

Our Plan to Protect Central and Southwest Florida's Water and Wildlife



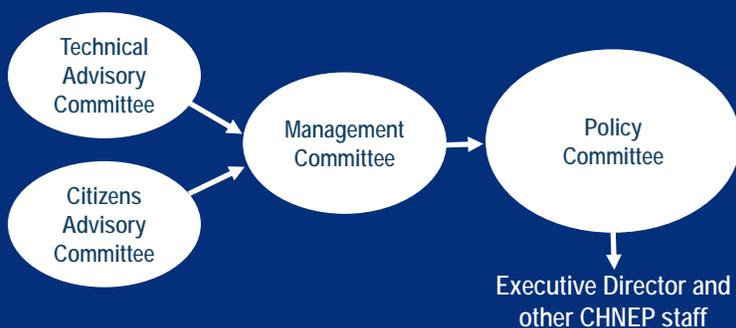
WHO WE ARE

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) was formed in 1995, when the Governor of Florida asked Congress to designate Southwest Florida's estuaries and their watersheds — from Dona Bay in Sarasota to Estero Bay in Lee County — as “estuaries of national significance.” The CHNEP is 1 of 28 entities in the National Estuary Program, and 1 of 4 in Florida.

As a result of that designation, added federal funding resources are provided to the region for the protection and restoration of water resources, as well as fish and wildlife habitat. The state and local governmental members contribute funding as well.

The CHNEP is a non-regulatory, science and consensus-based partnership that brings local, state and federal governmental entities together with the private sector and the public to advance common environmental initiatives. It collectively works towards fulfilling its strategic plan —called the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP).

The CHNEP includes four Committees: the Policy Committee which governs it, the Management Committee that provides consensus recommendations to the Policy Committee, and the Technical and Citizen Advisory Committees which provide technical and community input to the Management and Policy Committees.

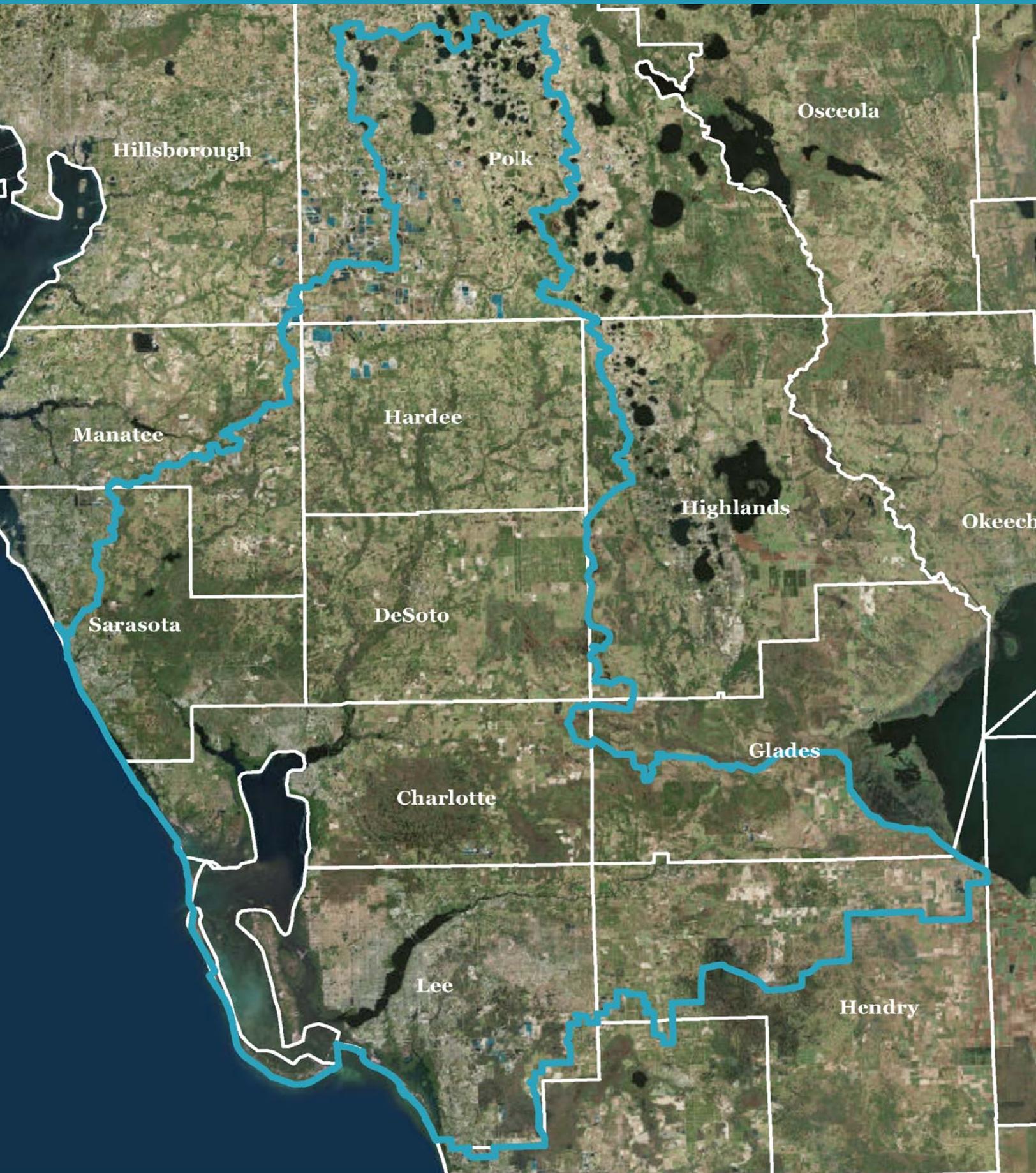


WHAT WE DO

The CHNEP is a partnership comprised of members, supporters, and volunteers who work to improve water quality, hydrology, fish and wildlife habitat, as well as to educate and engage the public to assist in the protection of these natural resources.

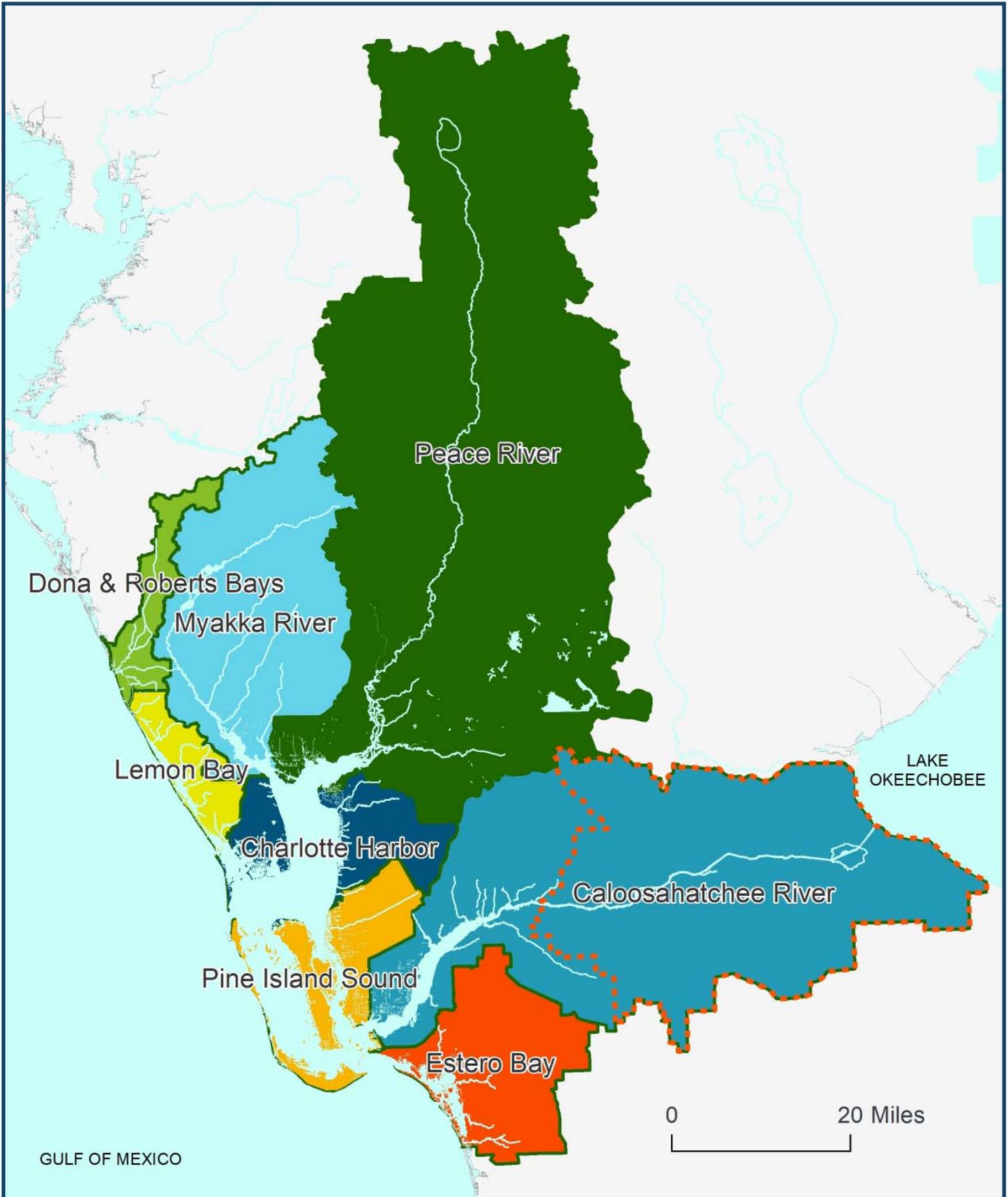
The CHNEP staff work to support the partnership in:

- ⇒ obtaining additional funding for projects and initiatives outlined in the CCMP
- ⇒ contracting and managing data collection, restoration, and other resource protection activities - especially ones crossing governmental jurisdictional boundaries
- ⇒ organizing and facilitating public meetings and events to bring scientists, resource managers, and other stakeholders together to work collaboratively and exchange information
- ⇒ administering the Conservation Grant program to provide funding to community partners for implementing CCMP activities
- ⇒ conducting monthly volunteer events and numerous external educational events, as well as producing educational publications, videos, and other resources for the public



Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership Area

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership protects six estuaries (Dona & Roberts Bays, Lemon Bay, Charlotte Harbor, Pine Island Sound, and Estero Bay) along the Gulf of Mexico in Southwest Florida, as well as waters that flow to them from their watersheds - some originating in Central Florida's Heartland. The orange dotted boundary indicates the area added into the CHNEP in 2019.



The Plan that Guides Us



Collectively, the CHNEP works on four priority actions outlined in its strategic plan — called the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP).

The CCMP was originally approved in 2000 and was updated in 2008, 2013, and again in 2019. The 2019 update includes the modification of the CHNEP name and the expansion of its boundary to encompass the freshwater Caloosahatchee Basin.

The 2019 CCMP was developed over a nearly two-year period through a series of public meetings and available on the chnep.org website. It provides the framework for the partnership and staff to create future annual workplans and budgets. It also contains actions and detailed activities with information about responsible parties, performance measures, annual costs and funding sources, etc.

This document summarizes the 2019 CCMP Action Plans:

- ◆ Water Quality Improvement
- ◆ Hydrological Restoration
- ◆ Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Protection
- ◆ Public Engagement

19:1

\$19 of restoration is achieved for every \$1 of federal funding the National Estuary Program receives, because of our ability to leverage those funds with other funding sources including public-private partnerships, grants and donations.



Water Quality Improvement

Vision

Waters that meet their designated human uses for drinking, shellfish harvesting, or swimming and fishing, while supporting appropriate and healthy aquatic life.

Objective

Meet or exceed water quality standards for designated uses of natural waterbodies and waterways with no degradation of Outstanding Florida Waters.

Strategy

Support comprehensive and coordinated water quality monitoring, and projects and programs that reduce pollutants entering waterways.

Actions

- 1 Support a comprehensive and coordinated water quality monitoring and assessment strategy
- 2 Develop water quality standards, pollutant limits, and cleanup plans
- 3 Reduce urban stormwater and agricultural runoff pollution
- 4 Reduce wastewater pollution
- 5 Reduce harmful algal blooms

CHNEP-funded water quality sampling and testing of Charlotte Harbor.





Hydrological Restoration



CHNEP member (Southwest Florida Water Management District) built an outfall at Lake Hancock to increase lake levels and downstream flow.

Vision

Appropriate freshwater flow across the landscape to sustain healthy wetlands, rivers, and estuaries.

Objective

Adequate aquifer recharge and freshwater volume and timing of flow to support healthy natural systems.

Strategy

Support data-driven watershed planning and hydrologic restoration projects to protect and restore natural flow regimes and provide sufficient fresh surface water and groundwater to natural systems.

Actions



Conduct data collection, modeling, and analyses to support hydrologic restoration



Increase fresh surface water and groundwater availability to support healthy ecosystems



Protect and restore natural flow regimes





Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Protection

Vision

A diverse environment of interconnected, healthy habitats that support natural processes and viable, resilient native plant and animal communities.

Objective

Permanently acquire, connect, protect, restore, and manage natural terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

Strategy

Promote and facilitate permanent acquisition and effective protection and management of critical natural habitats including wildlife dispersal areas, movement and habitat migration corridors, wetlands, flowways, as well as environmentally sensitive lands and estuarine habitats.



Actions



Protect, restore, and monitor estuarine habitats



Protect, restore, and monitor environmentally sensitive lands and waterways including critical habitat areas



Assess and promote the benefits of land, waterway, and estuary protection and restoration





Public Engagement



CHNEP-hosted 2018 Watershed Summit where 40 scientists presented the latest research in a 3-day public event.

Vision

An informed, engaged public making choices and taking actions that increase protection and restoration of estuaries and watersheds.

Objective

Increase the proportion of the population that supports and participates in actions to protect and restore estuaries and watersheds.

Strategy

Promote environmental awareness, understanding, and stewardship to the general public, new target audiences, and policymakers; and strengthen partner collaboration in education and engagement programs.

Actions



Promote environmental literacy, awareness, and stewardship through expanded education and engagement opportunities for the general public



Expand reach of education and engagement opportunities to new target audiences



Strengthen non-profit partner collaboration in education and engagement programs



Increase outreach to policymakers to enhance understanding and support for CCMP implementation

Citizen^o
Scientist



Get Involved

VISIT CHNEP.ORG TO

SUBSCRIBE



Learn

An informed, engaged public is needed to make choices and take actions that increase protection and restoration of estuaries and watersheds.

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) offers many resources to the public to learn about the water, wildlife and other natural resource issues in their community, as well as what they can do to help protect and restore them. These include fact sheets, technical letters, magazines, posters, videos, and other educational materials.

The CHNEP magazine and nature calendar are mailed free to those who subscribe through the CHNEP website (chnep.org). The CHNEP YouTube channel has informational videos. Also, liking the CHNEP Facebook page is a great way to learn of upcoming events.

The CHNEP Water Atlas website (chnep.wateratlas.usf.edu) consolidates and makes all publicly accessible water quality data available, as well as water quality analysis, a library of reference documents, flow data, and other useful information about the historical and current conditions of our natural resources.

Volunteer

Increased public engagement in actions to protect and restore natural resources is needed in order to protect and restore the natural resources that support our quality of life and economy.

There are so many ways to get involved and make a difference. Whether it is conducting citizen science to assist with scientific monitoring and restoration work, or acting as a CHNEP ambassador to provide outreach and education about the program, your volunteering can be instrumental in creating positive change in our communities and environment.

CHNEP encourages interested individuals to subscribe for volunteer updates and notices, as well as offers free monthly volunteer activities at our headquarters in Punta Gorda, FL. We also organize and participate in events throughout the CHNEP area, where volunteers are needed.

To volunteer, go to the "Get Involved" CHNEP webpage to sign up.



Take Action

Empowering and equipping communities with the resources they need to implement Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan actions is part of CHNEP's mission.

To do this, the CHNEP offers Conservation Grants up to \$3,000 to community partners to assist their efforts to carry out CCMP activities. These grants are awarded throughout the year until funding for them is expended for the year. Learn more about "Partner Grants" on the CHNEP website.

Contribute

Protecting and restoring the water and other natural resources we care about requires contributions of time, talent and funding. Volunteering with the CHNEP to do meaningful rewarding environmental work is a way to directly contribute to protecting our waters and wildlife.

Contacting your local, state, and federal elected representatives to voice support for funding of land acquisition and management, water quality testing and restoration, and for the CHNEP itself helps to provide the financial resources critically needed.

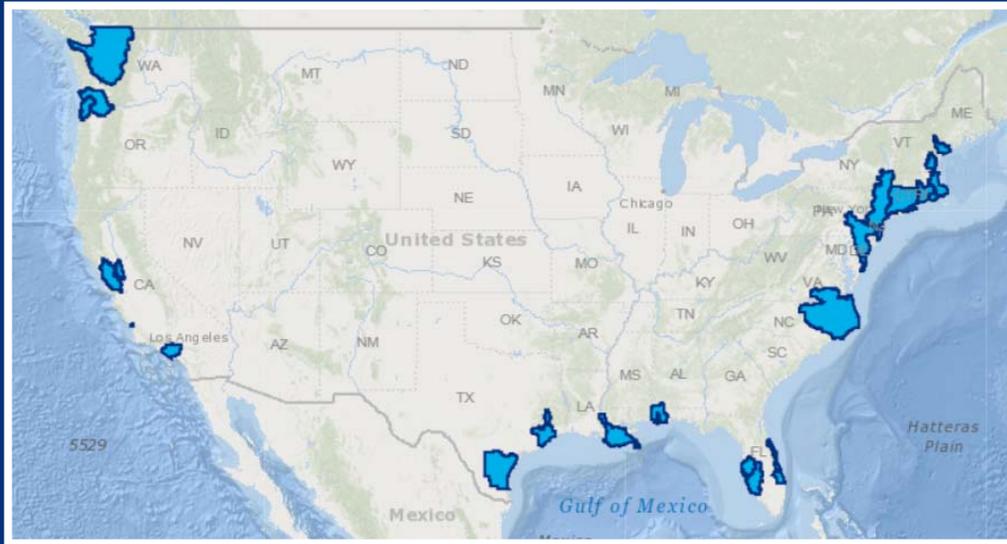
Additionally, donating to the CHNEP allows us to expand our environmental education and resource protection/restoration efforts. Donations are accepted electronically through the CHNEP website or by mail to the CHNEP office (326 W. Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda, FL 33950-4417).



TIPS FOR PROTECTING OUR WATER & WILDLIFE

- ◆ Use Florida-friendly plants for landscaping, which require less fertilizer and watering
- ◆ Install water conservation devices in your showers, toilets, etc.
- ◆ Use reusable bags and straws, as well as natural fiber clothing to reduce plastics in our environment
- ◆ Pick up and pack out trash when visiting parks and beaches
- ◆ Use gravel or crushed shell for pathways and parking areas rather than asphalt or concrete, to reduce stormwater runoff
- ◆ If you have a septic system, have it routinely inspected and maintained to reduce groundwater pollution
- ◆ If you have a boat, use pump-outs to empty holding tanks and move it to land for cleaning and maintenance

The National Estuary Program



Since 1987, the National Estuary Program (NEP, funded through the US Environmental Protection Agency) has been delivering economic, environmental and public health benefits to the American people. The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership is 1 of the 28 Congressionally-designated “estuaries of national significance” in the NEP (depicted by the blue shaded areas in the map above).

By building local partnerships, the NEP leverages and stretches scarce funding to tackle the many challenges our estuaries face. The NEP and its partners have protected America’s estuaries and restored approximately 2 million acres of habitat; continuing to improve water and wildlife management and protection across the United States.



326 W. Marion Ave.
Punta Gorda, FL 33950-4417