

September 6, 2022

Ms. Roberta Swann, Director
Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
118 N. Royal Street, Suite 601
Mobile, Alabama 36602

RE: Letter of Support - MBNEP's NOAA Grant Proposal - Catalyzing a Multi-Communal Approach for Transformative Restoration of the Perdido Watershed

Dear Ms. Swann,

As Chairman of the Baldwin County Commission, I am writing to express support for your 2022 NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants proposal: *Catalyzing a Multi-Communal Approach for Transformative Restoration of the Perdido Watershed*.

The Perdido Bay Watershed provides important wetland and riparian habitats contributing to Alabama's exceptional species diversity and environmental health. However, the region is experiencing unprecedented residential and commercial growth, putting pressure on habitats facing climate change impacts. Development of a comprehensive watershed plan for this area will provide site-specific management recommendations to help property owners, municipalities, and communities better protect critical habitats to increase overall community and environmental resilience.

Additionally, streambank erosion and downstream sedimentation are significant challenges facing communities in the Wolf Bay Watershed. This project will provide a comprehensive strategy to restore degraded streams and riparian corridors that have been negatively impacted by stormwater, invasive species, and a changing climate. Furthermore, we strongly support the development of hydrologic models for the Perdido Watershed. Similar models for other watersheds throughout the County are regularly utilized and have proven a valuable tool as Baldwin County engineers, planners, and resource managers work to proactively manage stormwater, increase the resilience of our coastal communities, and ensure growth and development occurs in sustainable manner. This effort will also result in increased coordination among local governments managing stormwater in areas challenged by hard rain in excess of five feet annually, erodible soils, and significant urban development.

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Coastal Alabama residents, the State, Baldwin County, and the City of Foley depend on stable shorelines, beautiful waters, and the productive fisheries that develop from healthy coastal habitats including intertidal marsh and sea grass. These are the intended outcomes of the holistic watershed restoration this project proposes. The MBNEP has a consistent record of sound stewardship of environmental restoration and protection funding and I have full confidence in the organization's ability to create a plan that addresses the complex issues of the watershed.

We hope that your proposal is considered favorably, and we look forward to a plan that improves coastal health and supports those things valued most by residents of and visitors to coastal Alabama.

If you wish to discuss any aspects of the proposal further, please do not hesitate to contact me or Ashley Campbell, Natural Resource Planner, at (251) 937-0264.

Sincerely,

JAMES E. BALL, Chairman
Baldwin County Commission