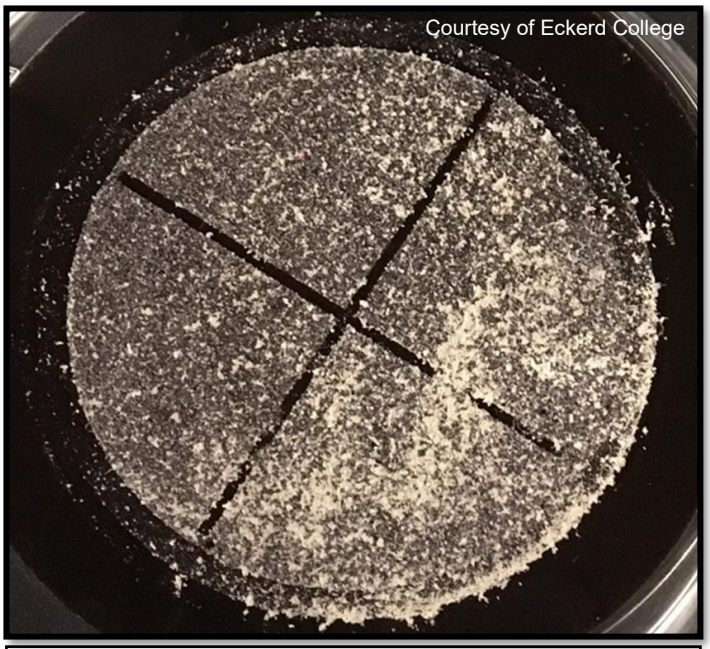
Pollution Recovery Fund Focus Newsletter 2024

Pollution Recovery Fund Grants Available in 2024

The Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County announces that applications for Pollution Recovery Fund grants will be accepted in 2024. PRF is funded solely by administrative penalties obtained through enforcement for the necessary correction of pollution.

The Pollution Recovery Fund is governed by Chapter 1-9, Rules of the Environmental Protection Commission for the funding of projects to restore polluted areas, mitigate the effects of pollution and to otherwise enhance pollution control activities within Hillsborough County. It is the Commission's intent that the monies be used so as to accomplish an improvement in the purity of the waters, soils or air of the county consistent with public health and enjoyment thereof, and the propagation and protection of wildlife, birds, game, fish and other aquatic life. PRF has provided over $9,000,000 for environmental projects in Hillsborough County since 1987. Please visit the PRF webpage for more information.

Did you know the PRF also supports EPC's Artificial Reef Program? The EPC manages eight artificial reefs in Tampa Bay, from the Courtney Campbell Causeway to Egmont Key. Find out more at our artificial reef webpage or view our YouTube page at Tampa Bay Artificial Reefs.



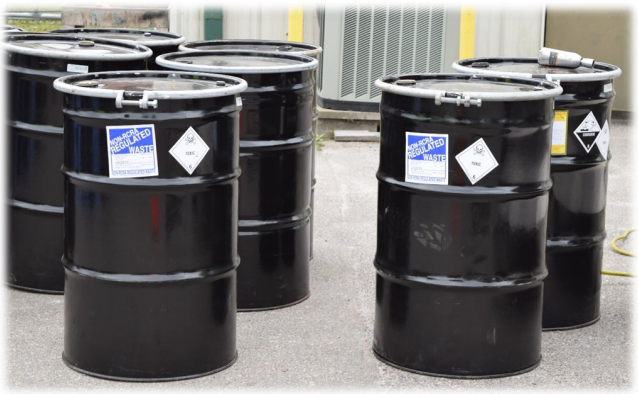
PRF funds were used to establish microplastic pollution loads and temporal trends in Tampa Bay.

Inside:
2023 PRF Project Awards

Projects Awarded in 2023

Agriculture Pesticide Collection

Hillsborough County Extension Service will offer the opportunity to promote safe and environmentally sound pesticide disposal from farms throughout Hillsborough County. Farmers may still have pesticide products in storage that have been banned, canceled, or suspended due to potential risk to human health, awaiting the availability of affordable disposal options. These farmers will be encouraged to bring their unusable pesticides to the collection site for disposal. The collection will occur at the Hillsborough County Alderman's Ford Solid Waste Facility site, where the service provider will handle all aspects of the collection and disposal. Hillsborough County Extension Service will report the types and quantities of pesticides collected and determine the level of materials that may still need collection.

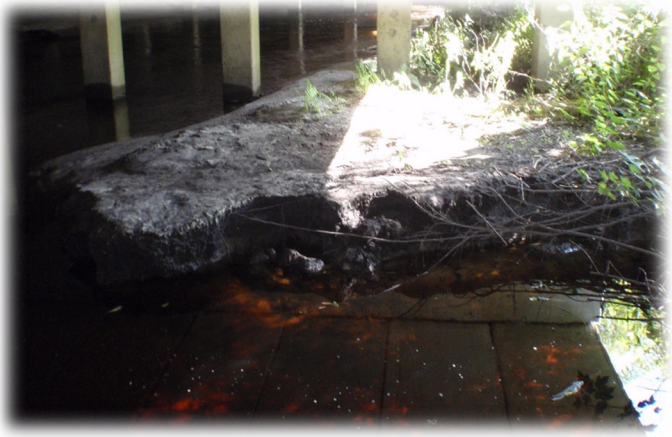


MacDill Air Force Base Mangrove Restoration

Ecosphere Restoration Institute, Inc. will restore 3 acres of mosquito ditches along the southern tip of MacDill AFB that currently bisect saltern communities up-slope of mangrove forests. These saltern communities were impacted by mosquito ditching practices performed through mangrove forests and into the saltern areas prior to MacDill's ownership of the peninsula in the 1960s that resulted in altering the tidal flow ways and hydrology of the area. These habitats provide critical feeding grounds for many species of wading birds during the monthly high tide periods. The project's method of hydro-blasting spoil mounds will restore the habitat's natural monthly high tide flooding periods, thus restoring the feeding areas for wading birds.

Impact of Indigenous *E. coli* on Microbial Water Quality

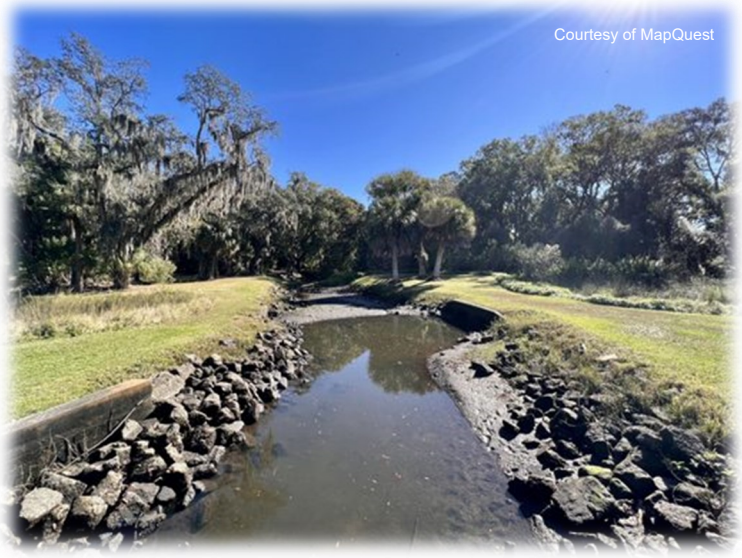
The University of South Florida will conduct a study that will collect sediment and water column samples in three streams in Hillsborough County to measure *E. coli* levels: Buckhorn Creek, Bullfrog Creek, and Rice Creek. The objective of this study is to develop methods to discriminate between fecal-derived *E. coli* from recent pollution events and indigenous *E. coli* populations in streams. The project will also identify sewage and animal fecal pollution by microbial source tracking (MST), a strategic approach for assessment of the dominant source of fecal pollution in water bodies. Visual identification and suspected sources based on data collected will be relayed to EPC on an on-going basis for remediation.



Projects Awarded in 2023

Reed Park Stormwater Restoration Project

Sea & Shoreline LLC will provide a method of green stormwater infrastructure through the reintroduction of native widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*) and tape grass (*Vallisneria americana*) to 0.61 acres of the Hillsborough River. Green stormwater infrastructure is a method to sequester nutrients, increase residence time, and improve water quality before stormwater reaches the Hillsborough River. The project will begin with a full benthic baseline survey and documentation that all planting unit nursery cultivars used in the project are native species of grasses. Planting units will then be planted within herbivory exclusion devices. After installation, a team of biologists will monitor the plantings for overall health and survivability, and remove biofouling from devices.

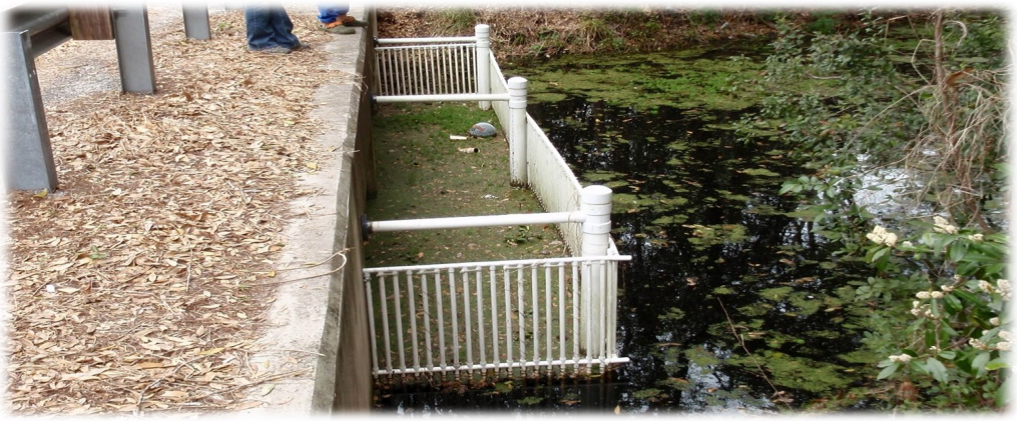


Invasive Species Removal along Hillsborough River, Hillsborough Bay, and Old Tampa Bay

The City of Tampa will remove invasive plant species to improve habitat within seven parks in Hillsborough County: River Boulevard Park, Temple Crest Park, River Tower Park, Skyway Trail, Bobby Hicks Pond, Davis Island Severn Avenue, and Gasden Park/MacDill Trail Greenway. Invasive plants such as Brazilian pepper, mimosa trees, air potato vines, and kudzu vines harm native species and threaten biodiversity; some, like Brazilian pepper, have taken over habitat for mangroves that are nursery habitat for young fish, improve water quality, help reduce storm surge, and provide other key ecosystem services. The project aims to remove all invasive species of vegetation within the project locations and improve approximately ten acres of habitat. Objectives also include maintenance and monitoring of the habitat locations.

Projects Awarded in 2023

Lake Magdalene Grass Carp Barrier



Lake Magdalene Special Dependent District will install a grass carp barrier on Lake Magdalene, and will stock the lake with grass carp to control nuisance vegetation. The project will involve the design, professional services, and the construction of the carp barrier at the designated location.

River Hills Nature Trail

RHC Master Association, Inc. will remove invasive vegetative species from the habitat along the River Hills Nature Trail bordering the Alafia River. The trail consists of 4.2 miles of trails over a 250-acre tract of land along the Alafia River, largely made up of natural systems including wetland hardwood forest and mixed wetland forest. Wetlands improve water quality, help reduce storm surge and flooding, and provide other key ecosystem services. Various invasive plant species have proliferated in the Tampa Bay area including along the River Hills Nature Trail. These invasive species can cause harm to native plant species and threaten biodiversity. This project will remove invasive trees and plants and replant the habitat with native species of plants and trees. Follow-up invasive species removal will take place one year after the completion of the initial invasive species removal, and continuing maintenance and monitoring will be conducted post-restoration.

Project Highlight

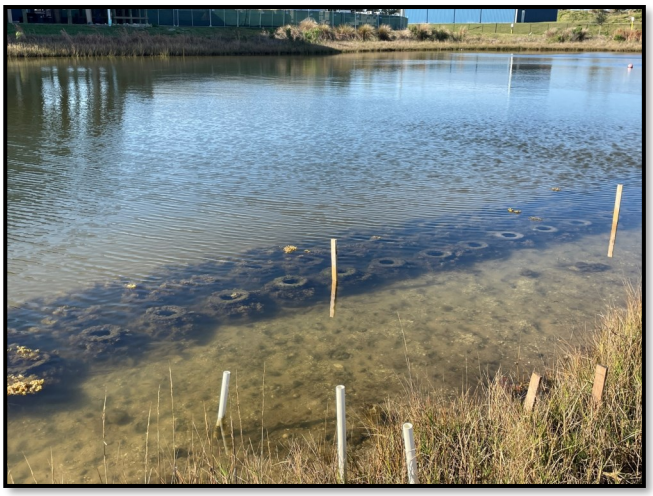
FWC—Living Shoreline Demo Site

Ecosphere Restoration Institute, Inc., applied for and was granted PRF funds in 2020 to implement a series of shoreline treatments along the banks of Newman Branch Creek near the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's teaching facility, the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center. This creek had previously been dredged and straightened. 70 acres of the creek have been restored by reestablishing the natural creek meanders between 2013 and 2020.

Hardened shorelines provide limited ecological benefits and result in the loss of wetland habitat, including native wetland plants, which in turn result in the loss of aquatic organisms including fish. The project provided 5 example treatments which employed best practices in Living Shoreline and Seawall Enhancement designs per the USACE and NOAA Systems Approach to Geomorphic Engineering (SAGE) method. The treatment designs offer the opportunity for the public to see first-hand what nature-based shoreline solutions look like.

The Suncoast Youth Conservation Center serves an average of 4,200 youth per year. This site is part of a unique partnership between the Florida Aquarium, FWC, and TECO on a 20-acre campus with over 490,000 visitors annually. Along with the living shoreline, the project also added educational signage about nature-based shoreline stabilization techniques.

2 years of quarterly post-construction monitoring were also conducted which consisted of assessing the natural recruitment of sessile organisms, such as barnacles and oysters. In addition, the health and survivorship of the installed estuarine wetland vegetation was evaluated and any recruitment of additional species were also noted.



PROJECT QUICK FACTS

APPLICANT
Ecosphere Restoration Institute, Inc.

AWARD AMOUNT
$42,000

Have a question? Please contact us:

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