

# RESTORE ACT Direct Component Multiyear Plan Narrative

## Department of the Treasury

OMB Approval No. 1505-0250

**Directions: Use this form for the Initial Multiyear Plan and any subsequent amendments to an accepted Multiyear Plan. For amendments, include only new and/or materially modified activities.**

Multiyear Plan Version (Initial or Amendment Number):	Amendment #2
Date of Initial Multiyear Plan Acceptance:	June 30, 2017
Date of Last Multiyear Plan Acceptance:	November 15, 2019

Eligible Applicant Name:	Okaloosa County, Florida
Name and Contact Information of the Person to be contacted (POC) on matters concerning this Multiyear Implementation Plan:	
POC Name:	Jane Evans
POC Title:	Grants and RESTORE Manager
POC Email:	jevans@myokaloosa.com
POC Phone:	850-651-7521

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

1. A description of each activity, including the need, purpose, objective(s), milestones and location. Include map showing the location of each activity.

Amendment #2 is to amend the Initial MYP Project: Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center. Program costs are estimates and project grants will include project oversight costs by the County.

### Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center RESTORE (\$87,181.43)

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park (GMAP), known simply as "The Gulfarium" by residents and guests, has a rich history in sea turtle exhibition, care, rehabilitation and release. It is estimated that "well into the hundreds" of these protected species have been cared for and returned to the Gulf of Mexico since 1955. Currently, GMAP employs an animal care staff of up to (8) individuals dedicated in part to sea turtle rescue, rehabilitation, and release. Veterinary care is funded entirely by GMAP.

Phase 1 of the C.A.R.E. (Conserve. Act. Rehabilitate. Educate.) Center will comprise six pools: one 20 ft in diameter, one 12 ft in diameter, and four 6 ft in diameter. This phase will cost an estimated \$240,000.00, \$150,000.00 of which will be funded by Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park.

Originally the project proposed that the requested \$87,181.43 (Direct Component Funds) would provide the funding necessary to refurbish fiberglass pools and to purchase and install state-of-the-art Life Support Systems (filtration). The amended project would use the same funding instead to purchase and installing a shade structure over the project area. The scope of work requires permit acquisition, hiring of contractors/crews.

To expand on the need for the project and how refurbishing two fiberglass pools and installing a filtration system will address the need: the Gulfarium received the fiberglass pools as donations to support our sea turtle conservation efforts. In order for the pools to be transported to the Gulfarium, the structures were disassembled, thus requiring fiberglass refurbishment in order for them to be in usable condition. The extra four 6 ft diameter pools are already on site as well, however, they do not need refurbishment. Since the original proposed project was submitted on Okaloosa County's MYP the Gulfarium was able to refurbish the fiberglass tanks with center funds but has now realized a critical need for a shade structure over the tanks to protect the sea turtles from the heat and radiation of the sun. In the past 5 years, we have seen a noticeable increase in the number of sea turtles requiring care and rehabilitation at the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center. Since 2012 the number of sea turtles needing rehabilitation has increased, we saw an 80% increase from 2012 to 2013, 22% increase from 2013 to 2014, 154% increase

from 2014 to 2015, and we are on track for a 50 % increase from 2015 to 2016. Similar facilities throughout the state of Florida are also seeing increased demand and are also attempting to create additional facilities to accommodate patient load. The increased demand is attributed to pollution, food source, depletion, disease, weather changes, and increased public presence and fluctuating trends in sea turtle populations. The scope of this project will more than double our current capacity of sea turtle patients that we are able to treat at any given time. This includes not only animals needing care in the Okaloosa county area, but sea turtles that need rehabilitation from as far away as New England and the Eastern Seaboard.

**NEED:** While the rescue program has seen more than 20 animals successfully released in the past three years, it has done so operating at a maximum capacity of its four 6 ft diameter pools. Cold stunned sea turtle numbers have increased over recent years, as have the number of animals entangled by, or that have ingested fishing gear. Boat strikes are common. These, along with the threat of potential oil spills, have created the critical need for additional sea turtle rehabilitation facilities. The addition of the pools has more than doubled the pool space we currently have.

Currently, sea turtle conservation has limitations and constraints based on federal regulations by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as well as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). This includes captive breeding and thus introduction of any offspring. Response to stranded and compromised sea turtles lie squarely on the shoulders of Gulfarium's program (under permitting by FWCC) in the surrounding county area. Not only has a measured increase in emerging diseases, interaction with personal and commercial fishing gear, and environmental inconsistencies occurred in the ecology of these endangered and/or threatened animals, but toxin exposure from scenarios such red tides and oil spills have made survival more difficult. Sea turtles fill an important role in the marine ecosystem of the Gulf of Mexico, and their extinction from the environment would change the already fragile balance we observe today. In order to protect this resource, rescue, rehabilitation and release must continue as a major function of enhancement and preservation of this iconic species.

**PURPOSE:** The scope of this project will more than double our current capacity of sea turtle patients that we are able to treat at any given time. In January of 2015, the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Foundation became an incorporated 501(c)3, with IRS exemption approval pending. The creation of the Foundation will enable the Center to hire its own staff, as well as allow for volunteers to participate in operations. While GMAP staff will continue to manage the rehabilitation program after Phase 1 completion, the C.A.R.E. Foundation will eventually assume these responsibilities by selecting a Program Manager and supporting staff, estimated with an initial staff of five having a wage scale from \$24,000 to \$100,000. The project is simple in design, but requires expertise to assemble and operate from a life support perspective. Technologies are already utilized in accredited aquariums (like GMAP), and available through vendors in the state of Florida. Given Gulfarium's sea turtle rehabilitation performance record, the risk to implement and maintain is minimal to none.

**OBJECTIVES:** The scope of this project will more than double our current capacity of sea turtle patients that we are able to treat at any given time. The Gulf Coast, specifically Okaloosa County and Ft. Walton Beach, receive national media attention when successful sea turtle releases occur. This affords the C.A.R.E. Center the opportunity to promote its relationships including the RESTORE Act funding should this project be funded. That relationship is based on the mutual commitment shared to support the environment, tourism, and the local economy.

100% of the Direct Component funds will be used to install the shade structure over the refurbished fiberglass tanks and filtration equipment. Approximately \$150,000 funded by the Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park will be used to pay for the concrete pad, infrastructure and utility installation for the quarantine facility that the refurbished pools and filtrations system are going into (and which the shade structure will cover) so that the entire quarantine system is functional.

2. How the applicant made the multiyear plan available for 45 days for public review and comment, in a manner calculated to obtain broad-based participation from individuals, businesses, Indian tribes, and non-profit organizations, such as through public meetings, presentations in languages other than English, and postings on the Internet. The applicant will need to submit documentation (e.g., a copy of public notices) to demonstrate that it made its multiyear plan available to the public for at least 45 days. In addition, describe how each activity in the multiyear plan was approved after consideration of all meaningful input from the

public and submit documentation (e.g., a letter from the applicant's leadership approving submission of the multiyear plan to Treasury or a resolution approving the applicant's multiyear plan).

The Amendment was approved to proceed to the 45-day Public Review and Comment period (November 5 to December 20, 2020) by the Board of County Commissioners on November 3, 2020 during their normal Board Meeting. The review period was advertised on November 6, 2020 in the Northwest Florida Daily News, and posted on the RESTORE Act page of the Okaloosa County website for the entire review period. The comments were directed to be submitted to the Grants & RESTORE Manager email.

There were no comments submitted by email to jevans@myokaloosa.com nor by any other means, therefore, there are no comments to address.

Amendment #2 was approved by the Board of County Commissioners on January 5, 2021 to be submitted to the United States Department of the Treasury for acceptance.

3. How each activity included in the applicant's multiyear plan narrative meets all the requirements under the RESTORE Act, including a description of how each activity is eligible for funding based on the geographic location of each activity and how each activity qualifies for at least one of the eligible activities under the RESTORE Act.

The State of Florida's coastal zone includes the area encompassed by the state's 67 counties, including Okaloosa County and the state's territorial waters. As a result, each of the 13 activities included in the multiyear plan matrix is located within the Gulf Coast region as defined in the RESTORE Act and is therefore eligible provided they meet one or more of the eligible activity requirements enumerated in the RESTORE Act. The following information describes how each activity proposed in the Okaloosa County multiyear plan meets the activity eligibility requirements:

Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center RESTORE (\$87,181.43)

The activity meets the RESTORE Act eligibility requirement for mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife and natural resources by providing state-of-the-art facilities for rehabilitating injured sea turtles before releasing the protected animals back into the wild.

To expand on the specificity of how this project will result in "mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources": the scope of the current project will allow the Gulfarium and C.A.R.E. Center to increase the number of sea turtle patients to more than double the current capacity. The more patients that can be treated has a direct impact on how many sea turtles can be returned to the Gulf of Mexico and contribute to the reestablishment of native sea turtle population levels. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) considers "enhancement" to encompass several practices that include introducing animals into wild populations to "increase" stock numbers. Since USFWS, the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) won't allow captive breeding of endangered species, rehabilitation and release is one of the few measures that can enhance, or in this case, maintain stock numbers.

4. Criteria the applicant will use to evaluate the success of the activities included in the multiyear plan narrative in helping to restore and protect the Gulf Coast Region impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center RESTORE (\$87,181.43)

Equipment acquisition and property development will be monitored by Gulfarium Marine Park Management. Operational evaluations will be made by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) per policy and regulations. Success will be based on the number of patients that have been rehabilitated at the Gulfarium that is already mandated to be reported to the State on a quarterly and annual basis. Furthermore, success of this project is measured in the increased number of sea turtle patients the Gulfarium and C.A.R.E. Center is able to treat at any given time as well as the number of sea turtles being reintroduced into the Gulf of Mexico versus those that are euthanized based on facility limitations. The addition of the tanks will be more than double the size of our current holding space. The installation of the proposed systems will more than double our current capacity of 6-8 patients to 16-18 patients.

5. How the activities included in the multiyear plan narrative were prioritized and list the criteria used to establish the priorities.

The Okaloosa County RESTORE Advisory Committee (ORAC) established and publicized a meeting schedule which identified monthly public meetings at alternating geographic locations within the County. These meetings were nominally two hours in length and included opportunities for public comment.

The ORAC opted to develop an evaluation tool comprising both quantitative and qualitative scores that collectively represent an individual project score for each activity. The process involved developing economic, general, and

environmental evaluation factors for the quantitative scoring and performing tests of the model using examples of projects being considered elsewhere. The public was provided opportunity to submit project ideas and presentations would be heard by project proposers that meet the minimum requirements established by the ORAC.

An evaluation tool was developed using both quantitative and qualitative components. This approach was preferred as it provided a defensible, replicable process while allowing the respective expertise from the individual members of the ORAC. The ORAC adopted a 70%-30% split ratio with 70% of the weight placed on quantitative factors and 30% on qualitative factors. The economic factors identified by the ORAC were consolidated into a smaller number of revised factors which capture the underlying concepts the ORAC has identified as important to measure. Three economic factors were formalized for the Quantitative Score which capture job opportunity/job creation impacts, economic diversification impacts, life-cycle costs, leverage, matching funds, in-kind considerations, taxpayer return-on-investment, and sustained economic benefit. The three factors include:

- i. Gross Product per RESTORE Dollar Invested
- ii. Net State and Local Government Revenues Generated per RESTORE Dollar Invested; and,
- iii. Economic Diversification. Numerous “general” factors identified in by the ORAC which capture implementation readiness, shovel readiness, permits, compliance, land ownership, proven success, and technical feasibility. These were consolidated into two general factors for the scoring model

- i. Implementation Readiness; and,
- ii. Project Feasibility.

Lastly, the ORAC identified four environmental factors to be considered in the quantitative score. These four factors are consistent with the four non-economic goals identified in the Initial Comprehensive Plan approved by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (GCERC) in August 2013 for regional-wide Gulf Coast restoration and include:

- i. Restore / Enhance / Protect Habitats
- ii. Replenish / Protect Living Coast and Marine Fisheries
- iii. Enhanced Community Resilience
- iv. Restore Water Quality

Each of these nine quantitative factors was given a “factor significance” that represents the relative importance of each factor as follows:

- 12% - Gross Product per RESTORE Dollar Invested
- 14% - Net State and Local Government Revenues Generated per RESTORE Dollar Invested
- 14% - Economic Diversification
- 10% - Implementation Readiness
- 13% - Project Feasibility
- 10% - Restore / Enhance / Protect Habitats
- 10% - Replenish / Protect Living Coast and Marine Fisheries
- 10% - Enhanced Community Resilience
- 7% - Restore Water Quality

The qualitative scores, representing 30% of the project score, was determined to be a subjective score applied by the members of the ORAC based on their respective importance of each project proposed. The ORAC agreed to base their individual quantitative scoring on factors such as community acceptance, geographic distribution of projects, enhancement to local quality of life, and the expert judgment each member offered to the committee.

Project presentations were heard by the ORAC in June/July 2015 and the ORAC members provided their qualitative scores. The final project scores were tabulated and the projects were prioritized accordingly. The recommended projects for the draft Multi-Year Implementation Plan were selected and presented to the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners for approval and publicly noticed for public comment.

6. If applicable, describe the amount and current status of funding from other sources (e.g., other RESTORE Act contribution, other third party contribution) and provide a description of the specific portion of the project to be funded by the RESTORE Act Direct Component.

Since its acceptance on the Initial MYP, the Gulfarium has completed this project with its own funds except for, the shade structure over the project area.