

Northwest Florida Umbrella, Watershed-based, Regional Mitigation Plan

US Army Corps
of Engineers
Jacksonville District
Cocoa, FL

US Environmental
Protection Agency
Region 4
Atlanta, GA

US Fish and
Wildlife Service
Panama City, FL

US National Marine
Fisheries Service
St. Petersburg, FL

Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
Tallahassee, FL

Florida Department
of Transportation
Chipley, FL

Northwest Florida
Water Management District
Havana, FL

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Background

The Northwest Florida Umbrella, Watershed-based, Regional Mitigation Plan (Umbrella Plan) was established by agreement between the US Army Corps of Engineers - Jacksonville District (CORPS) and the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) in July 2006. Operated as an In-lieu Fee Program, it is an outgrowth of the NFWFMD's responsibility under Florida Statutes to provide mitigation for Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) impacts to wetlands regulated by federal and state code. Delineated by seven major watersheds, the NFWFMD jurisdiction covers 16 counties (~11,300 mi²) and extends from east of Tallahassee to west of Pensacola.

Purpose

Prior to adoption of the Umbrella Plan, mitigation for FDOT impacts was planned and implemented on a piecemeal basis as transportation projects headed into final permitting phases. With the Umbrella Plan, watershed resources and mitigation needs are identified upfront in a comprehensive manner. The Umbrella Plan establishes a process by which wetland mitigation projects are strategically identified at a watershed scale by the NFWFMD, evaluated by an Interagency Review Team (IRT), approved by the CORPS, and creates a mitigation credit ledger whereby "banked" credits may be used as offsetting mitigation for future wetland impacts.

Program Operation

*NFWFMD staff identify potential mitigation projects for inclusion in "Umbrella Plan"

*Quarterly meetings with CORPS / IRT
+Discussions of existing and proposed mitigation projects, and anticipated FDOT impacts
+Field visits to selected sites
-Determination of appropriateness of project
-Determination of mitigation values / credits
+Discussions of problems encountered and remedial actions proposed or undertaken

*Mitigation plan updates approved by NFWFMD Governing Board / Executive Director

*Project plans posed on website (<http://www.NFWFMDwetlands.com>) for CORPS / IRT review

*CORPS approval of new projects and updated mitigation credit ledger

*Funding
+FDOT mitigation (FY 09 funding is \$98,840 per impact acre--adjusted yearly based on federal Consumer Price Index)
+Sale of mitigation credits to other entities (public and/or private)

*Annual project-specific monitoring reports posted on website

Accomplishments

*Mitigation implemented on 10,500+ acres (1997 - 2008)

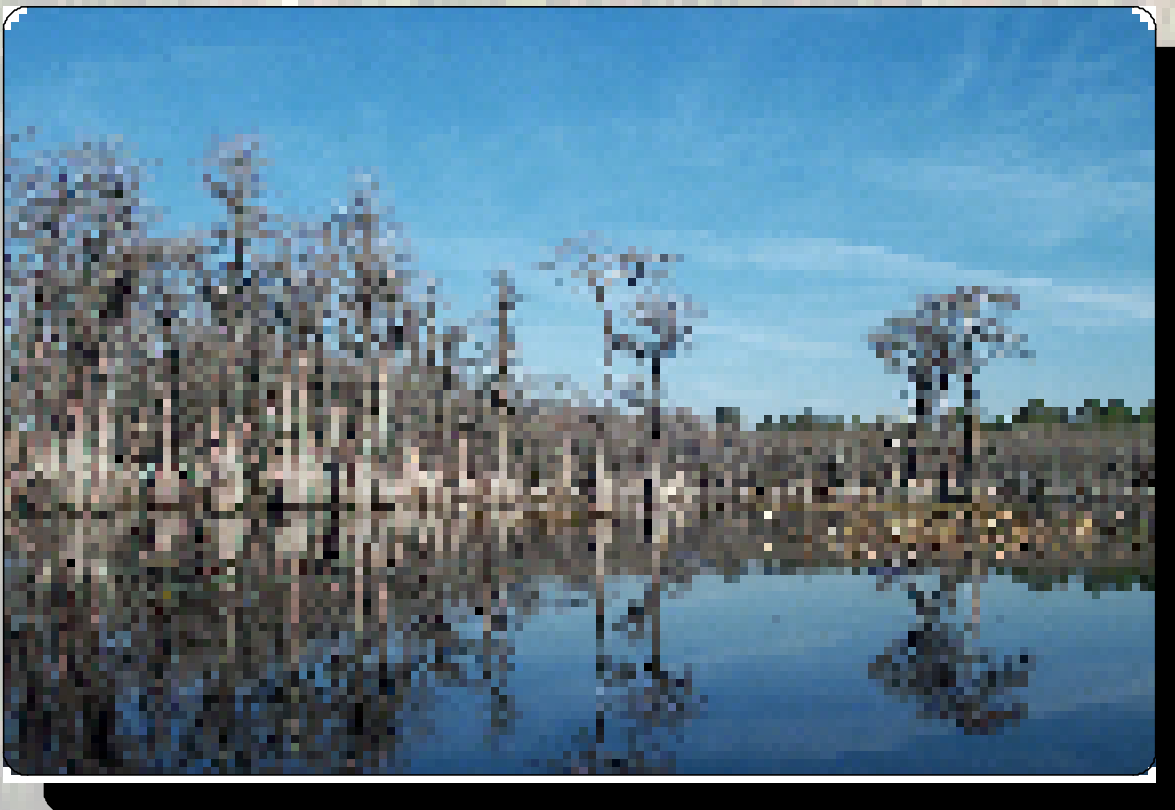
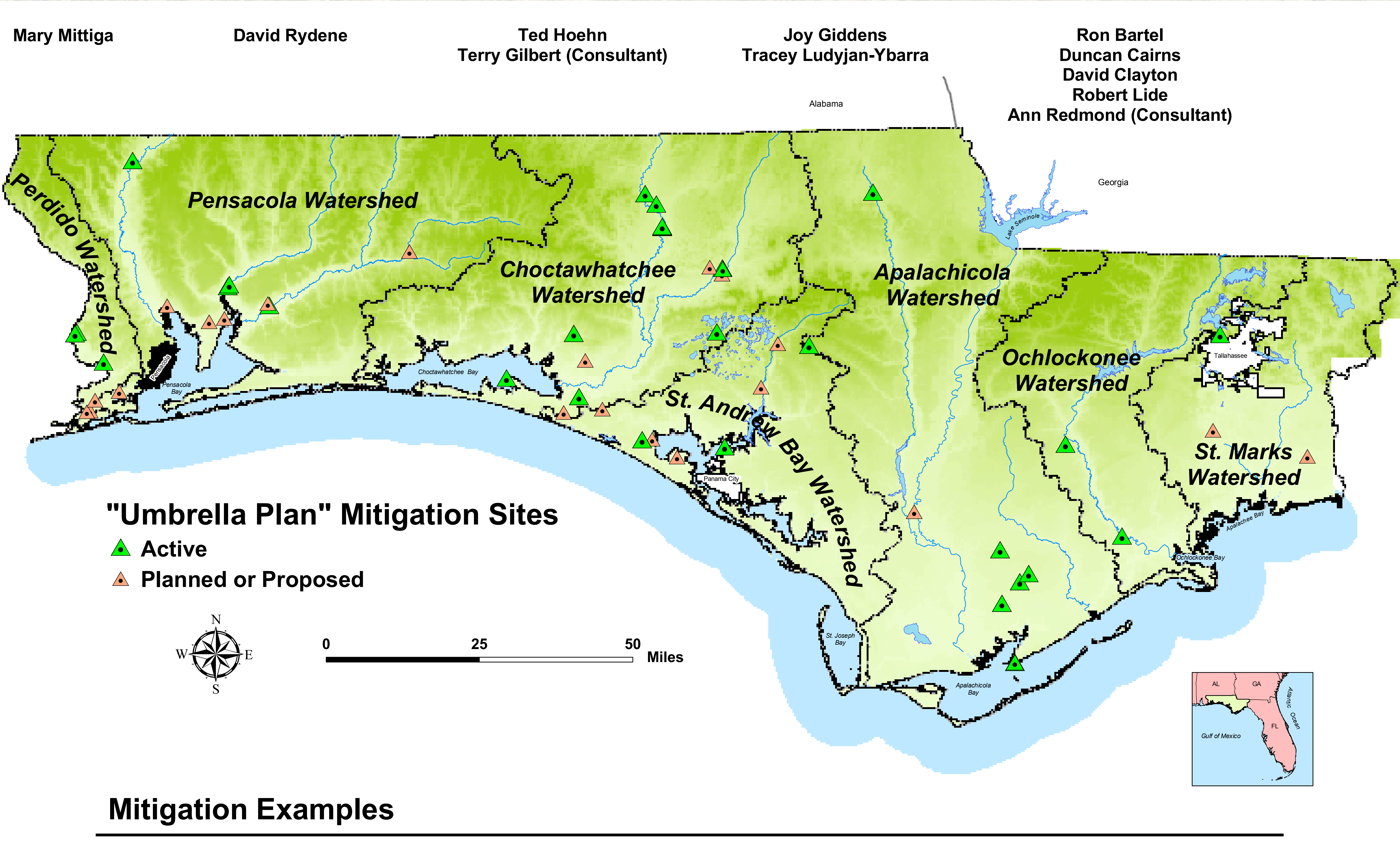
+Acquisition (9,000+ acres)
-5,600+ wetland acres
-3,400+ upland buffer acres
+Restoration on existing preserved lands (1,500+ acres)
-650+ wetland acres
-850+ upland buffer acres

*Mitigation credits advanced/released by CORPS = 536.38

*Mitigation credits used to offset FDOT impacts = 379.10

*Potential credits approved to date by CORPS = 900.43

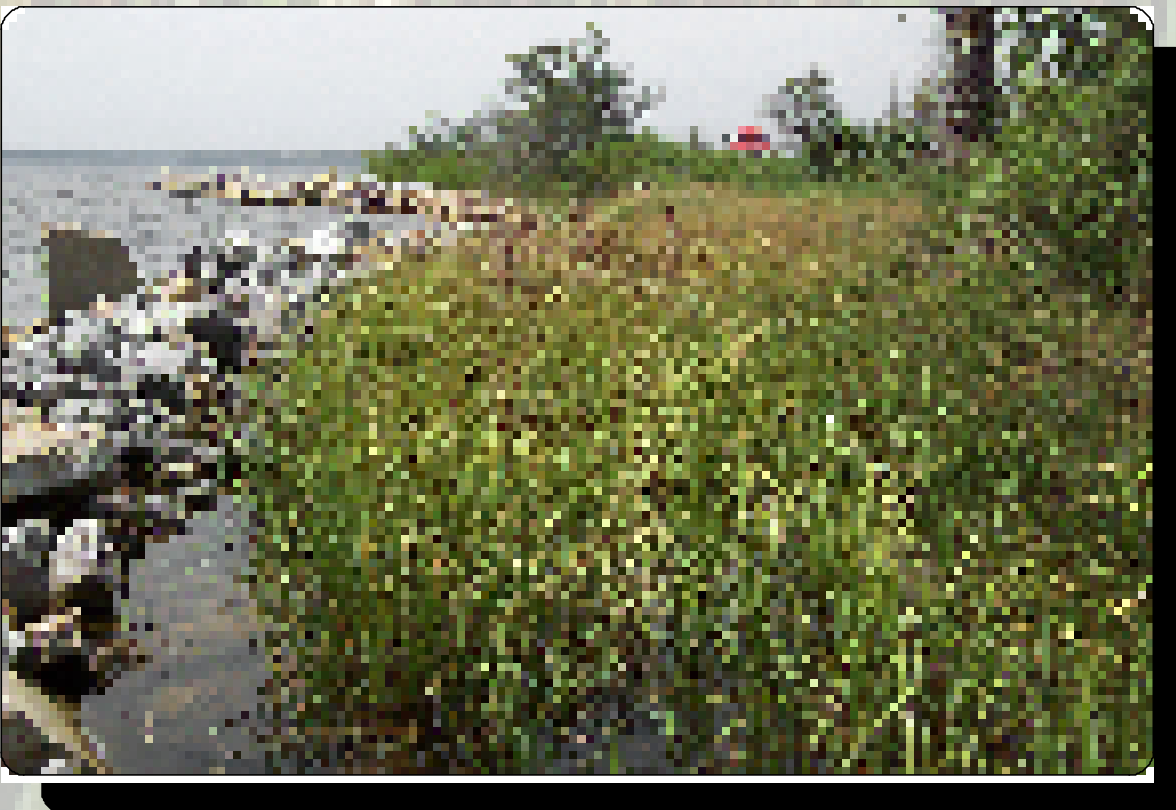
*Wetland habitats protected / enhanced / restored
+92% Palustrine (e.g., hydric pine flatwoods and savanna, seepage slopes, cypress sloughs, mixed forested wetlands, emergent, herbaceous)
+8% Estuarine (e.g., salt marsh)



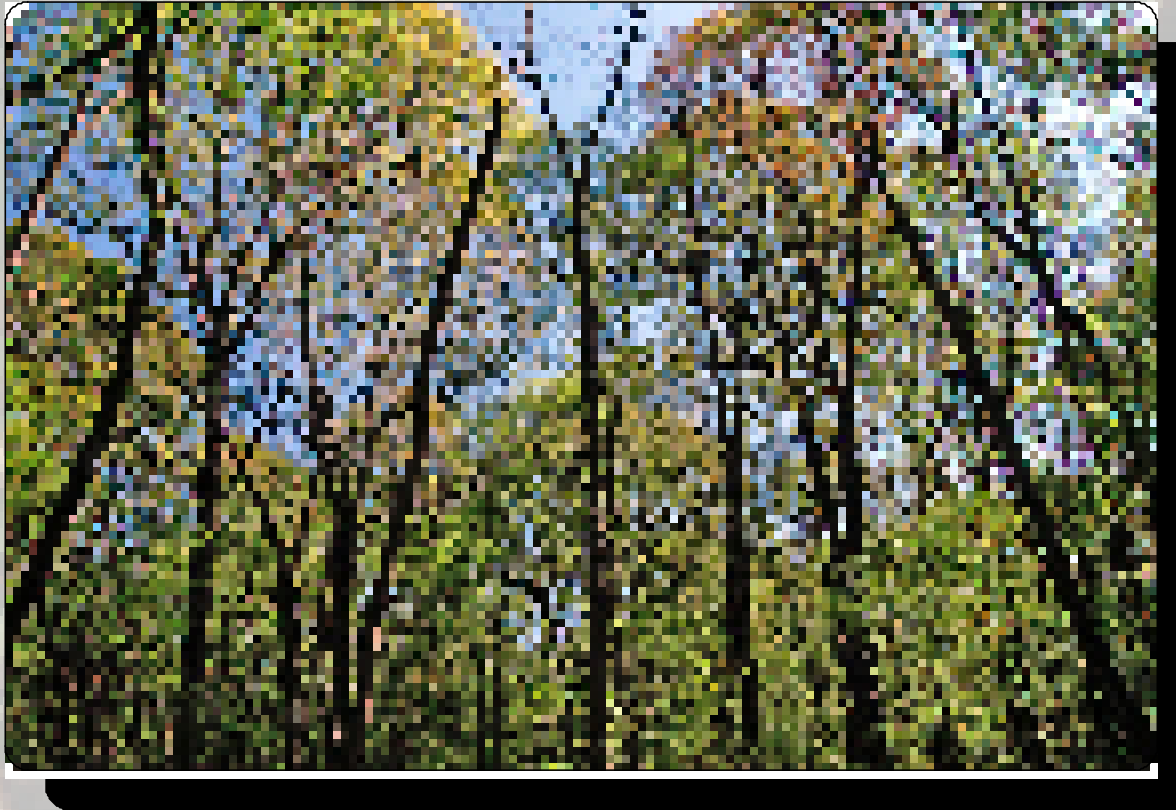
Cypress / Karst Pond Management
(Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank)



Wiregrass Planting
(Womack Creek)



Salt Marsh Restoration
(Lynn Haven)



Bottomland Swamp Preservation
(Bellamy Tract)



Ditch / Road Removal
(Doyle Creek)



Exotics Eradication
(Meginniss Arm)



Brush Reduction / Hydric Flatwoods
Restoration (Ward Creek West)



Prescribed Fire
(Yellow River Ranch)