

Northwest Florida Watersheds Partnership Program

“Celebrating 50 Years of Preserving Water
Resources in Northwest Florida”



Surface Water Improvement & Management (SWIM)

Program: Partnership Program Video



- The Florida Legislature passed the SWIM Act in 1987 to improve and manage the water quality and natural systems of Florida's surface waters, including lakes, rivers, streams, estuaries, springs, and wetlands.
- The District's SWIM priority list includes the seven major watersheds of northwest Florida.
- The central component of the SWIM Program is the development of plans for each watershed.
- SWIM plans provide:
 - Watershed characteristics
 - Descriptions of anthropogenic impacts to water quality and aquatic habitats
 - Strategies to restore and to protect watershed resources
- The SWIM plans were last updated and approved by the Governing Board in 2017 and 2018.



Northwest Florida Watersheds Partnership Program



- Collaborative program to identify priority sub-basins in each SWIM watershed and focus resources to implement projects that address water resource issues.
- Outreach and coordination will be key to maximizing partnerships and innovation.
- FY 2025-26 Legislative Budget Request is \$25 million
 - \$22.5 million for grant program
 - \$2.5 million for program implementation



Perdido River Near Otto Hill



Perdido Beach

Why Now?



- Florida is the fastest growing state in the U.S.
- The District includes some of the fastest growing counties in Florida (Gulf #3, Walton #6, Bay #15, Santa Rosa #17, and Wakulla #18).
- Collaborative partnerships and additional funding are needed to address pressing water resource issues in Northwest Florida.
- With the creation of the three panhandle estuary programs and the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program becoming the first newly designated National Estuary Program in 30 years, there is significant local momentum to identify and fix priority resource issues.



Blackwater River Marsh



Project GreenShores and Admiral Mason Park

Partnership Program Implementation



- To ensure timely implementation, the District is developing sub-basin prioritization criteria, a public involvement plan, and a sub-basin work plan template.
- Public involvement activities anticipated to include:
 - Public meetings in all seven watersheds
 - Coordination with state agencies
 - Presentations at estuary program meetings
 - Meetings with local governments, regional planning councils, and interested parties
 - Creation and maintenance of a program webpage
- The District is pursuing funding for the Program during the 2025-2026 legislative session.



Choctawhatchee River at Highway 20



Live Oak Point Oyster Breakwater

Sub-basin Prioritization



- The goal is to identify seven priority sub-basins, one in each of the seven major SWIM watersheds.
- Sub-basin prioritization criteria focus on:
 - Water Quality
 - Water Supply
 - Natural System Protection
- Water Quality criteria includes impairment status and the potential for stormwater management needs.
- Water Supply criteria includes delineated areas of water resource concern and population growth.
- Natural Systems criteria includes changes in aquatic habitat area as an indicator of restoration priorities.



Longleaf Restoration in Econfinia Creek WMA



Lake Powell Beach Outfall

Sub-basin Work Plans

Once the seven priority sub-basins are identified, work plans will be developed to include:

- Sub-basin descriptions
- Water resource issues and strategies
- Project types, potential partners and collaborations
- Project implementation plans and estimated funding needs



Agricultural BMPs at Stoutamire Farms



OysterCorps Shoreline Stabilization, St. George Island

Grant Program Implementation



- If funding is received, the District will implement a grant program and solicit project proposals.
- Eligible project types are anticipated to include:
 - **Water quality** (restoration planning, stormwater, sediment abatement, septic to sewer, wastewater improvements)
 - **Aquatic habitat** (estuary program support, habitat restoration, living shorelines)
 - **Water supply** (reuse, source water protection, water conservation, water supply development including transmission and storage)
- Submitted projects will be evaluated and presented to the Governing Board for approval.
- Sub-basin work plans will be updated annually to reflect progress achieved (e.g., acres of habitat restored, lbs. of nitrogen removed, etc.).



May Nursery Algae Harvester Site



Sopchoppy River

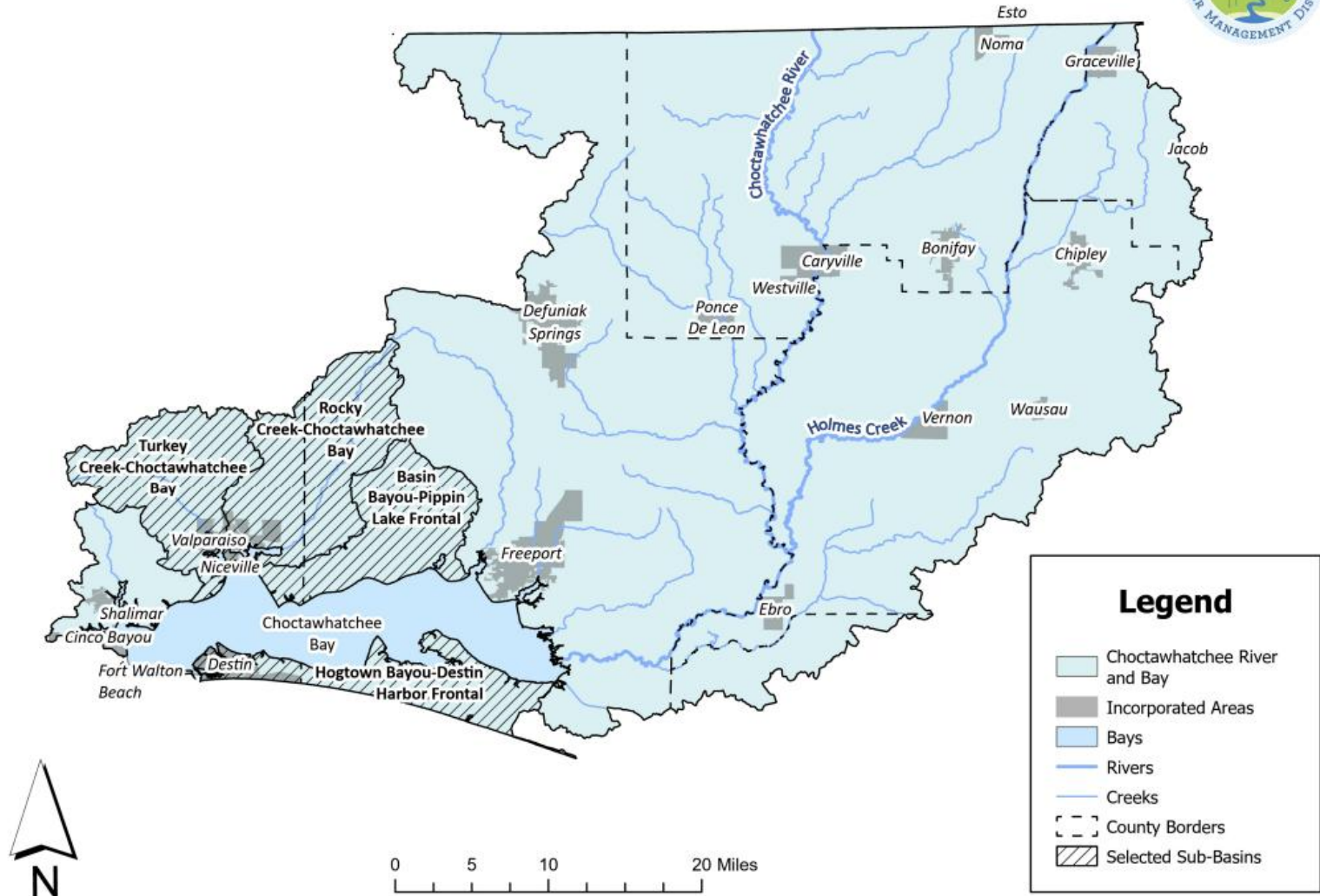
Choctawhatchee River & Bay Watershed



Choctawhatchee River and Bay Watershed

Candidate
Priority Basins

Located in
Walton and
Okaloosa
counties



Hogtown Bayou-Destin Harbor Frontal



Description: This basin, drains into Hogtown Bayou, Choctawhatchee Bay, and the Gulf of America. It includes Topsail Preserve and Henderson Beach State Parks, and the City of Destin. It includes 10 dune lakes (Fuller Lake to Alligator Lake).

Water Quality: Includes waterbodies impaired for pathogens, bacteria, and nutrients. This basin is vulnerable to storm surge, but with a low number of critical assets susceptible to flooding. The basin is in the top 25% for amount of floodplain.

Water Supply: The basin is located within a Water Resource Caution Area where the Upper Floridan Aquifer levels are below sea level. The basin is within the top ten percent for historical (2010 –2020) and projected (2024 - 2045) population increase.

Natural Areas: This basin ranks in the top 10% for decreases in aquatic habitats from 2010 to 2022 and has restoration plans in place.

Hogtown Bayou-Destin Harbor Frontal



Basin Bayou-Pippin Lake Frontal

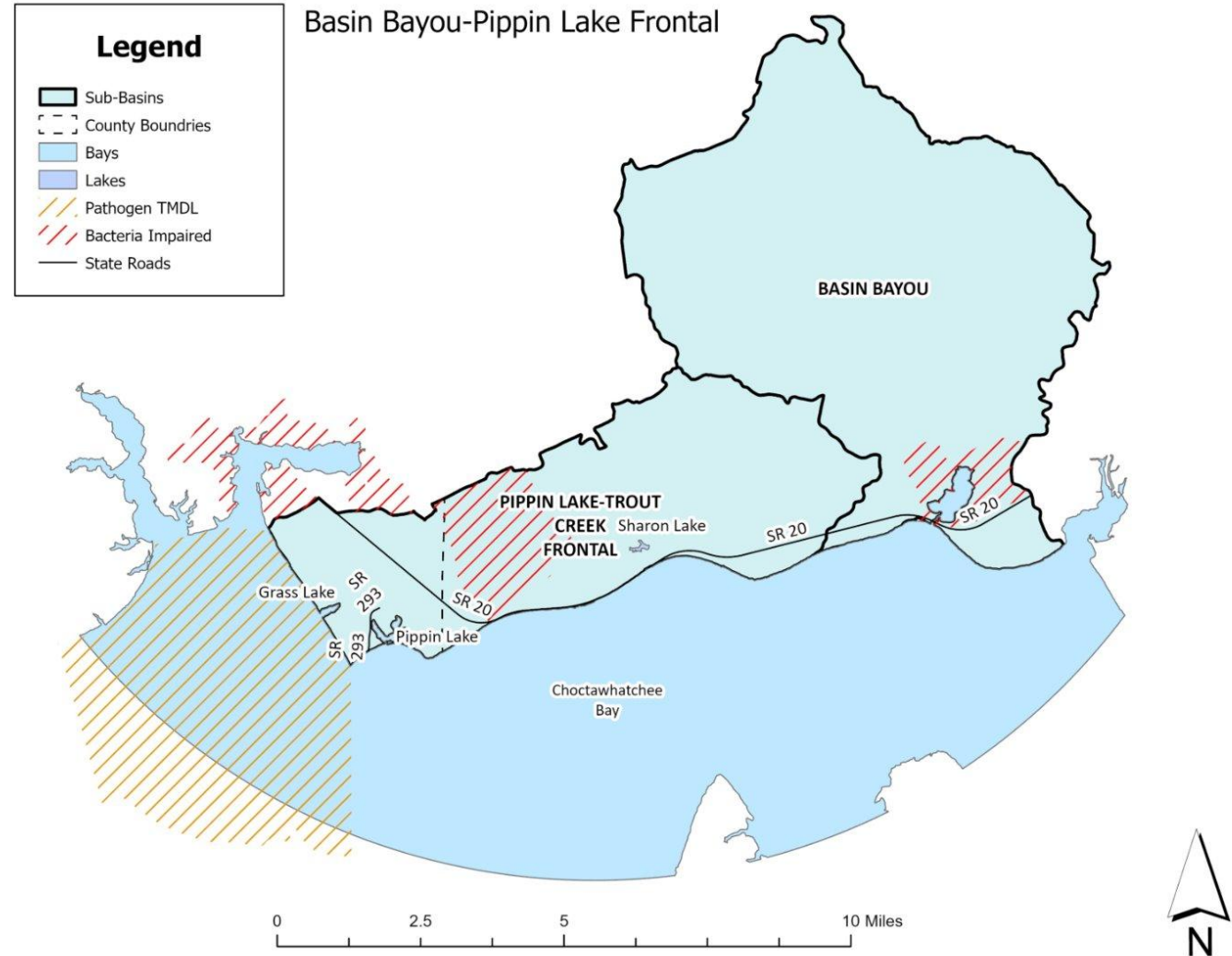


Description: This basin drains into Basin Bayou and Choctawhatchee Bay.

Water Quality: Includes waterbodies impaired for pathogens and bacteria. The basin is at risk of storm surge and has a moderate amount of critical assets susceptible to flooding. Additionally, the basin is in the high middle range for amount of floodplain contained.

Water Supply: The basin is located within Planning Region II and a Water Resource Caution Area. Upper Floridan aquifer levels are below sea level in some areas. The basin is within the top 10% for historical (2010 –2020) and projected (2024 -2045) population increases.

Natural Areas: This basin ranks in the top 25% for decreases in aquatic habitat from 2010 to 2022 and has restoration plans in place.



Rocky Creek-Choctawhatchee River and Bay

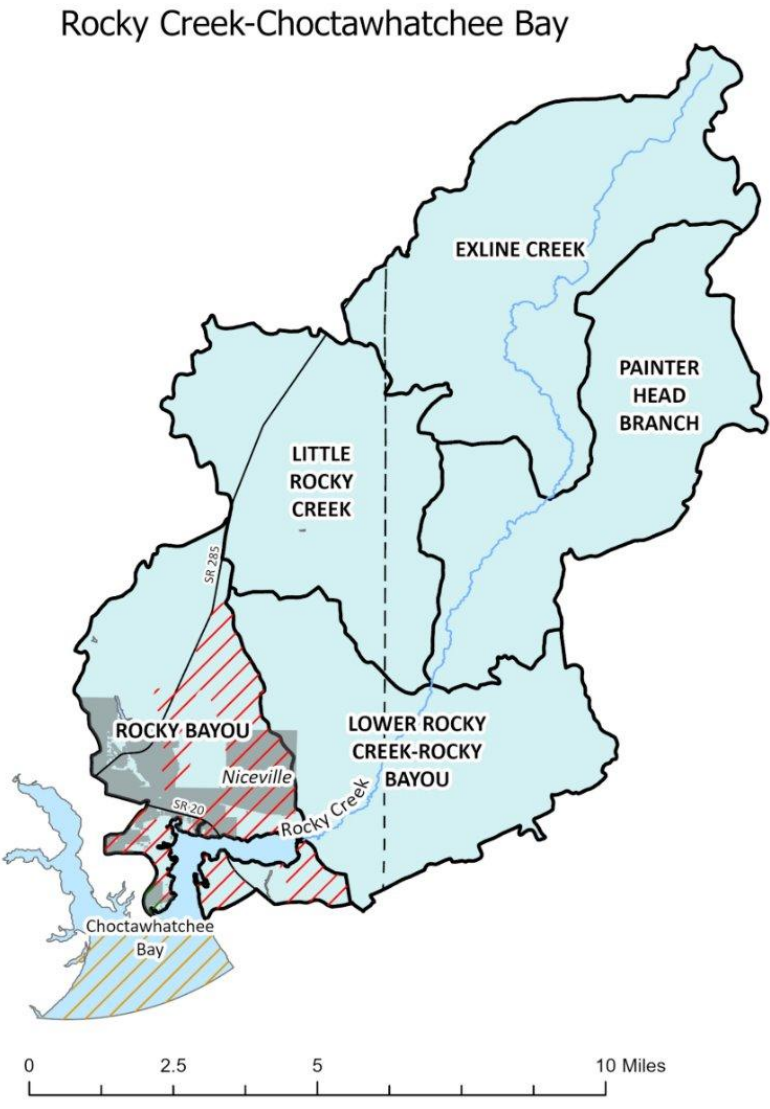


Description: This basin drains to Rocky Bayou and Choctawhatchee Bay. It includes portions of Eglin AFB and the City of Niceville.

Water Quality: Includes impaired waters for pathogens, bacteria, and nutrients. This basin is at risk for storm surge and has a moderate amount of critical assets susceptible to flooding. The basin is among the high middle range for floodplain contained.

Water Supply: The basin is located within Planning Region II and a Water Resource Caution Area. The basin also contains Upper Floridan aquifer levels below sea level. Additionally, the basin is among the top 20% for historical (2010 –2020) and projected (2024 - 2045) population increases.

Natural Areas: Basin ranks in the low middle for decreases in aquatic habitat area from 2010 to 2022 and has restoration plans in place.



Turkey Creek-Choctawhatchee Bay

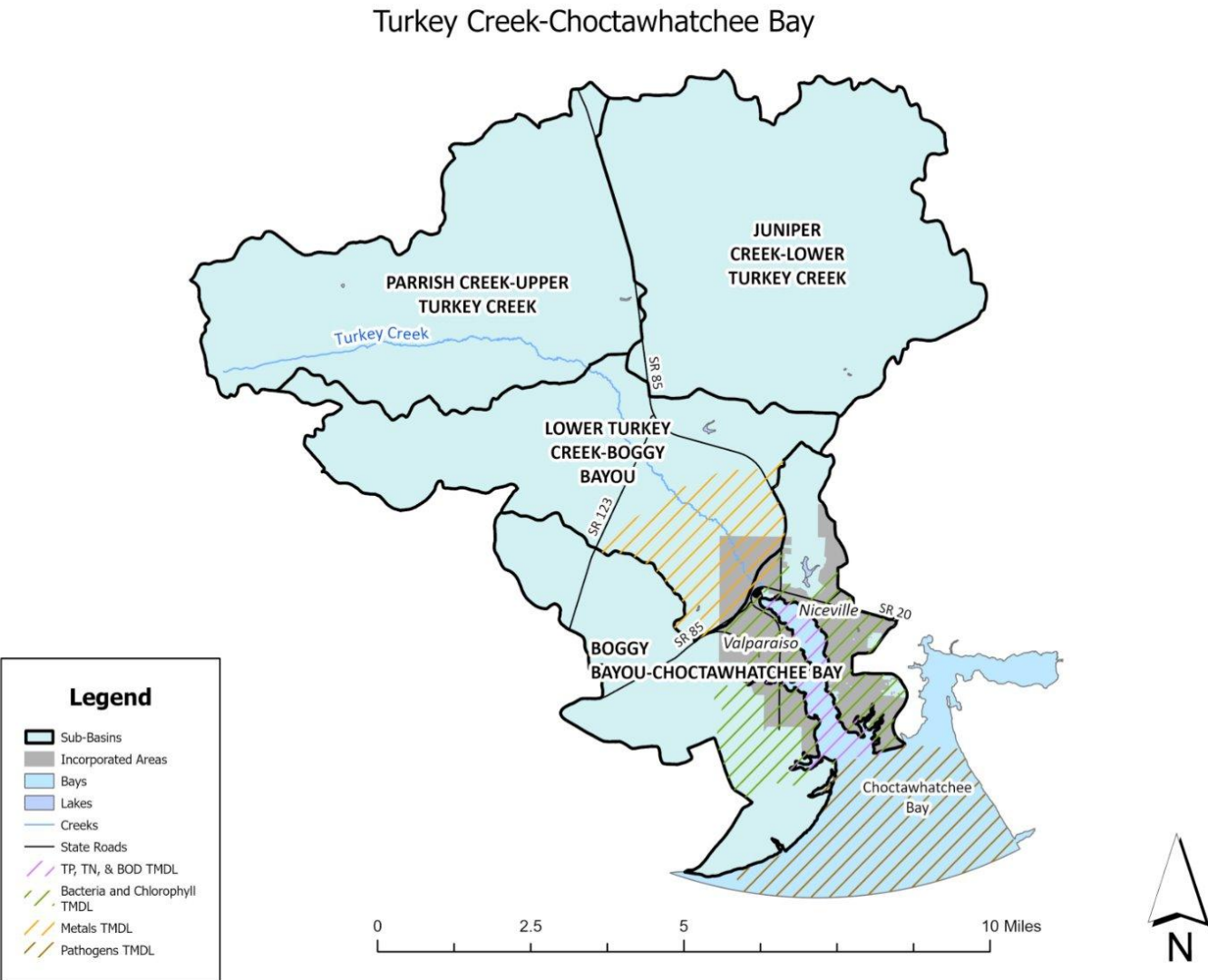


Description: This basin drains to Boggy Bayou and Choctawhatchee Bay. It includes the City of Valparaiso and portions of Eglin AFB and the City of Niceville.

Water Quality: Includes impaired waters for TP, TN, biological oxygen demand (BOD), bacteria, chlorophyll a, metals, and pathogens. Basin is under risk of storm surge and has a low amount of critical assets that are susceptible to flooding. The basin is in the middle range for amount of floodplain contained.

Water Supply: The basin is located within Planning Region II and a Water Resource Caution Area. The basin contains areas where Upper Floridan aquifer levels are below sea level. Additionally, the basin is in the top 20% for historical (2010 –2020) and projected (2024 - 2045) population increases.

Natural Areas: The basin ranks in the high middle range for decreases in aquatic habitat from 2010 to 2022 and currently has restoration plans in place.



Next Steps



- **October:** Outreach to share information and solicit feedback on the Partnership Program elements including:
 - Sub-basin prioritization
 - Sub-basin resource issues and strategies
 - Planned and potential projects
 - Sub-basin work plans
- **November – January:** Develop work plans for prioritized sub-basins
- **Public Comment Period: *Ends October 24***
- Send to: Donnie.Hicks@nwfwater.com or Darryl.Boudreau@nwfwater.com



Wakulla River



Wakulla Beach

Public Comment and Results



- **Public Comment Period: Ends October 24** Send to:
Donnie.Hicks@nwfwater.com or
Darryl.Boudreau@nwfwater.com

Northwest Florida Watershed Partnership

Survey:



Website:



Port St. Joe



John B. Gore Park

Thank You



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