



NFWF

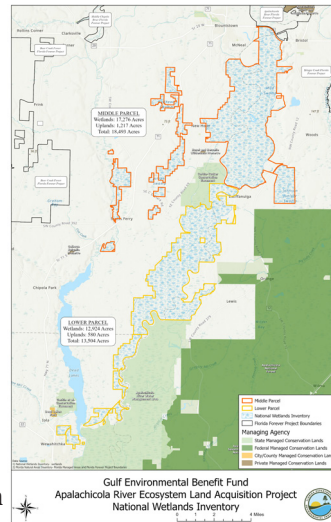
Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

FLORIDA

# Apalachicola River Ecosystem Land Acquisition & Management

This project would acquire and manage approximately 32,000 acres of wetlands and floodplains and nearly 38 miles of frontage along the Apalachicola River. Preserving Florida's largest river and its extensive floodplain is key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Apalachicola Bay fisheries because the floodplain supplies a critical source of nutrients and organic matter, a cornerstone of Apalachicola Bay's food web. The importance of the Apalachicola River's nutrient rich waters can be detected up to 160 miles offshore in the northeast Gulf of Mexico where phytoplankton blooms and migratory estuarine fishes are an important source of prey in offshore food webs. Moreover, the floodplain provides the right mix of environmental conditions for historically prolific oyster growth in Apalachicola Bay.

Acquisition of the property would provide protection to approximately one-third of the entire portion of the floodplain, thereby preventing potential conversion to more intense agricultural uses, a common occurrence along large areas bordering southern rivers. Moreover, this acquisition would allow the State to perform additional hydrologic restorations to enhance river flows. This portion of the Apalachicola River provides habitat for juvenile and adult Gulf sturgeon, a threatened species that is known to spawn in the upper reaches of the acquisition area. The river is also at the center of North America's 6th highest ranked biological diversity hot spot, supporting more than 1,500 species of native plants and animals including many waterbird species. Once acquired, FWC would manage the lands as a part of the Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area. The Apalachicola River Ecosystem project is one of the highest priorities of Florida Forever, the State's premier conservation and recreation lands acquisition program, and the State is pursuing funding to acquire and protect an additional 12,500 acres of this vital floodplain.



Long-term protection of Apalachicola's floodplains will benefit fisheries and oysters throughout the Bay.

## AT A GLANCE

**RECIPIENT:**  
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

**AWARD AMOUNT:**  
\$32,973,000

**LEVERAGE:**  
\$800,000

**LOCATION:**  
Calhoun, Gulf, and Liberty counties, Florida

**AWARD DATE:**  
November 2021

**STATUS:**  
Awarded



The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF), administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, supports projects to remedy harm and eliminate or reduce the risk of harm to Gulf Coast natural resources affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. To learn more about GEBF and view a comprehensive project map go to [www.nfwf.org/Gulf](http://www.nfwf.org/Gulf)