

Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration Phase II



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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

NFWF Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund – \$20,057,000

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Multiple partnerships
- Six-year timeline
- Apalachicola Bay and Suwannee Sound
- Important to stress collaboration with management agencies, universities, and public stakeholders



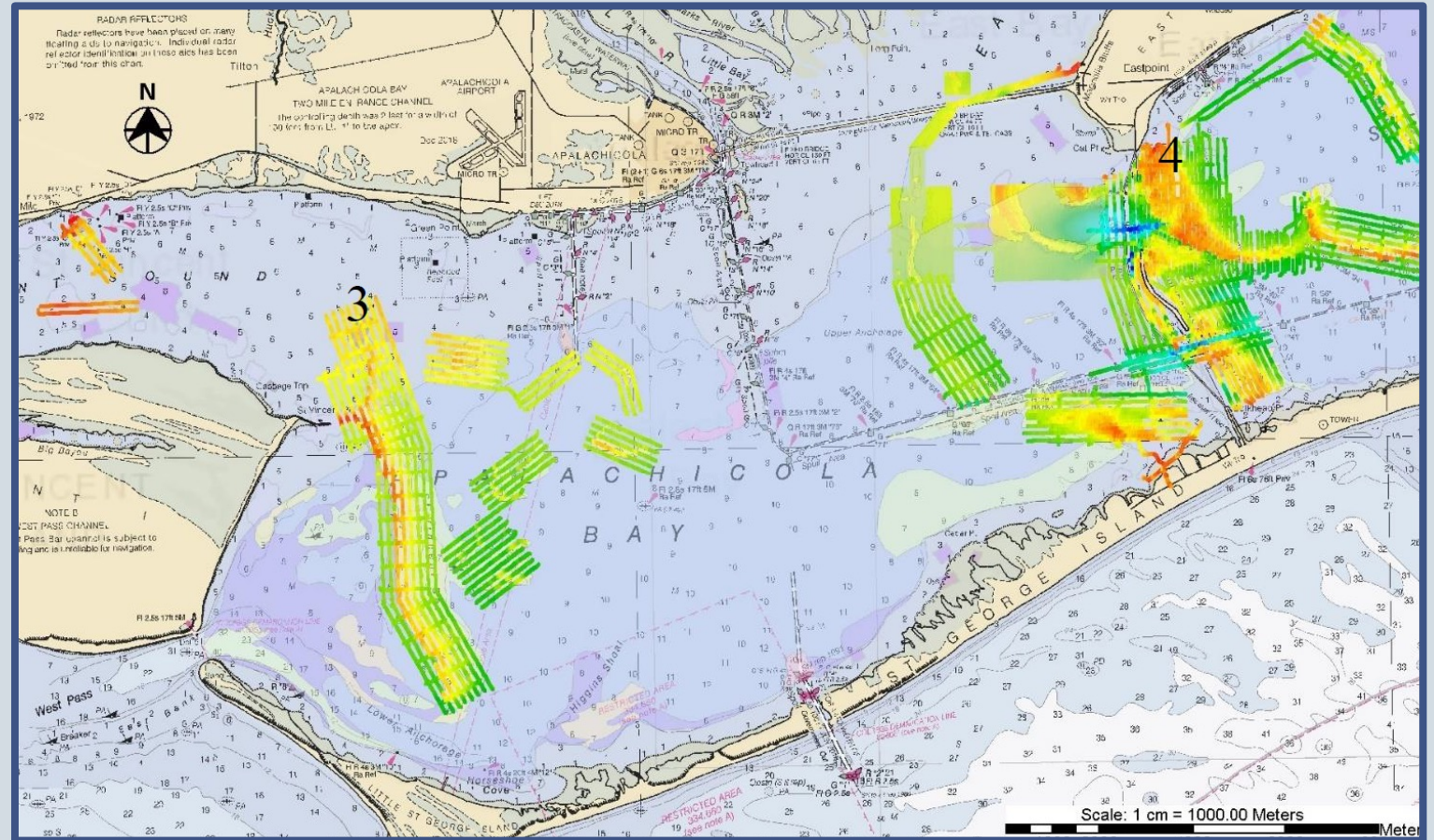
Stage 1

- **Budget: \$3,277,029**
- Data collection
- Harvest management system
- Compile information
- Data workshop
- Habitat restoration decision



Stage 1 – Data Collection

- Apalachicola Bay
 - 3-D mapping
 - Oyster densities
 - Oyster spat densities
 - Sedimentation rates
 - Predatory snail densities
- Suwannee Sound
 - 3-D mapping
 - One time population survey



Stage 1 – Harvest Management System

- Revamped oyster fishery management plans
- Stakeholder-informed
- Apalachicola Bay
- Suwannee Sound
- Statewide Strategic Oyster Fishery Management Plan



Stage 1 – Compile Information & Data Workshop

- Data collection
 - ANERR
 - ABSI
 - FWRI
- Data workshop – June '22
- Habitat restoration decision
 - Where?
 - What materials?
 - Densities - how high?
 - How much (acres)?



Stage 2 – Cultching in Apalachicola Bay

- Shelling
 - Where?
 - What materials?
 - Densities-how high?
 - How much (acres)?
- Monitoring



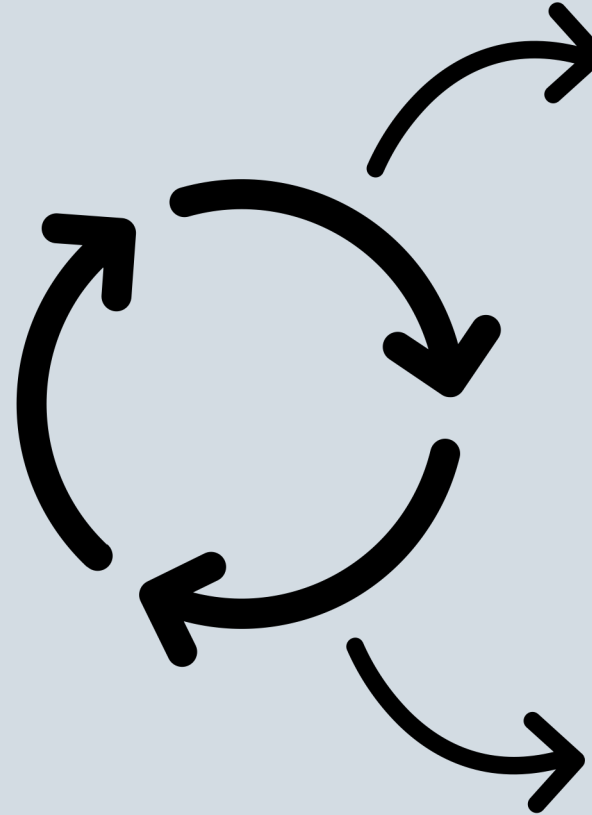
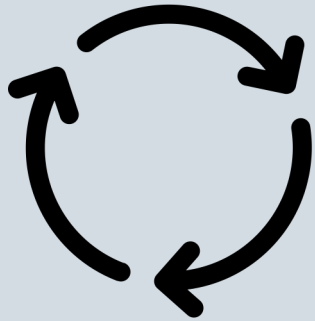
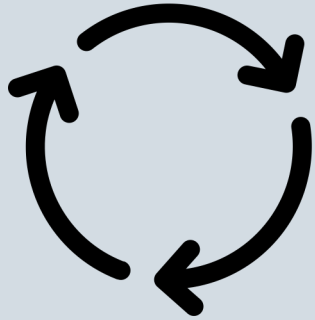
Stage 2 – Cultching in Apalachicola Bay

- NFWF has expressed concerns over approving the remaining \$16M for clutching activities
 - Past restoration operations in the Bay did not perform as well as expected
 - *“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”*
- Large number of unknowns still present
- Perform a large-scale pilot study
 - FSU will conduct complementary study
- FWRI will increase their budget to conduct monitoring oversight
- Utilizing these studies, FWC will have more data to construct and perform larger restoration activity





Adaptative Management and Restoration Plan



Pros and cons for future restoration activities

Informs FWC on management options for local fishery

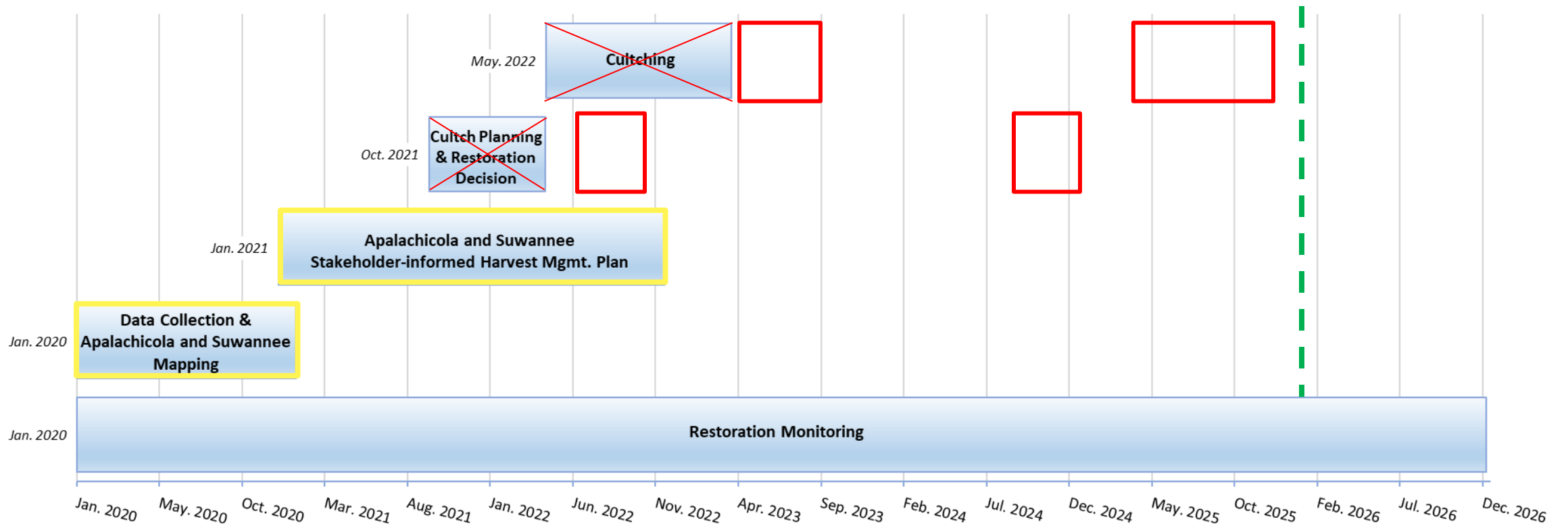
No oysters

Regroup with NFWF



Project Timeline

Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration - Phase II



Questions

- “Is FWC going to look to extend the closure past 2025?”
 - It is premature to have those discussions at this time. However, those talks will need to be had soon with FWC leadership. NFWF, being the funding entity, will also be curious on our management strategies as we approach 2026. The bottom line is that closures, including extending closures, are a last resort for FWC. But these decisions need to be data and science driven. So, if the data do not support opening the Bay, either partially or entirely, that information will be provided to the Commissioners.
- “Is there a situation where FWC will open the Bay on 1/1/26 regardless of the state of the Bay’s oysters?”
 - It is tough to provide insight on this question, as there haven’t been talks with FWC leadership on this matter.
- “Is FWC considering limited-entry?”
 - Firstly, let me say that FWC is the sole entity that is charged with determining and regulating the wild-caught fishery management strategies for when the Bay is ready to be open. Secondly, whatever strategy FWC puts in place is not “set in stone.”
 - At the moment, it’s difficult to speak too much about the management of the fishery because there isn’t much of a fishery to manage. Soon after the data are reviewed from the restoration pilot studies, FWC will hopefully be ready to conduct a larger restoration activity. At that time, FWC will be prepared to have discussions, both external and internal, on management strategies. Public input will be a key component of these discussions.

