Text

Priority & Commitment To Plan Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Tampa Bay Watershed Restoration

PROPORAL NUMBER

FL-4

LOCATION

Southwest Florida (Tampa Bay)

SPONSOR(S)

Florida

TYPE OF FUNDING REQUESTED (Planning, Technical Assistance, Implementation)

Planning/Technical Assistance/Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

Ebonye T. Allen

DATE:

05 February 2015

A. Comprehensive Plan Goals

Of the goals addressed by the proposal, which is the single primary goal?
Proposals should discuss how the proposed activity is designed to address the primary goal.
Check one:

- (●) Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity and resilience of key coastal, estuarine and marine habitats.
- ( ) Restore Water Quality – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine and marine waters.
- ( ) Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse and sustainable living coastal and marine resources.
- ( ) Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes.
- ( ) Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

Notes:

The Tampa Bay Watershed proposal includes five projects that, collectively, will restore and protect habitat and water resources; replenish living marine resources; and revitalize the local economy—and the local communities that depend on those resources and that economy—and set them on a sustainable, resilient footing for the future. The primary goal is to restore and conserve habitat with the corresponding primary objective to restore, enhance and protect habitat. The interrelated projects in the proposal propose to accomplish these ends by restoring shoreline habitat, creating and enhancing upland habitat, and providing stormwater treatment to reduce pollutant impacts on critical water resources.

B. Comprehensive Plan Objectives

Proposals must clearly identify which objectives the proposal will address

1. Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

2. Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

3. Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

4. Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

Notes:

The project proposal states that the benefits of projects and programs have already proven successful in the watershed. Collectively, their primary goal is to restore and conserve habitat with the corresponding primary objective to restore, enhance and protect habitat. They propose to accomplish these ends by restoring shoreline habitat, creating and enhancing upland habitat, and providing stormwater treatment to reduce pollutant impacts on critical water resources—and in doing so, would achieve the complete set of Council goals and objectives. They propose that these actions in turn would invigorate the diverse Tampa Bay economy, which depends on its expansive coastal environment to attract and sustain its year-round community and tourist industry.

8. Of these objectives which is the single primary objective the proposal addresses?

Check one:

- (●) Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats
- ( ) Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources
- ( ) Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources
- ( ) Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines
- ( ) Promote Community Resilience
- ( ) Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education
- ( ) Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes

C. RESTORE Act and Comprehensive Plan Priority Criteria

All proposals must explain if the proposal addresses one or more of the priority criteria as established by the RESTORE Act and Initial Comprehensive Plan and, if so, how.

1. This project is projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

2. This is a large-scale project/program that is projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

3. This project is contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.

(●) YES ( ) NO

4. This project will restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

(●) YES ( ) NO

5. Promote Community Resilience

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

6. Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

Notes:

As stated in the proposal, Tampa Bay is the largest open-water estuary in Florida at nearly 400 square miles. It borders three counties—Hillsborough, Manatee, and Pinellas—and, at 2,200 square miles, its watershed is more than five times larger than the bay itself. It is designated as an "estuary of national significance," by the EPA and it is the location of two National Wildlife Refuges: Pinellas National Wildlife Refuge and Egmont Key. Tampa Bay is the economic and environmental centerpiece of a rapidly growing region supporting more than 2.3 million people. All five of the proposal projects propose to contribute to the restoration and conservation of coastal ecosystem health, diversity, and resilience. This would be accomplished through habitat restoration, water quality and quantity improvements, or by the expansion of

D. Comprehensive Plan Commitments

All proposals must demonstrate how the proposal will achieve any or all of the commitments in the Comprehensive Plan. The commitments in the Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

Does the proposal articulate how it will achieve the following commitments in the comprehensive plan?

1. Science-based Decision-Making

◉ YES ◯ NO ◯ Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, the five projects in this proposal would support restoration activities identified in adopted restoration plans for Tampa Bay system, including the Tampa Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan (Northwest Florida Water Management District, 1999) and the Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan Joint Florida Gulf National Estuary Programs, 2013). The implementation methodology for each of the five projects cite peer reviewed literature for the basis of project design and implementation.

2. Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration

◉ YES ◯ NO ◯ Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, because estuaries are important to the health of Florida's Gulf Coast, and align with the criteria and goals of the RESTORE Act, the sponsor utilized an estuarine restoration and watershed theme as the guide to developing this proposal. The projects in this proposal would leverage the extensive restoration work already underway to meet these goals, particularly through the Tampa Bay Estuary Program and the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program for Tampa Bay.

3. Engagement, Inclusion, and Transparency

◉ YES ◯ NO ◯ Not articulated

Notes:

As described in the proposal, Florida's proposals involved extensive outreach activities including two public webinars, individual calls with the 23 Gulf Coast Counties, visits with state and federal agencies, discussions with nongovernmental organizations as well as other input received at numerous meetings hosted by others. Over 1200 project ideas were submitted through a project submission portal maintained by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). The sponsor notes that each of the projects in this proposal had its genesis from a submission to the portal.

4. Leveraging Resources and Partnerships

◉ YES ◯ NO ◯ Not articulated

Notes:

The sponsor notes that this proposal leverages more than $88 million. The Robinson Preserve Restoration project proposes to convert lands purchased by Manatee County, in partnership with the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and the Robinson Family, an additional 150 acres of adjacent lands valued at $3.2 million. The total amount of secured and proposed funding leveraged in association with the Robinson Preserve is $71.8 million. The Southwest Florida Water Management District, City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department, City of Tampa Stormwater Department, and the Florida Department of Transportation are all partners in the River Tower Shoreline Restoration and Stormwater Treatment project. The proposal requests $1,500,000 toward the total project cost of $2,790,000. The local match being provided, $1,290,000, amounts to 46%. While the overall project involves enhancements for public access,

5. Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts

◉ YES ◯ NO

Notes:

As stated in the proposal, each of the proposal projects have monitoring, success criteria, and reporting tailored to the project.

The Robinson Preserve Restoration would establish baseline data and regular construction and engineering inspections and monitoring would be conducted through the end of construction. After final grading, a seven year program of habitat establishment, including required monitoring, would be implemented. Results of the project progress propose to be

E. Meeting Commitments and Tracking and Measuring Progress

1. Does the proposal articulate how it will meet and achieve its commitments?

◉ YES ◯ NO ◯ Not articulated

2. Does the proposal have a plan for tracking and measuring progress?

◉ YES ◯ NO

Notes:

As described in the proposal, each of the proposal projects have monitoring, success criteria, and reporting tailored to the project.

Robinson Preserve Restoration: After final grading, a seven year program of habitat establishment, including required monitoring, would be implemented. Successful completion would be achieved when created habitats have been established and are determined to be in a maintenance phase of management which can be sustained using staff and budget allocated for the site. Results of the project progress propose to be be presented at appropriate venues

F. Proposal Emphasis Areas

Does the submission describe how the proposed project or program addresses the following four considerations:

1. Is the proposed activity **foundational** in the sense that the project or program forms an initial core step (or steps) in addressing a significant ecosystem issue, and can future activities be tiered to substantially increase the benefits?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As detailed in the proposal, improved water quality and habitats help preserve priority habitats that multiple living resources rely on. Collectively, the projects proposed in the Tampa Bay Watershed Restoration proposal will expand critical habitat, improve the hydrology in the region, and provide erosion control and shoreline protection which are foundational steps to watershed restoration.

2. Will the proposed activity be **sustainable** over time?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As stated in the proposal, risk and uncertainty have been evaluated for each of the projects in order to increase the probability of sustainability over time. Possible risks associated with the Robinson Preserve Restoration project include altered flow of water and undesirable sediment deposition. These concerns have been mitigated through hydrological modeling of proposed water bodies with analysis of flushing and sediment migration. The sponsor notes that geotechnical investigations were completed to identify and avoid exposing fine sediments and ensure suitable materials is placed for elevated upland habitat areas. The other four proposal projects have limited risks and uncertainty due to the existence of

3. Is the proposed activity **likely to succeed**?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As described in the proposal, each of the projects are likely to succeed as they extend the benefits of existing projects. For example, the lessons learned from previous projects are reflected throughout the design and specifications for the Robinson Preserve Expansion project. Manatee County, proposed to assist with implementation, has been successful converting disturbed landscapes to productive habitat which further mitigates risks. Projects successfully undertaken within the past 10 years include the established portion of Robinson Preserve, Perico Preserve, Ungarelli Preserve, and Neal Preserve. Older projects, such as Leffis Key Preserve, Emerson Point Preserve, demonstrate a longer term reference for restoration success. Lessons learned from previous projects are reflected throughout the design and

4. Does the proposed activity **benefit** the human **community**?
(examples of benefits may include, but are not limited to: how a project will utilize local workers, how a project will benefit geographically or socially vulnerable communities, how a project will benefit the natural resources critical to natural-resource dependent industries such as fisheries, tourism, etc.)

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

As described in the proposal, the local economy would benefit from the use of local workers and businesses for planning, design, construction and future maintenance. An increase in tourism opportunities is proposed as another benefit of the Robinson Preserve and Edward W. Chance Reserve Restoration. Benefits would stem from increased ecosystem services, including water quality improvements, juvenile fish nursery area expansion, and creation of prime forage for birds and other wildlife. Robinson Preserve also provides recreational experience. According to Tripadvisor.com, Robinson Preserve is the #2 attraction in the area receiving a certificate of excellence in 2014. Edward W. Chance Reserve provides nature and educational opportunities.