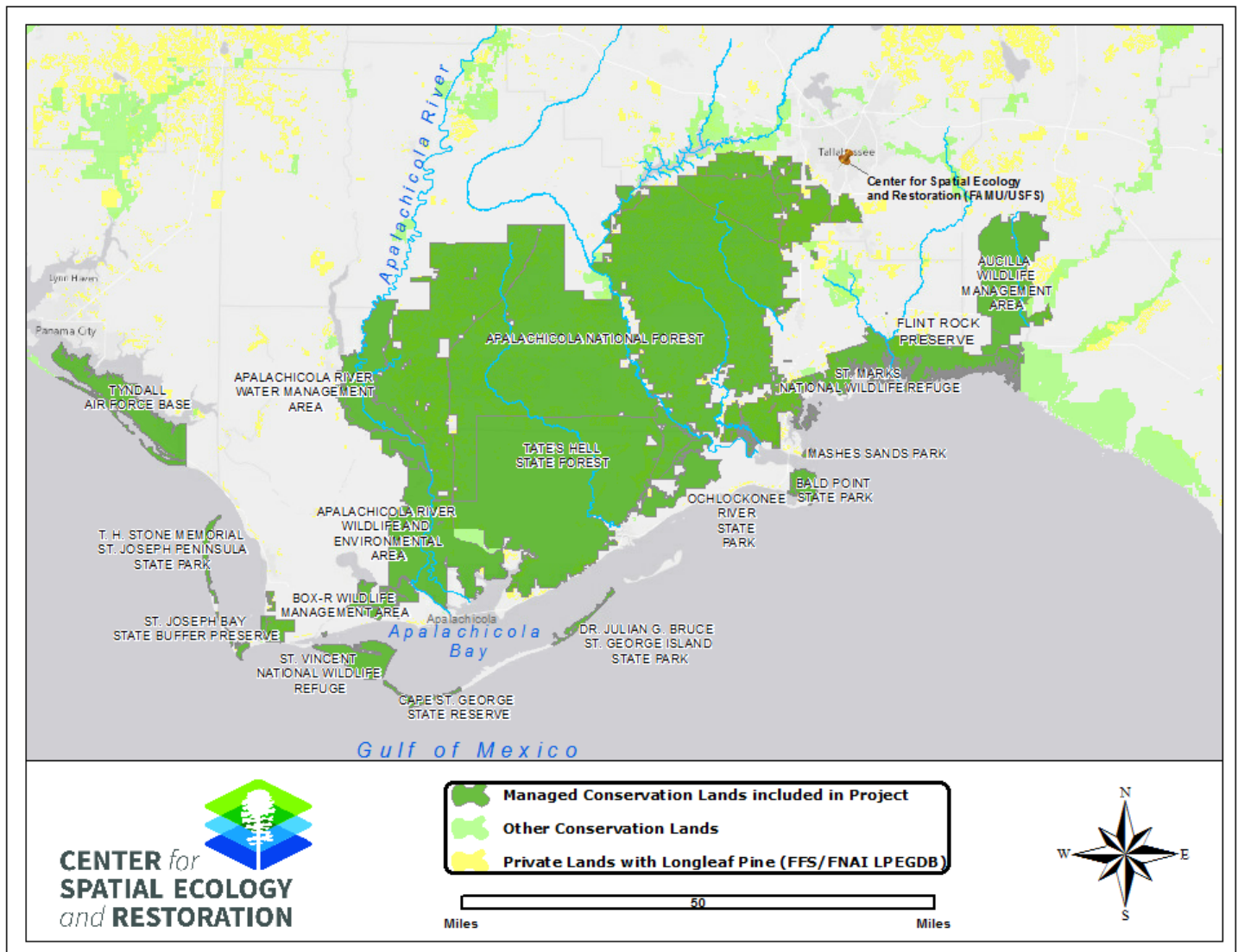


Figure 1. Managed conservation lands where ecological restoration activities will be implemented in The Apalachicola Regional Restoration Initiative (ARRI) Strategy 2, and private lands with longleaf pine which will be considered for Strategy 3.

* Project phasing is flexible (e.g., delaying wetland restoration until additional funding is available in later years), or scaled down (e.g., restoration on less acres) based on available funding.

