

PINELLAS COUNTY

Land Acquisition for
Floodplain Restoration and Resiliency

PROJECT NO. 16-3

Project Description

OVERVIEW AND LOCATION

This program involves the prioritization and Pinellas County acquisition of severe repetitive loss properties in the coastal flood zone. Targeted properties include those that also have failing wastewater and/or drainage infrastructure, and are thus sources of coastal pollution. Acquired properties will be razed and restored in the future to provide natural habitats and floodplain storage. Properties acquired under this program will be permanently designated as publicly owned conservation areas. Targeted properties have been identified in the Brooker Creek, Cross Bayou, Smith Bayou, Stevenson's Creek, and Curlew Creek watershed, which are shown in **Figure 16-3A**, but **properties throughout the County will be considered, including undeveloped properties, to allow greater flood mitigation and resiliency.**

NEED AND JUSTIFICATION

Pinellas County is the most densely populated county in Florida, and much of the early post–World War II development occurred in low-lying coastal areas with inadequate wastewater and drainage infrastructure. Pinellas County has identified approximately 35 severe repetitive loss (SRL) residential and commercial properties in low-lying coastal areas. These properties not only experience frequent nuisance flooding, but also generate pollutants from failing wastewater (e.g., septic tanks) and inadequate stormwater treatment infrastructure. The costs associated with remediating flood damage and maintaining the development on these SRL properties are not sustainable over the long term. In addition, the Brooker Creek, Cross Bayou, Smith Bayou, Stevenson's Creek, and Curlew Creek watersheds all have documented water quality impairments. **If undeveloped properties in the flood zone are available for purchase, the County will consider acquiring those as well, to avoid further development and similar future issues in these problematic areas and to enhance coastal flooding resiliency.**



Figure 16-3A. Restoration property acquisition location map.

RESTORE Act
Compliance

Public Participation

Financial Integrity

Overall Consistency

Proposed Projects

Implementation

SECTION V: Proposed Projects, Programs, and Activities

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this program is to publicly acquire priority SRL residential, commercial, **and undeveloped** properties in low-lying coastal areas, raze **any** existing development, and restore the properties back to natural systems that provide both habitat and floodplain storage functions. The objectives of the program are to: (1) improve coastal resiliency by eliminating **or preventing additional** unsustainable residential and commercial SRL properties; (2) remove existing failing infrastructure and eliminate on-site pollutant sources; (3) improve ambient water quality; (4) restore native fish and wildlife habitats; and (5) provide for increased coastal floodplain storage.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

This program involves three components: (1) property acquisition; (2) demolition and the removal of existing development and failing infrastructure **if present**; and (3) restoration of natural systems and coastal floodplain storage. Spill Impact Component funds will be used only to acquire priority properties and to remove existing pollutant sources. Other Pinellas County funds will be used for future restoration of natural systems.

Acquired properties will be maintained in Pinellas County ownership in perpetuity for conservation and floodplain storage functions. **Figure 16-3B** shows one of the priority properties. This property is a densely populated mobile home park located on Cross Bayou, a tidal slough that connects Old Tampa Bay to Boca Ciega Bay. The mobile home park is frequently flooded, and the only wastewater treatment facilities are septic tanks. Under this program, the property will be acquired and razed **if necessary**, including the removal of all existing septic tanks. Using future Pinellas County funds, the property will be graded, planted, and integrated into adjacent native habitats, which include mangroves and oligohaline marshes. Similar conditions exist at the other identified priority SRL properties.



Figure 16-3B. Example SRL property in the Cross Bayou watershed of Pinellas County.

Contributions to the Overall Economic and Ecological Recovery of the Gulf

This program will improve coastal resiliency in Pinellas County by eliminating **or preventing additional** unsustainable residential and commercial SRL properties and converting them to public ownership for later restoration of native habitats and coastal floodplain storage. In addition, the project is expected to improve ambient water quality in several impaired waterbodies by removing failing wastewater and stormwater treatment infrastructure **and restoring natural systems functions**.

Implementing Entities

Pinellas County will be the sole implementing entity and grant sub-recipient responsible for the permitting, construction, and success monitoring of this project.

Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

This project is consistent with, and addresses, the following RESTORE Act eligible activity:

- Eligible Activity 1: Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This project is consistent with, and addresses, the following Comprehensive Plan Goals:

- Goal 2: Restore Water Quality and Quantity (primary)
- Goal 1: Restore and Conserve Habitat.

This project is consistent with, and addresses, the following Comprehensive Plan Objectives:

- Objective 2: Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources (primary)
- Objective 1: Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats
- Objective 5: Promote Community Resilience.

Feasibility Assessment and Best Available Science

This program is considered to be feasible with respect to the ability to: (1) acquire priority properties; (2) obtain necessary permits; (3) raze existing infrastructure and restore native habitats and coastal floodplain storage; and (4) effectively maintain the restored natural systems in perpetuity. The program is also consistent with the following adopted natural resource management plan:

- *Janicki Environmental et al., 2011. Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for Clearwater Harbor and St. Joseph Sound. Final report prepared for the Pinellas County Department of Environmental and Infrastructure and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.*

Risks and Uncertainties

Land acquisition activities are always at risk with respect to securing a willing seller and negotiating reasonable terms. Pinellas County has identified priority properties with willing sellers and is ready to proceed with property acquisitions.

Success Criteria and Monitoring

This program will involve property acquisition and restoration, and is also expected to improve adjacent water quality via the removal of existing **or prevention of additional** pollutant sources. Specific success criteria will be developed and described in the project grant request. It is anticipated that quantitative success criteria will be developed for:

- Acres of SRL / **coastal flood zone** properties acquired
- Acres of acquired properties restored
- Changes in ambient water quality in the vicinity of the improvements.

SECTION V: Proposed Projects, Programs, and Activities

In the project grant request, a detailed monitoring program design will be described that addresses data collection and assessment methodologies for the above listed criteria. Pinellas County implements an ambient water quality monitoring program in County surface waters, and is committed to conducting the monitoring necessary to quantify project benefits.

Project Milestones and Schedule

The total estimated time horizon of this project is approximately eight years. It is expected to start in 2018 and end in 2025. Implementation of this project has been divided into six milestones, as shown in the milestone chart below.

MILESTONE	YEARS FROM SEP APPROVAL															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Feasibility Study																
Site assessments																
Property acquisition																
Final Design & Permitting																
Construction/Restoration																
Success monitoring																

Budget/Funding and Leveraged Resources

Pinellas County has estimated the total cost to acquire, appraise and secure the identified priority SRL properties to be approximately \$10,000,000. Pinellas County is proposing to use \$3,450,000 of their Spill Impact Component allocation for property acquisition and demolition, with the remainder of the project costs to made up with other Pinellas County funds. A summary of the project budget and funding sources for this program is provided in the table below.

MILESTONE	ESTIMATED TOTAL DOLLARS	ESTIMATED POT 3 ALLOCATION
Feasibility study	\$200,000	\$0
Site assessments and appraisals	\$250,000	\$0
Planning Subtotal	\$450,000	\$0
Property acquisition and demolition (as needed)	\$9,400,000	\$3,450,000
Final design and permitting for restoration (as needed)	\$100,000	\$0
Implementation Subtotal	\$9,500,000	\$3,450,000
Monitoring	\$50,000	\$0
Total Cost	\$10,000,000	\$3,450,000
COMMITTED FUNDING SOURCES		
Spill Impact Component		\$3,450,000
Direct Component		\$0
Other County funds		\$6,550,000
Total Committed Funding		\$10,000,000
Budget Shortfall		\$0

POTENTIAL LEVERAGED FUNDING SOURCES

Natural Resource Damage Assessment

F.19 Conservation Technical Assistance

F.21 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention

F.40 Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Grants

F.51 National Coastal Wetlands Grants

O.42 Shell Marine Habitat Program

O.43 Southeast Aquatics

S.07 Flood Mitigation Assistance Program

S.47 Florida's State Wildlife Grants Program (Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative)

S.52 SWFWMD Cooperative Funding Initiative

Should additional leveraged funds become available, they will be used to conduct habitat restoration on the acquired properties.

Partnerships/Collaboration

Pinellas County anticipates partnering with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and will seek cooperative funding for restoration of the acquired properties in the future.