

Northwest Florida Watersheds Partnership Program

Partnership Program Video

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



Surface Water Improvement & Management (SWIM) Program



- 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



- Identify one priority sub-basin in each SWIM watershed and focus resources to 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 Econfina Creek WMA



Lake Powell Beach Outfall

Water Quality



The table below summarizes water quality concerns and criteria used to prioritize the top-ranked basins:

Basin Name	Basin Management Action Plan or Alternative Restoration Plan	Waters Not Attaining Standards	Contains Total Maximum Daily Load	In Storm Surge Zone
Mill Bayou-Lairds Bayou Frontal	-	✓	✓	✓
Intercoastal Waterway-Harrison Bayou Frontal	-	-	-	✓
Deer Point Lake	-	-	-	✓
Sandy Creek-East Bay	-	✓	-	✓
Wetappo Creek-Intercoastal Waterway Frontal	-	✓	-	✓

The water quality prioritization process also considered:

- Acreage located within the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas; and
- Number of water-related critical assets susceptible to flooding, as identified in local government vulnerability assessments.

Water Supply



The table below summarizes the water supply concerns and criteria used to prioritize the top-ranked basins:

Basin Name	In Regional Water Supply Plan Area	Water Resource Caution Area	Area of Resource Concern	Floridan Aquifer Below 0 FT.
Mill Bayou-Lairds Bayou Frontal	-	-	✓	✓
Intercoastal Waterway-Harrison Bayou Frontal	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deer Point Lake	-	-	✓	-
Sandy Creek-East Bay	-	-	✓	-
Wetappo Creek-Intercoastal Waterway Frontal	-	-	✓	✓

The water supply prioritization process also considered the historical population growth between 2010 and 2020, and projected population growth from 2024 to 2045.

Natural Habitat



The table below summarizes the natural habitat concerns and criteria used to prioritize the top-ranked basins:

Basin Name	Natural Habitat Acreage Loss (1-10)	Natural Habitat Percent Change (1-10)	One or More Restoration Plans
Mill Bayou-Lairds Bayou Frontal	10	10	✓
Intercoastal Waterway-Harrison Bayou Frontal	8	8	✓
Deer Point Lake	8	8	✓
Sandy Creek-East Bay	9	10	✓
Wetappo Creek-Intercoastal Waterway Frontal	9	7	✓

Natural habitat (scores 1-10): 1 represents the least amount of change in aquatic habitat and 10 represents the most amount of change from 2010 to 2022.

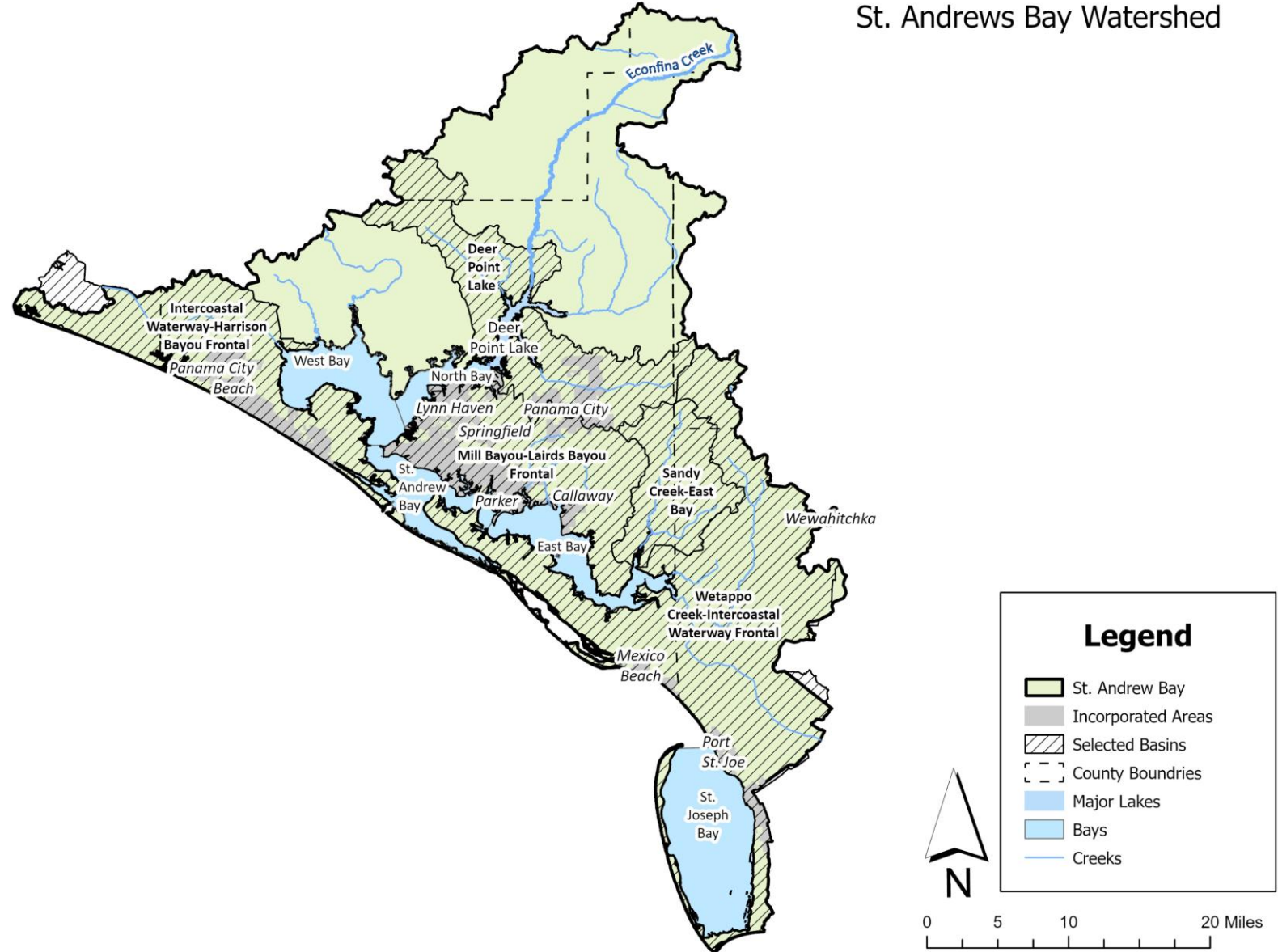
Additionally, restoration plans (i.e. State of the Bays Report, CCMP, Aquatic Preserve Management Plans, etc.) were also considered in the prioritization process.

St. Andrew Bay Watershed



Candidate Priority Basins

St. Andrews Bay Watershed



Intercoastal Waterway-Harrison Bayou Frontal



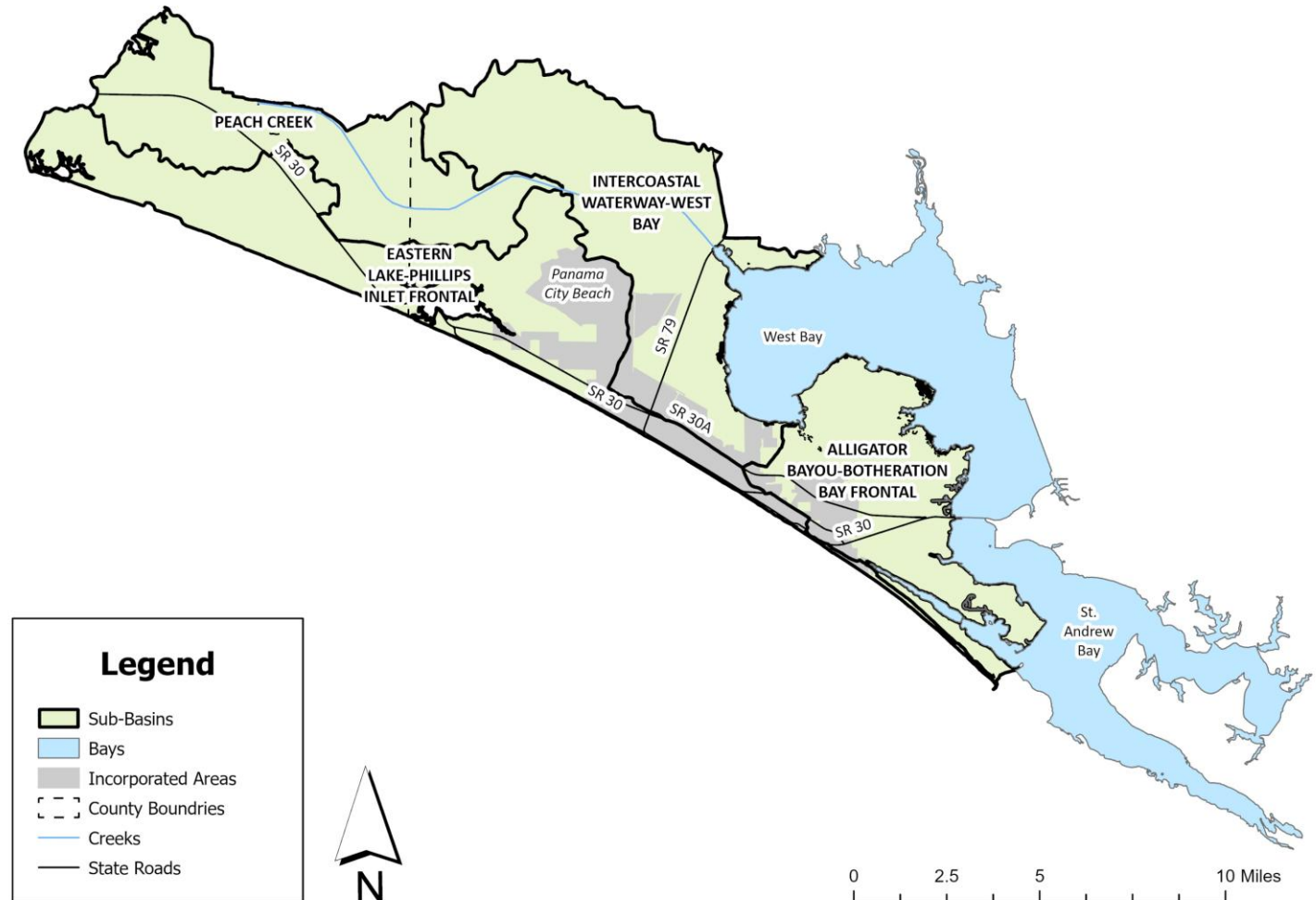
Description: This basin, encompassing Panama City Beach, drains to West Bay, St. Andrew Bay, and the Gulf of America.

Water Quality: This basin is vulnerable to storm surge and has a moderate number of critical assets susceptible to flooding. The basin is among the top 25% of basins within the District, based on the total area with 1% annual chance of flooding.

Water Supply: The basin is partially located within a Water Resource Caution Area and an Area of Resource Concern. Additionally, 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 20% for decreases in aquatic habitats from 2010 to 2022 and has restoration plans in place.

Intercoastal Waterway-Harrison Bayou Frontal



Mill Bayou-Lairds Bayou Frontal

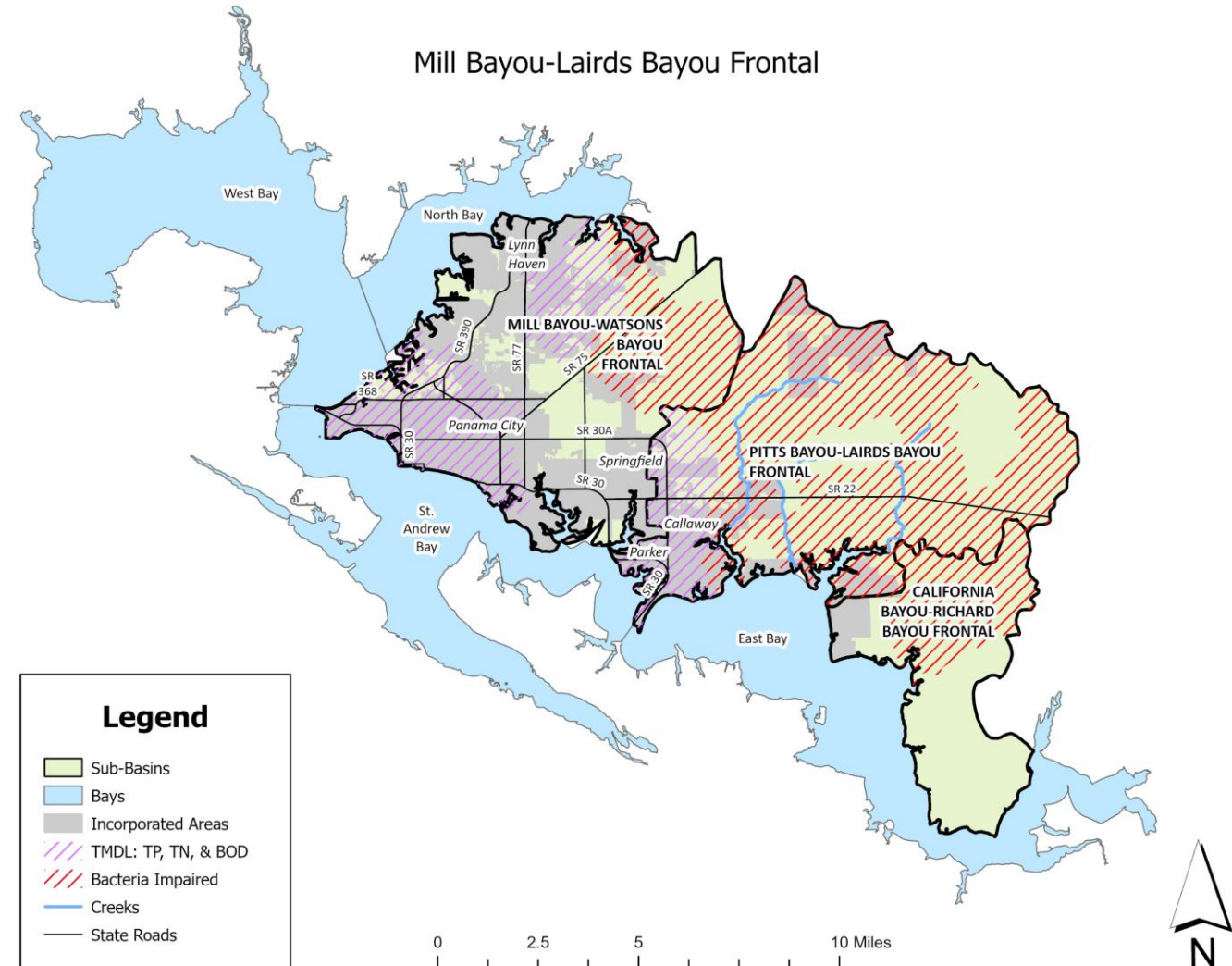


Description: This basin, encompassing Panama City Beach, drains to West Bay, St. Andrew Bay, and East Bay.

Water Quality: Includes waterbodies impaired for phosphorus, total nitrogen, biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), and bacteria. Much of the basin is at risk of storm surge and has a moderate amount of critical assets susceptible to flooding.

Water Supply: The basin is within an Area of Resource Concern. Additionally, the basin is within the middle range for historical (2010 –2020) and projected (2024 - 2045) population increases.

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



Deer Point Lake

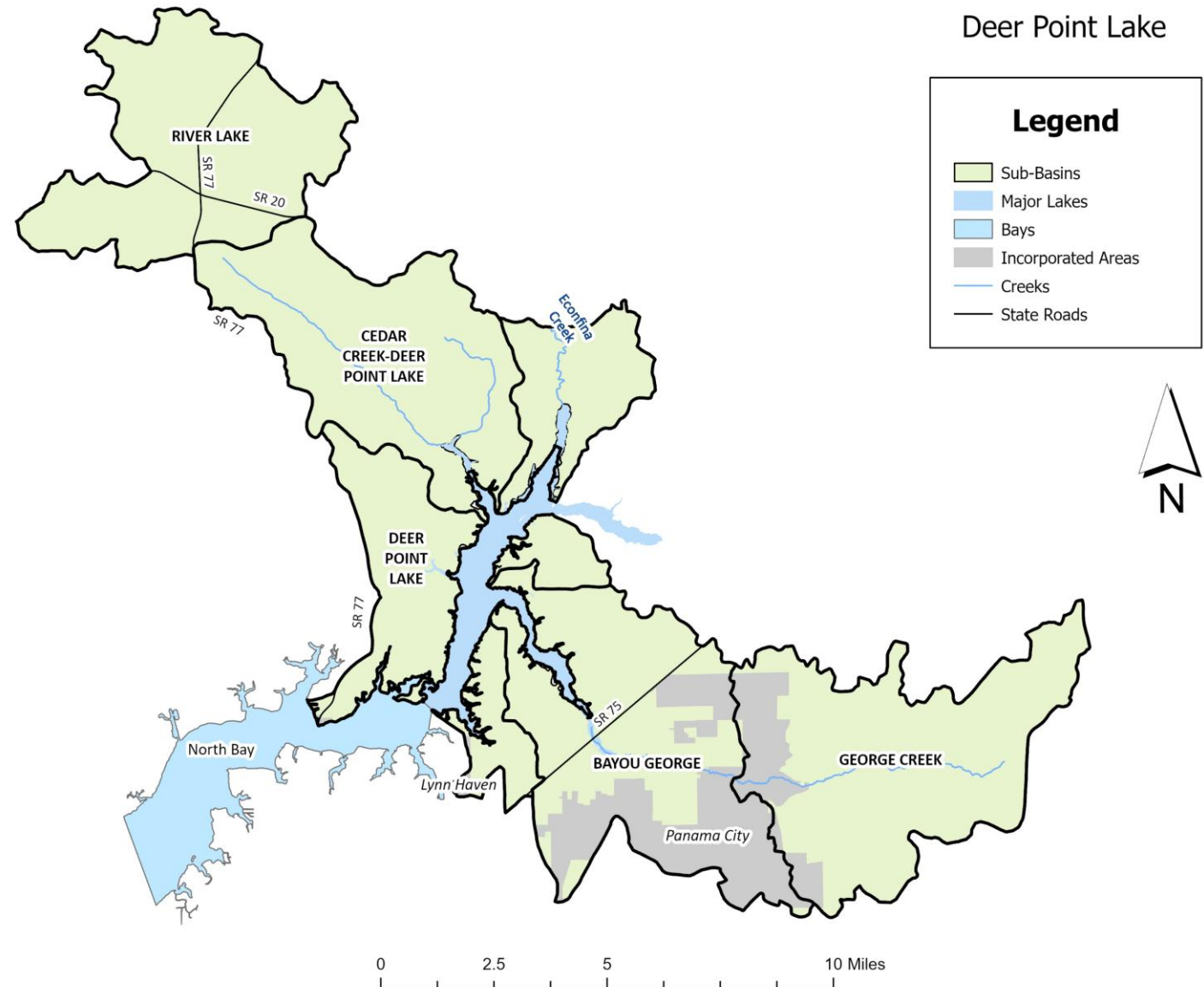


Description: This basin drains to Deer Point Lake Reservoir, which is the primary water supply for Bay County.

Water Quality: This basin is at risk for storm surge and has a moderate amount of critical assets susceptible to flooding. Additionally, the basin is among the top 25% for amount of floodplain contained.

Water Supply: The basin is within an Area of Resource Concern. Additionally, the basin is among the top 20% for historical (2010 –2020) and projected (2024 - 2045) population increases.

Natural Areas: Basin ranks in the top 20% for decreases in aquatic habitat area from 2010 to 2022 and has restoration plans in place.



Sandy Creek-East Bay

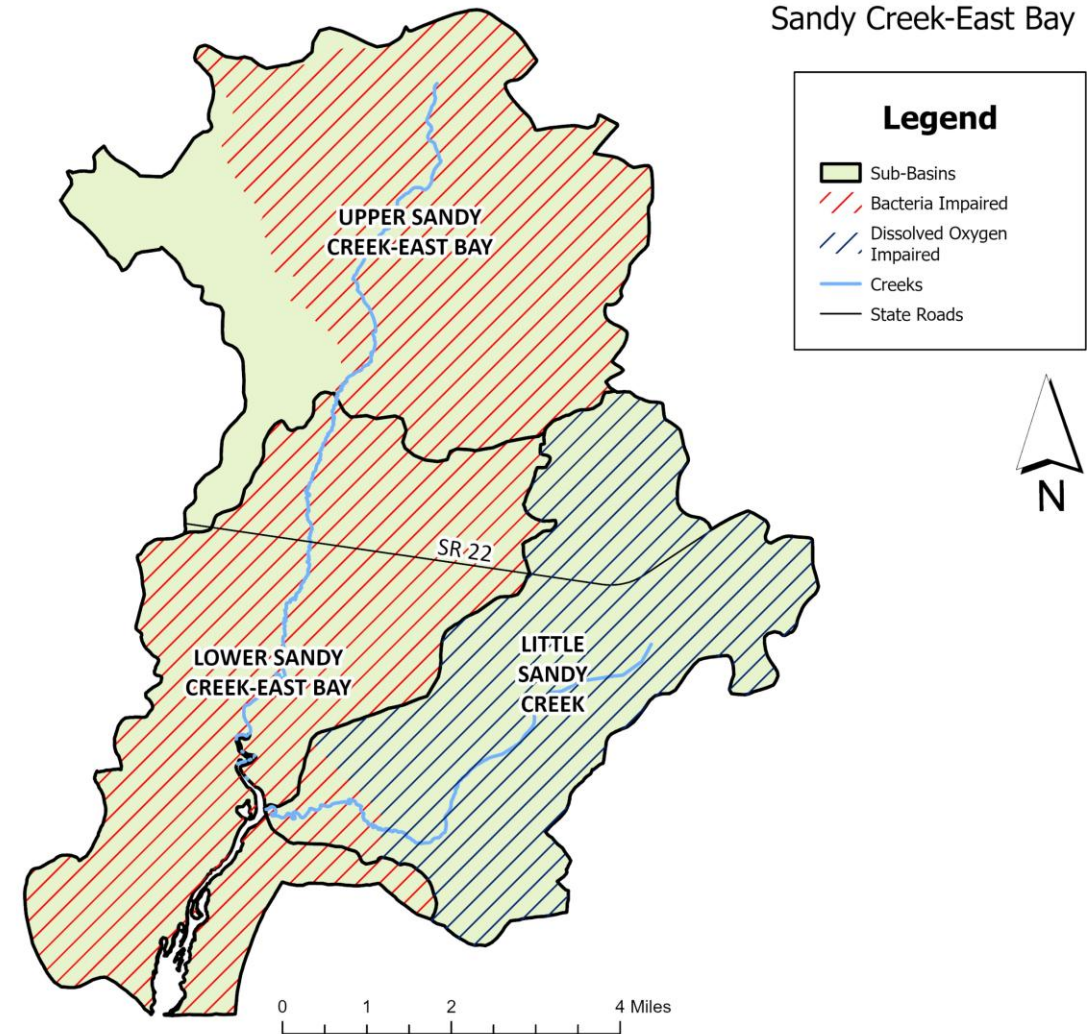


Description: This basin drains to East Bay.

Water Quality: Includes impaired waters for dissolved oxygen and bacteria. Basin is under risk of storm surge and has a low amount of critical assets that are susceptible to flooding. Additionally, the basin is in the top middle range for amount of floodplain contained.

Water Supply: The basin is within an Area of Resource Concern. Additionally, the basin is in the top 30% for historical (2010 –2020) and projected (2024 - 2045) population increases.

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



Wetappo Creek-Intercoastal Waterway



Description: This basin drains to East Bay, St. Andrew Bay, St. Joseph Bay, and the Gulf of America.

Water Quality: Has known impaired waters for bacteria. Basin is at risk for storm surge and has a high number of critical assets susceptible to flooding. Additionally, the basin is among the top 25% for amount of floodplain contained.

Water Supply: The basin is partially within an Area of Resource Concern. As a whole, the basin is not estimated to be heavily impacted by historical (2010 – 2020) and projected (2024 - 2045) population increases although growth rates are high in some areas.

Natural Areas: Basin ranks in the top 20% for decreases in aquatic habitat from 2010 to 2022 and has restoration plans in place.

Wetappo Creek-Intercoastal Waterway



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

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



Port St. Joe



John B. Gore Park

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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