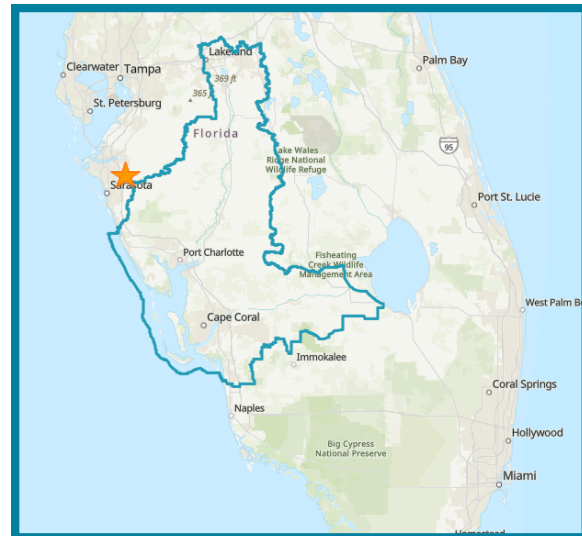
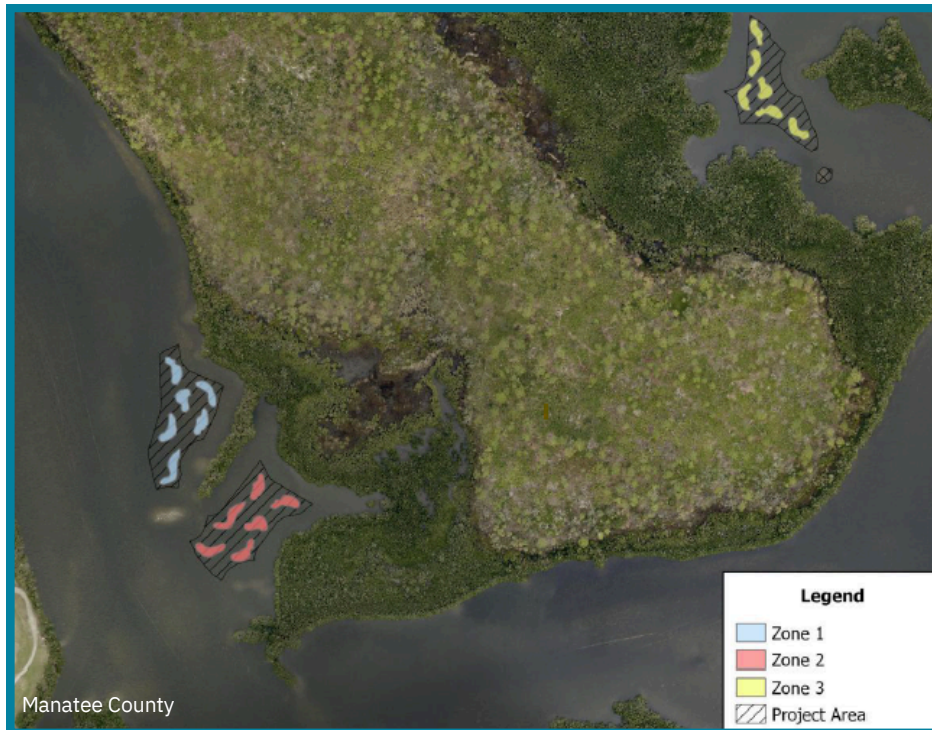


Manatee County Braden River Oyster Restoration Project

FISH, WILDLIFE, & HABITAT PROTECTION



Summary

In recent decades, the Manatee and Braden Rivers have experienced significant declines in oyster populations where historic oyster beds once thrived. In response to these declines, Manatee County developed the Manatee River Oyster Restoration Master Plan, which identified and characterized potential oyster restoration areas within the Manatee River and its confluence with the Braden River.

This project in partnership with Manatee County will provide the designs and permits for an oyster restoration project within the Braden River, adjacent to the Pine Island Preserve. A total of three project zones are proposed, spanning a total of 0.75 acres. The designs will utilize natural materials including riprap and recycled oyster shell that will be placed in each project zone. These materials will provide substrates suitable for juvenile oyster settlement. Once established, these oyster reefs it will not only provide habitat for nearby species but serve as a broodstock for future generations to help reestablish oyster reefs in the Braden River and surrounding estuarine systems.

Location: Manatee County

Partners: Manatee County

Implemented: 2026

Status: Ongoing

CHNEP Cost: \$203,869

Funding Source: EPA IIJA

2025 CHNEP Plan Activity:



Fish, Wildlife, & Habitat Protection
1.1: Protect, monitor, and restore beneficial submerged aquatic vegetation, including seagrasses, as well as bivalves, and coastal wetlands, to establish status and trends as a biological indicator of ecosystem health and fisheries as well as to manage and enhance ecosystem services.

COASTAL & HEARTLAND NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP



Anticipated Results and Benefits

Enhanced Wildlife Habitat and Water Quality

Oysters are a reef forming species that provide structure to nearshore environments, and serve as a nursery habitat and food source for many species including fish and invertebrates. As filter feeders, oysters help improve water quality by removing pollutants, excess nutrients, and suspended sediments, which contributes to improvements in water clarity, allowing sunlight to penetrate to deeper critical habitats like seagrasses. Oyster reefs are also excellent stabilizers of sediment that help prevent shoreline erosion, and function as buffers to high wave energy and storm surge events.

Enhanced Community Resiliency

In addition to enhancing wildlife habitat and water quality, oyster restoration has been identified as a tool to help provide additional resiliency for coastal environments. CHNEP is supporting Manatee County's resiliency through this project. In 2025, Manatee County completed a Countywide Vulnerability Assessment to determine critical assets and evaluate areas and infrastructure most at risk to flooding and extreme storm events. One area that was identified as an area at risk was the Pine Island Preserve in the Braden River, which is a tributary to the Manatee River in the CHNEP area. This project will help protect and enhance estuarine habitats, mitigate impacts of sea level rise, reduce shoreline erosion, improve water quality, restore habitat, and enhance biodiversity. The designs proposed for this project will help support and restore oyster reefs in the Braden River, thereby increasing the resiliency of this region, enhancing estuarine habitat, and supporting the ecosystem services that oysters provide.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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