

Tampa Bay Oil Spill

Wetland Restoration Projects

Project: Wetland restoration

Location: Joe's Creek in the Cross Bayou area of Boca Ciega Bay

Funding: \$132,686 (from Tampa Bay Oil Spill settlement); \$134,000 (from [Southwest Florida Water Management District \(SWFWMD\)](#)); \$89,000 ([Pinellas County](#)).

Year of Completion: 2003

The Joe's Creek restoration project was undertaken to compensate for injuries to the water column and sediment resulting from the spill. A historical wetland located in upper Boca Ciega Bay was cleared of debris and invasive plant species while a nesting area for a bald eagle and existing stands of slash pine, cabbage palms and live oaks were preserved. Portions of the land were re-graded to flatten spoil mounds, create additional upland hammocks and restore natural tidal flow to lowland marsh areas. Native upland and wetland vegetation was planted and mangroves are expected to re-colonize the area over the next several years. The newly created habitat receives untreated storm water runoff from a multifamily development and provides water quality improvement by removing nutrients and other pollutants from the storm water runoff. Including the uplands, freshwater and low salinity habitat, roughly 15 acres were restored.

This project has multiple benefits in that it provides salt marsh services during the early successional stages of the project, and will contribute indirectly to improved seagrass recovery through improved water quality. This action also improves the overall water quality in Boca Ciega Bay, the health of which supports the process for natural recruitment and colonization of salt marshes throughout that system. The created mangroves will provide habitat and foraging services to birds as a replacement for any such services lost due to the oil spill, and will enhance the bird populations in the bay system by providing additional nesting areas.

The project was proposed, designed and constructed by SWFWMD's Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) program. Tampa Bay Watch Inc. (a local restoration non-profit), and Admiral Farragut Academy student volunteers also participated by planting 2,000 salt marsh plugs to restore approximately half an acre on the tract.

Pinellas County and SWFWMD continue to monitor for invasive plants and erosion.

Project: Mangrove restoration

Location: Cross Bayou

Funding: Implemented by a party responsible for the Tampa Bay Oil Spill

Year of Completion: 1999

The Cross Bayou mangrove restoration project was constructed by the parties responsible for the oil spill to compensate the public for injuries to mangroves resulting from the spill. The project involved the removal of solid waste from historic mangrove wetlands, creating new tidal channels and planting the newly constructed marsh platform with smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) to stabilize the channel edges and facilitate mangrove propagule recruitment. Mangrove recruitment relied upon the abundant source of propagules from adjacent mangrove forests. High tides transported mangrove propagules into the restoration site and the vegetative community quickly transitioned from *Spartina alterniflora* to mangroves. Today, a mix of red, black and white mangroves dominate the site, providing replacement habitat for that lost as a result of the spill.

Project: Saltmarsh restoration

Location: Turtle Crawl Point at the Pinellas County War Veterans Memorial Park

Funding: Implemented by a party responsible for the Tampa Bay Oil Spill

Year of Completion: 1999

To compensate the public for injuries to saltmarsh vegetation, the responsible party planted approximately 7,260 planting units of smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) at Turtle Crawl Point at the Pinellas County War Veterans Memorial Park. Approximately 1.5 acres of unvegetated habitat were planted on three-foot centers. Nursery grown two-inch peat pots of smooth cordgrass were planted in areas that, at the time of the planting effort, did not support any vegetation. War Veterans Memorial Park was chosen because oiling directly impacted it. The created habitat deters shoreline erosion, increases productivity, and provides foraging habitat for birds.

Project: Salt marsh restoration

Location: Bird Key in Boca Ciega Bay

Funding: Implemented by a party responsible for the Tampa Bay Oil Spill

Year of Completion: 1999

To compensate for injuries to saltmarsh habitat, the responsible party was required to plant 1,000 planting units of smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) at Bird Key in Boca Ciega Bay. Bird Key suffers from erosion and the goal of the restoration was to rehabilitate the shoreline by re-establishing *Spartina alterniflora*.