

## NEWS RELEASE

August 12, 2015

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### Award-Winning Grant Program Provides \$673,000 for Tampa Bay Protection Projects

An innovative public-private grant partnership will provide \$673,000 for important restoration, research and education projects in the Tampa Bay watershed.

Seven organizations or agencies are receiving grants from the Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund (TBERF). The Fund is managed jointly by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program and Restore America's Estuaries (RAE). Funding comes from the Southwest Florida Water Management District; The Mosaic Company Foundation; Hillsborough County; Manatee County; Pinellas County; the Florida Department of Transportation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and TECO Energy.



This year, seven grant proposals were selected to receive full or partial funding totaling \$673,070. Because TBERF grants require a 1:1 match, this will result in nearly \$1.35 million in the coming year for projects to protect and restore the Tampa Bay watershed .

Funding was awarded to the following projects:

#### **Seeding potential of *Pyrodinium bahamense* cyst beds in Old Tampa Bay (\$83,150)**

Since 2000, the algae *Pyrodinium bahamense* has bloomed nearly annually in Old Tampa Bay, where its cascading effects of low dissolved oxygen, occasional fish kills and degraded water clarity contribute to Old Tampa Bay's persistent water quality problems. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Fish and Wildlife Research Institute will characterize the distribution of viable resting cysts of *Pyrodinium* on the bay bottom and develop methods to predict bloom locations and severity.

#### **Duette/Headwaters Preserve Remote Sensing Hydrological Restoration Monitoring (\$75,000)**

Manatee County will use remote sensing techniques and traditional on-the-ground monitoring to better quantify and document the benefits of restoring surface water flows in headwaters of the Manatee River. Results will be useful to others considering the use of remote sensing techniques to monitor environmental results.

**Ft. De Soto Ecological Enhancement/Recirculation (\$168,500)**

Pinellas County will remove a land bridge formed by an old access road at Fort De Soto Park decades ago, to promote tidal circulation and improve habitat in two backwater bays. The project is expected to promote the growth of up to 200 acres of new seagrasses.

**Improving Coastal Management with Blue Carbon: Quantifying Carbon Stocks and Sequestration Rates for Natural and Restoring Mangroves, Marshes and Salt Barrens (\$53,950)**

Restore America's Estuaries will collect field data to determine current and potential carbon storage rates and benefits of mangroves, marshes and seagrasses to help shape land use planning and policy related to sea level rise over the coming century.

**Terra Ceia Huber and Frog Creek Upland Project (\$71,170)**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District will restore and enhance approximately 112 acres of coastal uplands adjacent to Terra Ceia Bay. This project is part of a larger ecosystem restoration effort to return lands historically cleared for agricultural and plant nursery purposes to natural habitats.

**Tampa Bay Dredged Hole Habitat Assessment (\$141,300)**

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program will examine the current habitat value of 10 dredged holes in the bay through an extensive 12-month water quality, fisheries usage and benthic resources monitoring program. Results will help determine whether and which holes should be partially or completely filled to improve dissolved oxygen levels and allow seagrass growth.

**Fantasy Island Living Shoreline Stabilization (\$80,000)**

Tampa Bay Watch will create oyster reef habitat by building and placing oyster domes and fossilized oyster shell on the southern shoreline of Fantasy Island in Hillsborough Bay. The project will create a living shoreline to reduce erosion and provide habitat for fisheries and foraging birds.

TBERF recently was awarded a third place "Gulf Guardian Partnership" award by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program. The Gulf Guardian awards honor groups and individuals who keep the Gulf clean, healthy, and productive.

In its two years, TBERF has provided more than \$1.37 million to 19 projects for on-the-ground conservation and restoration work in the Tampa Bay area.

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