

## Ceremony Recognizes More than \$1.5 Million in Bay Restoration Grants

An innovative public-private grant partnership was honored today for providing more than \$1.5 million in grants since 2013 for important restoration, applied research and education projects in the Tampa Bay watershed.

The **Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund** grant program is being managed jointly by the Estuary Program and Restore America's Estuaries (RAE), who have pledged to work together to recruit financial donors and achieve measurable conservation outcomes from the funded projects.



In 2013, 10 agencies and organizations received \$900,000 in grants for projects that restored more than 1,000 acres of coastal habitats, created 2,900 feet of oyster reefs and treated 500 acres of urban runoff. Nearly \$625,000 in grants is being awarded this year to nine recipients.

Sponsors of the 2013 Tampa Bay Environmental Fund included the Southwest Florida Water Management District; The Mosaic Company Foundation, Hillsborough County and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The grant program was renewed in 2014 as the Tampa Bay Environmental Fund, and financed with contributions from SWFWMD; The Mosaic Company Foundation through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; Manatee County; Pinellas County; TECO Energy; the Florida Department of Transportation; and Port Tampa Bay.

For more information about the Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund, visit <http://www.estuaries.org/tampa-bay-environmental-restoration-fund.html>.

### **2014 Recipients: Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund**

#### **Colonial Waterbird Management in the Tampa Bay Watershed (\$36,000)**

Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuary staff will manage and track population trends and threats in nationally significant waterbird nesting colonies supporting 50,000 pairs of 31 bird species annually.

#### **Safety Harbor Waterfront Park Habitat Restoration (\$70,000)**

The City of Safety Harbor will remove invasive plants from a planned passive-use public park and replant with native species to restore 6 acres of marsh/mangrove wetlands.

### **Mapping of Hard-Bottom Habitat in Tampa Bay (\$150,000)**

SWFWMD will inventory and assess the quality of hard bottom reefs, oyster beds, and tidal flats in Tampa Bay to determine historic extent and develop restoration/protection targets for these important habitats.

### **Coastal Blue Carbon Assessment (\$100,000)**

Restore America's Estuaries will assess the climate mitigation benefits associated with restoring salt marshes, mangroves and seagrass beds in the Tampa Bay ecosystem. These three habitat types are collectively called "coastal blue carbon habitats" for their ability to sequester carbon that contributes to climate change.

### **Rock Ponds Coastal Ecosystem Restoration (\$60,000)**

Tampa Bay Watch will plant marsh grasses utilizing community volunteers to enhance or restore 20 acres of tidal wetland habitat over a 2-year period as part of the comprehensive restoration of former shell mining pits on Tampa Bay's southeast shore.

### **Oyster Bar Restoration at Robinson Preserve (\$53,000)**

Manatee County will install 7,500-square-feet of oyster beds as part of the comprehensive restoration of a 651-acre county preserve.

### **Duette Preserve Hydrologic Restoration (\$87,260)**

Manatee County will restore forested and non-forested freshwater wetlands by removing manmade ditches to recreate natural hydrologic flows in the eastern Manatee River watershed.

### **Bay Soundings Environmental Journal (\$25,000)**

The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council will produce, print and distribute one year (four issues) of this popular environmental journal informing citizens about bay management trends, issues and accomplishments.

### **MacDill Air Force Base Living Shoreline (\$41,000)**

Tampa Bay Watch will place 137 tons of oyster reefs and plant 1,000 linear feet of salt marsh grass using community volunteers as part of a large restoration along the southeastern shoreline of MacDill AFB.

## **2013 Recipients: Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund**

### **Newman Branch Creek Fisheries Habitat Restoration Phase III (\$60,000)**

Ecosphere Restoration Institute will reconnect the creek to restore tidal flow to adjacent wetlands to provide critical fisheries habitat along 24 acres of the southeast shore of Tampa Bay.

### **Robles Park Water Quality Improvement Project (\$175,000)**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District will enhance stormwater treatment functions and freshwater wetland habitat in a manmade 5-acre pond at this urban park that discharges directly to the Hillsborough River.

### **McKay Bay Oyster Reef Creation and Enhancement (\$80,000)**

Tampa Bay Watch will utilize volunteers to install 2,900 feet of oyster reefs in shallow areas of McKay Bay to filter pollutants from the water and provide fish habitat and shorebird foraging areas.

### **Rock Ponds Ecosystem Restoration (\$200,000)**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District will continue the restoration of more than 1,000 acres of estuarine, freshwater and upland habitats along Hillsborough County's south shore, in what will be the largest coastal habitat restoration to date in Tampa Bay.

### **Which Tidal Tributaries Are The Best Snook Nurseries? (\$100,000)**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will attempt to answer this question by studying 20 tidal creeks in the bay watershed to identify common factors that contribute to productive habitat for juvenile snook, a popular sportfish.

### **Reducing Nitrogen Loads to Tampa Bay Using Bioretention Systems (\$105,000)**

The University of South Florida will construct four bio-retention systems in East Tampa and monitor their effectiveness at removing nitrogen from urban runoff.

### **Community-Based Stormwater Nutrient Management (\$100,000)**

The University of Florida will employ water quality sampling and social marketing techniques to inform and involve homeowners in the Lakewood Ranch community of Manatee County in implementing Best Management Practices to reduce nitrogen and improve water quality in their stormwater ponds.

### **East McKay Bay Habitat Restoration and Water Quality (\$100,000)**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District will remove invasive plants and construct three stormwater treatment ponds to treat urban and industrial runoff from 436 acres of surrounding lands.

### **Autonomous Water Quality and Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring (\$50,000)**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will examine the relationship between Harmful Algal Blooms, water quality and bay restoration efforts through autonomous water quality sampling as well as phytoplankton sampling.