



Destin Harbor-Hogtown Bayou Sub-Basin Work Plan

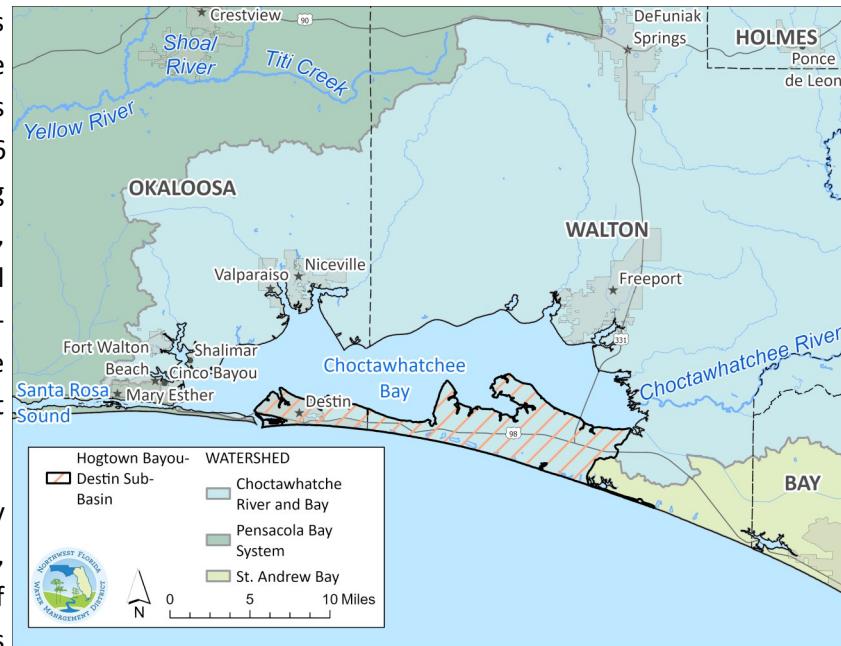
Northwest Florida Watersheds Partnership Program

The **Northwest Florida Watersheds Partnership Program (Program)** is a collaborative, multi-party initiative to proactively address critical water resource issues within priority sub-basins of the Northwest Florida Water Management District (District). The program is being implemented in coordination with local and county governments, regional entities, and other interested parties to maximize effectiveness.

Destin Harbor-Hogtown Bayou

The Destin Harbor-Hogtown Bayou sub-basin was selected as the priority sub-basin within the Choctawhatchee River and Bay watershed. This sub-basin encompasses approximately 36,456 acres in Okaloosa and Walton counties, including drainages to Old Pass Lagoon; Joes, Indian, Hogtown and other bayous; and multiple coastal dune lakes. This work plan describes the sub-basin's characteristics, critical water resource issues, and strategies and proposed projects that can be implemented to address these issues.

Surface waters within the sub-basin are highly productive and include extensive tidal marshes, seagrass beds, and coastal dune lakes. The city of Destin is within the sub-basin, as well as unincorporated areas within Okaloosa and Walton counties. The 2020 census population was 42,528 and is expected to grow an additional 44 percent by 2045. Approximately 44 percent of the watershed is developed land. Residential and commercial land uses are concentrated in Destin, with suburban and resort development extending eastward in the vicinity of Indian and Jones bayous, the Fourmile Point peninsula, and the coastal reach south of U.S. Highway 98 between Destin and Topsail Hill Preserve State Park. About five percent of the sub-basin consists of public lands.



Current Issues and Challenges

Water quality in the Destin Harbor-Hogtown Bayou sub-basin is affected by nonpoint source pollution generated by stormwater runoff which contains pollutants such as nutrients, sediments, bacteria, fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, oils and greases. The sub-basin has approximately 4,133 known and likely septic systems which can also be a source of nutrients and bacteria pollution. Water quality impairments include dissolved oxygen, nutrients (chlorophyll-a), fecal coliform bacteria, and *E. coli*.

Potable water sustainability in the region is affected by a long-term drawdown in the upper Floridan aquifer due to decades of groundwater withdrawals. There are concerns for saltwater intrusion and the sub-basin is within a delineated Water Resource Caution Area. Alternative water supply sources are anticipated to be needed to meet future demands and ensure sustainable water resources. Other challenges affecting the sub-basin include flooding, coastal resilience, and the vulnerability of seagrasses and salt marshes to water quality impacts and sea level rise.

Strategies and Solutions

The work plan summarizes management strategies to address the water resource challenges affecting the Destin Harbor-Hogtown Bayou sub-basin. Each approach identified addresses multiple issue areas and objectives, reflecting the interrelated nature of water resource attributes and conditions. Proposed strategies include stormwater retrofits, sanitary sewer system improvements, alternative water supply development, reuse of reclaimed water, green infrastructure and living shorelines, septic tank abatement, ecosystems restoration, and monitoring and assessment.



Hogtown Bayou/Live Oak Point

Proposed Projects and Funding Needs

Proposed projects to address water resource issues within the Destin Harbor-Hogtown Bayou sub-basin are detailed in the work plan. Addressing critical water resource issues will require a multi-year effort. Future projects, in addition to those identified within this work plan, will likely be needed to fully address water resource issues and challenges within the sub-basin. A total of **26** projects have been proposed as of January 2026, at an estimated cost of **\$45.8 million**. The current unmet funding need is **\$38.9 million**. Project types proposed include:

- Water supply and reclaimed water transmission and distribution development and improvements
- Stormwater system improvements
- Living shoreline and saltmarsh restoration
- Seagrass and benthic community assessments
- Water quality monitoring
- Estuary program support



East Pass