

Final Selection Criteria for the RESTORE 2026 Funded Priorities List (FPL) Florida Programs Project Proposals

On May 12, 2026, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) presented [draft criteria](#) for selection of projects approved for funding under the 2026 FPL programs in Florida. After the 30-day public comment period ended, DEP finalized its selection criteria as described below. DEP will announce a call for projects via GovDelivery email subscription and on its website for project submittals through the [Protecting Florida Together Grants Portal](#).

In selecting projects under three of the Florida RESTORE programs, DEP will give the highest priority to projects that address the priority criteria provided in the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf States Act (RESTORE Act). Proposed projects must address at least one:

(I) Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.

(II) Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.

(III) Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.

(IV) Projects that restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

Eligibility Screening

Eligibility will be determined by the geographic location and consistency with RESTORE Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives. The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council), which administers RESTORE Council-Selected Restoration Component (Bucket 2) and Spill Impact Component (Bucket 3) funds, maintains a [Comprehensive Plan](#) and subsequent [Planning Framework](#) of priority approaches and restoration techniques.

The information provided in the table below represents the approved geographic and restoration planning priorities for the three Florida FPL programs for projects under the 2026 FPL.

Program Name	Geographical Extent	Comprehensive Plan Goal	Comprehensive Plan Objective	Eligible Technique(s)
Gulf Coast Resilience Program	23 Gulf Coast Counties	Enhance Community Resilience	Promote Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect Natural Shorelines • Coastal and Submerged Lands Management • Other (Develop Tools for Planning & Evaluation)
Gulf Coast Tributaries Hydrologic Restoration Program	Watersheds that drain to the Gulf of America ¹ (8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code)	Restore Water Quality and Quantity	Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore Hydrologic Connectivity • Restore Natural Salinity Regimes
Florida Water Quality Improvement Program	Watersheds that drain to the Gulf of America (8-digit HUC)	Restore Water Quality and Quantity	Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater Management • Erosion and Sediment Control • Wastewater System Improvements

¹ HB 575 ensures all official state documents, maps, and references reflect the designation Gulf of America, and EO 14172, “Restoring Names that Honor American Greatness”, which renamed the Gulf of Mexico.

Project Screening:

Project proposals that meet the geographical criteria and are consistent with RESTORE Council's Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives will be evaluated in three areas: **technical, feasibility, and project status.**

Best Available Science (BAS) must be used to demonstrate the technical and feasibility aspects of the project. Applicants should provide appropriate technical justification and citations to support their assertions of project benefits and the appropriateness of their methods.

The RESTORE Act defines BAS as science that (A) maximizes the quality, objectivity and integrity of information, including statistical information; (B) uses peer-reviewed and publicly available data; and (C) clearly documents and communicates risks and uncertainties in the scientific basis for such projects. The inclusion of the following items in the proposal will assist in demonstrating that BAS has been taken into consideration:

1. Cite peer-reviewed and/or publicly available information, when applicable, and include a complete and accurately cited bibliography
2. Discussion of applicable regional plan(s)
3. Consideration of all the risks and uncertainties associated with the proposal, including short and long-term sustainability and effects associated with implementation
4. Discussion of monitoring and adaptive management strategies (if applicable)
5. Discussion of data management and accessibility sharing plan

1) Technical Criteria

The following technical criteria will be applied when reviewing proposals.

- **Extent to which project will address *environmental benefits* using BAS.**
 - Environmental benefits can be achieved through multiple activities that could be considered for funding (e.g., planning, implementation, science, education, improved resilience).
 - Such benefits can be quantitative (e.g., acres restored or conserved, amount of nutrients or other pollutant reductions) and/or qualitative (e.g., increased community resilience, increased public stewardship of natural resources). Such benefits must be discussed in reference to one or more underlying environmental stressors identified by best available science and/or an applicable ecosystem restoration plan(s).
 - Discuss the rationale for the anticipated duration/sustainability of the environmental benefits that would accrue from the proposed project (consistent with the following discussion of risks and uncertainties).

- **Whether the project is consistent with existing plans**
 - Basin Management Action Plans, Alternative Restoration Plans, Minimum Flow Levels, Surface Water Improvement and Management Plans, Adaptation Action Plans or the Florida State Expenditure Plan, etc.

2) Feasibility Criteria

The following feasibility criteria will be applied when reviewing proposals.

- **Assessment of short-term and long-term risks, as well as proposed measures to mitigate such risks and uncertainties.**
 - The proposal should discuss whether the project is vulnerable to applicable risks under varying future scenarios, including but not limited to flooding and hurricanes.
 - Consider how such risks might affect the benefits and duration of the project.
 - The proposal should describe any design or other measures taken to mitigate these risks.
 - Other applicable risks and uncertainties might include questions and unknowns relating to construction feasibility, unanticipated cost increases, land rights, regulatory review, project timing, public opposition, and/or the potential for unanticipated adverse environmental and/or socio-economic impacts.
 - Any relevant scientific uncertainties and/or data gaps should also be discussed (including the appropriate citations).
 - Proposed measures to mitigate risks should be discussed. For proposals that involve only planning (no construction), this section should discuss how the foregoing risks and uncertainties would be addressed in the planning process.
- **Cost-effectiveness relative to benefits.**
 - If the activity is scalable, the sponsor is encouraged- but not required- to provide one or two options (scaled down iterations of the activity).
 - Such scale options should include an estimated total cost for each variation of the activity, along with the associated ecosystem benefits.
- **Project sustainability.**
 - For projects that will require ongoing operation and maintenance, project sponsors will need to demonstrate strong operation and management capabilities, as well as financial resources, to assure the long-term success of the project.
- **Extent to which the project proposal is supported by the local community.**

3) Project Status

The following project will be applied when reviewing proposals.

- **Project's Readiness to proceed.**
 - Planning projects are based on established and vetted regional or comprehensive plans using BAS.
 - Implementation/Construction projects have completed designs and permits in hand.
- **Extent to which project proposal leverages other funding sources.**

- Include a description of any resources that may be leveraged with this proposal. Documentation of the commitment of such leveraged resources may be required.
- **Status of environmental compliance (for implementation projects).**
 - Environmental compliance documentation is needed for proposals that involve or lead directly to ground disturbing activities that may have significant effects individually or cumulatively.
 - The environmental compliance section should describe the status of compliance with environmental laws that might be applicable at the implementation phase of the project or program. For example, a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit and/or compliance with the Coastal Barrier Resources Act might be needed prior to implementation of a given project.

Other Factors

- **Regional Project:** Projects that represent a “regional” effort, meaning more than one county, municipality, and/or water management district is involved will be prioritized.
- **Disadvantaged Community:** Whether the project is located within a disadvantaged community under Chapters 218 or 288, Florida Statutes.