This project will complete engineering and design plans to restore up to 28 acres of saltmarsh habitat along the St. Marks River within the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Wilderness Area. The project will restore saltmarsh habitat by removing remnant dredge spoil islands that consist of large crushed limestone piles. Permitting, design, and planning will evaluate beneficial use alternatives for crushed limestone, including the construction of bird nesting, artificial reefs, and oyster reef restoration in the St. Marks River and Apalachee Bay. Restoring saltmarsh habitat and historic hydrological conditions to the project area will help re-establish riparian ecosystem services. Saltmarsh ecosystems provide habitat for a variety of ecologically and economically important fishes and birds and are critical to the long-term viability of regional fisheries in Florida. Restoration will include removal of up to 24 dredge spoil islands along the St. Marks River within the St. Marks NWR and Wilderness Area. Phase II of the project will implement preferred design alternatives identified and permitted in this phase.

Restoration of coastal marsh and estuarine habitats remain a high priority focal area for the State of Florida under the Florida GEBF Restoration Strategy, is identified in the St. Marks NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the St. Marks River and Apalachee Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan, and the State Wildlife Action Plan.