

COASTAL & HEARTLAND NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

FISCAL YEAR 2024 EPA NOVATED 320 WORK PLAN



Aerial view of the barrier island of Cayo Costa prior to Hurricane Ian's landfall. / Photo Credit: Steve Russell

May 25, 2023



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The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) is comprised of citizens, elected officials, resource managers and commercial and recreational resource users working to improve water quality and ecological integrity of other natural resources in its boundaries. A cooperative decision-making process is used to address diverse resource management concerns in its 5,416-square-mile area. Many of these partners also financially support the Partnership. The governmental entities in the CHNEP and its service area include:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
Florida Department of Agriculture
Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
Southwest Florida Water Management District
South Florida Water Management District
West Coast Inland Navigation District
Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority
Florida Gulf Coast University
University of South Florida
University of Florida
Polk, Sarasota, Manatee, Lee, Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Glades Counties and the incorporated Cities and Towns of Dundee, Haines City, Auburndale, Lake Alfred, Lake Wales, Lake Hamilton, Lakeland, Winter Haven, Eagle Lake, Bartow, Fort Meade, Bowling Green, Wauchula, Zolfo Springs, Arcadia, Venice, North Port, Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, Cape Coral, Sanibel, Estero, LaBelle, Moore Haven, and Clewiston.

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COASTAL & HEARTLAND NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

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US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4

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Florida Department of Environmental Protection

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Hon. Ashley Coone
Desoto County

Hon. Alice White
City of North Port

Hon. Emory Howard
Hendry County

Hon. Tony Whidden
Glades County

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Hon. Fred Burson
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Village of Estero

Hon. Ken Doherty
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Hon. Bill Read
City of Lakeland

Hon. Barbara Arnold
City of Fort Meade

Ms. Allie McCue
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

Mr. Jack Bispham
Southwest Florida Water Management District

Mr. Chauncey Goss
South Florida Water Management District

Mr. Don McCormick
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council

Ms. Margaret Wuerstle
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council

Ms. Jennifer Codo-Salisbury
Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Management Committee Co-Chairs

Mr. David Hutchinson & **Ms. Claire Jubb**

Technical Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

Mr. Ernesto Lasso de La Vega & **Mr. Mark Walton**

Citizens Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

Mr. Harry Phillips & **Ms. Debi Osborne**

CHNEP Executive Director

Ms. Jennifer Hecker

NOVATED 320 GRANT FUNDING

When the CHNEP changed fiscal hosts October 1, 2022, it had a grant with three years of EPA 320 funding that had been accepted on its behalf by its prior host (City of Punta Gorda) still open. Now that FY22 expenses have been processed, the amount of unexpended grant funds has been determined (approximately \$333,876). The CHNEP had originally planned to leave those funds with the City to be expended on the Tiki Point Living Shoreline Project. However, due to Hurricane Ian and delays in a state funding agreement that is being used as match, this project has not been able to commence in the timeframe planned.

Therefore, EPA, the City, and CHNEP determined that it would be best to novate this grant, closing out the grant with the City and deobligating the funds to be immediately obligated in a new grant to the CHNEP's current fiscal host, Charlotte County. CHNEP has prepared this required Novated 320 Work Plan and Budget required to be submitted with the grant application. It outlines that all these funds, once novated and transferred, will be applied to FY24 personnel costs. That will in turn free up EPA regular 320 funds, which can then be added to TBD Research/Restoration projects.

CCMP FOCUS

This Work Plan and Budget reflects the approved 2019 CCMP, which outlines the 5-year organizational strategic plan and has the following visions, goals, objectives, and strategies:

WATER QUALITY

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

GOAL: Water Quality Improvement.

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 programs and projects and programs that reduce pollutants entering waterways.

WQ-1: Support a comprehensive and coordinated water quality monitoring and assessment strategy

- CHNEP will continue working with partners to collect water quality monitoring data and uploading it to the CHNEP Water Atlas for access by interested parties and the public.
- CHNEP will work with our partners to develop new information pages on the Water Atlas as needed.
- CHNEP will continue to fund and support the Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN).

WQ-2: Develop water quality standards, pollutant limits, and clean-up plans

- CHNEP will continue to support, providing technical comment as appropriate, the development and implementation of water quality standards, pollutant limits and clean-up plans.

WQ-3: Reduce urban stormwater and agricultural runoff pollution

- CHNEP will continue to provide public presentations and information on urban stormwater and agricultural runoff pollution.
- CHNEP will continue to support partners in the implementation of stormwater and agricultural runoff reduction projects.

WQ-4: Reduce wastewater pollution

- CHNEP will continue to support partners in the implementation of wastewater discharge reduction and reuse projects, as well as septic to sewer conversion projects.

WQ-5: Reduce harmful algae blooms

- CHNEP will continue to provide public presentations and information on harmful algae blooms and nutrient pollution, as well as research algae bloom remediation techniques.

HYDROLOGICAL RESTORATION

VISION: Natural freshwater flow across the landscape to the estuaries.

GOAL: Enhanced and improved waterbodies with more natural hydrologic conditions.

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

STRATEGY: Support data-driven watershed planning and hydrological restoration projects to preserve or restore natural flow regimes and provide sufficient fresh surface and groundwater to natural systems.

HR-1: Conduct data collection, modeling, and analyses to support hydrologic restoration

- CHNEP will continue to actively participate in gathering data and supporting modeling and analyses as well as fund integrated ground and surface water models to improve decision-making with regards to hydrological restoration projects. Currently, these include the South Lee County Watershed Initiative and the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Initiative projects.

HR-2: Increase fresh surface water and groundwater availability to support healthy natural systems

- CHNEP will continue to promote water conservation and sufficient flows and levels of freshwater to support natural systems.

HR-3: Preserve and restore natural flow regimes

- CHNEP will work with partners to identify funding sources to facilitate capital programs that coordinate water storage, flood control, water quality and disaster planning.
- CHNEP will continue participating and providing technical assistance in Everglades' restoration through project review, meeting participation and technical comment.

FISH, WILDLIFE & HABITAT PROTECTION

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

GOAL: Natural habitat protection and restoration.

OBJECTIVE: Permanently acquire, connect, protect, manage, and restore 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, and environmentally sensitive lands and estuarine habitats.

FW-1: Protect, restore, and monitor estuarine habitats

- CHNEP will continue to work with Southwest Florida Estuarine Restoration Team (SWERT) partners on designing, permitting, and constructing seagrass, oyster, and other estuarine restoration projects in CHNEP area.

FW-2: Protect, restore, and monitor environmentally sensitive lands and waterways including critical habitat areas

- CHNEP will continue to share the Habitat Restoration Needs report and maps to support the conservation, management and enhancement of environmentally sensitive lands and critical habitat areas necessary for habitat resilience and migration.
- CHNEP will continue to offer grants to assist engaged citizens that promote the protection and management of public environmental lands and waterways.
- CHNEP will continue to directly engage in funding and project managing habitat restoration projects.

FW-3: Assess and promote the benefits of land, waterway, and estuary protection and habitat restoration

- CHNEP will continue to use its comprehensive regional Economic Valuation study to promote the economic return on investment from land, water and estuarine protection and restoration investments.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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

GOAL: Public education and engagement.

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 non-profit partner collaboration in education and engagement programs.

PE-1: Promote environmental literacy, awareness, and stewardship through expanded education and engagement opportunities for the general public

- CHNEP will continue to host routine volunteer events, as well as routinely host and participate in community events to provide environmental education and public engagement opportunities.
- CHNEP will continue to produce free educational materials and distribute them throughout the CHNEP area.
- CHNEP will continue to disseminate information about public engagement opportunities through Constant Contact, on social media, and on the www.chnep.org website.

PE-2: Expand reach of education and engagement opportunities to new target audiences

- CHNEP will continue to conduct educational workshops and events, including in underserved communities, as a way to introduce natural resource protection information to new target audiences in that area.

PE-3: Strengthen non-profit partner collaboration in education and engagement programs

- CHNEP will continue to administer a Conservation Grant program to foster community natural resource protection projects and initiatives that support CCMP implementation, including with non-profit partners.
- CHNEP will continue to seek and work with non-profit organizations on collaborative initiatives.
- CHNEP will continue to sponsor events that foster non-profit partner collaboration to educate and engage the public on issues relating to CCMP implementation.

PE-4: Increase outreach to policymakers to enhance understanding and support for CCMP implementation

- CHNEP will continue to meet and send information to local, state, and federal policymakers, explaining CHNEP's role in supporting CCMP implementation.

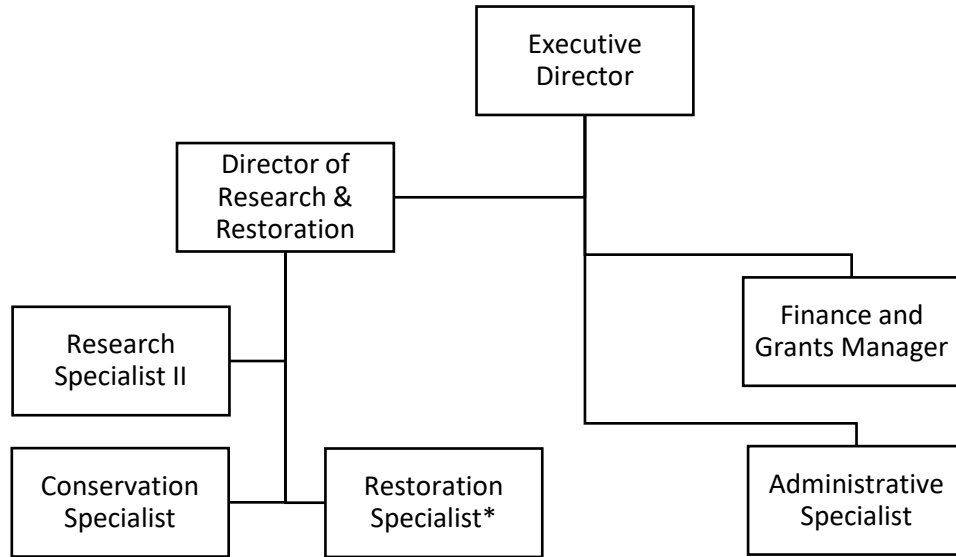
FISCAL YEAR 2024 EPA NOVATED FUNDING BUDGET

Table 1: Fiscal Year 2024 EPA Novated 320 Budget Overview

Revenue	
Federal (EPA Novated 320 Funding)	\$ 333,876
Total Revenue	\$ 333,876
Expenditures	
Personnel	\$ 333,876
Total Expenditures	\$ 333,876

STAFF ORGANIZATION CHART AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The FY23 CHNEP staffing plan includes seven full-time professionals, including the following positions:



Executive Director: Responsible for overall program management including cultivating and strengthening partnerships and soliciting funding, as well as is the liaison to Policy and Management Committees.

Director of Research & Restoration: Responsible for management of research and restoration projects and initiatives, as well as is the staff liaison to Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees.

Finance & Grants Manager: Responsible for finance, grants, and contracts administration.

Research Specialist II: Responsible for assisting project management of scientific research projects and initiatives, as well as drafting the technical content for articles, grant proposals and reports.

Restoration Specialist: Responsible for providing assistance with restoration projects and initiatives, as well as drafting the technical content for articles, grant proposals and reports. [** Note: this position would be filled as 1-year locally funded contractor position if filled in FY24*]

Conservation Specialist: Responsible for providing a variety of public outreach and engagement duties, including environmental education programs, volunteer and member support, marketing, etc.

Administrative Specialist: Responsible for providing a variety of administrative support functions relating to payroll, database management, donation processing, meeting preparation, etc.

CHNEP EPA NOVATED 320 FUNDED WORK PLAN TASKS

The CHNEP projects are organized according to task. There are five tasks, as follows:

Task 1: Management Conference

- 1.1 Materials and Supplies

Task 2: Public Engagement

- 2.1 Conservation Grants
- 2.2 2025 Calendar and 2024 Harbor Happenings Magazines
- 2.3 Public Engagement Events
- 2.4 Sponsorships

Task 3: Research Coordination

- 3.1 Water Quality and Seagrass Monitoring and Mapping Programs
- 3.2 CHNEP Water Atlas
- 3.3 Charlotte County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment
- 3.4 Polk County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment
- 3.5 Highlands County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment
- 3.6 Lee County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment
- 3.7 DeSoto County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment
- 3.8 Hardee County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment

Task 4: Watershed Coordination

- 4.1 Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Restoration
- 4.2 Pine Island Flatwoods Preserve Wetland Habitat Enhancement
- 4.3 Myakka Headwaters Project
- 4.4 Tiki Point Harborwalk Living Shoreline Pilot Project
- 4.5 Restoration/Research Project(s) TBD

Task 5: Policymaker Education

- 5.1 Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan Updating and Reprinting

Note that only the task bolded above is funded with EPA 320 Novated funding.

Task 1 Management Conference: Administration, Finance, Operations

Objective: Provide committee structure that supports the implementation of the CCMP; support administration of CHNEP; ensure compliance with grant and agreement requirements as awardee and awarder; and seek additional funding support for identified projects.

Description: The CHNEP office provides staff support to the Management Conference, furnishes operations and finance support, ensures compliance with Host Agency procedures, secures funding from partners, and assists partners seeking grants and contracts to implement the CCMP.

CCMP Elements Implemented: All

Outputs/Deliverables

- Management Conference committee meetings for 4 committees, 3x/yr.
- Management Conference adoption of Annual Work Plan before June 1, 2024
- GPRAs Reporting through EPA's NEPORT, by September 14, 2024

Milestones

- Administration of Program Office operations and finances, ongoing
- Collaborate with partners on CCMP implementation, ongoing
- Compliance with Host Agency finance and procurement requirements, ongoing
- Compliance with Funders' grant reporting requirements, ongoing

FY 24 Budget

Novated 320 Funds (FY24):

Personnel (Salaries & Benefits)	\$333,876
EPA 320 Funds (FY24):	
Personnel (Salaries & Benefits)	\$204,934
Staff Travel	\$ 15,000
Overhead Host Administrative Fees	\$184,869
Communications Software and Fees	\$ 9,000
EPA BIL (FY24):	
Staff Travel	\$ 10,000
SWFWMD	
Personnel (Salaries & Benefits)	\$ 56,000
FDEP	
Personnel (Salaries & Benefits)	\$ 75,000
	Note: Total personnel costs are \$669,810
Local:	
Meeting Support	<u>\$ 7,000</u>
Task 1 Total Budget	\$ 895,679

Outcomes

- Fully informed and engaged CHNEP Management Conference
- Other federal, state, and non-profit grants obtained to fund CCMP implementation
- Increased participation, understanding and support of NEP mission by partners
- Continued commitment from partners to fund CHNEP and CCMP activities

CWA Core Program Goals/Objectives Addressed: Potentially all

CLEAN WATER ACT CORE PROGRAM SUPPORT

CHNEP supports the Clean Water Act (CWA) core programs through direct funding of projects, staff assistance to partners and partner activities. Provided below are representative activities of CHNEP support for CWA core programs during Fiscal Year 2023.

Water Quality Monitoring for Water Quality Standards

The CHNEP manages the Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN), a regional partnership of agencies that collect monthly water quality data using consistent, technically-sound sampling design. The long-term random sampling of strategically located stations allows for the scientific assessment of water quality status and trends. The CCHMN was created to fill gaps in coastal water monitoring and initiate a unified sampling approach throughout the CHNEP area. CHNEP also contributes to this project by assisting in the monitoring of upper and lower Charlotte Harbor within the project area. CHNEP creates and maintain the EPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and Standard Operating Procedures for the CCHMN, conducts annual field audits and meetings, contracts and assists with field sampling, and compiles and analyzes collected water quality data through the CHNEP Water Atlas. CHNEP and CCHMN partners also participate in the Regional Ambient Monitoring Program (RAMP) which holds quarterly meetings. RAMP participants share current water quality field and laboratory issues and conduct quality assurance field sampling and laboratory analyses. CHNEP provides ongoing support to the CCHMN and the Charlotte Harbor Estuary Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Network (CHEVWQMN), as their data is entered into the state Watershed Information Network (WIN) database and is used to evaluate status and trends of state, regional, and local estuarine conditions. The data is used locally by CHNEP to develop future water quality targets and numeric nutrient data. Charlotte Harbor is also a Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) priority Water Body.

The continuation of consistent data collection throughout this project area will help to assess impairments, determine total maximum daily load limits (TMDL), and develop basin management action plans for the watershed. The gathering of water quality data results in valuable information that is used for guidance on the improvement of water quality based on records starting in 2000.

Controlling Non-Point Sources

CHNEP funds Conservation Grants, many of which are aimed at educating or implementing non-point source pollution reduction. Examples include fertilizer restriction brochures and signs, native landscaping workshops, marine debris reduction, rain gardens, etc.

The CHNEP hosts the CHNEP Water Atlas site, a web-based resource center providing both technical users and interested community members and policy makers with a one-stop shop to find local data on water quality, flow, and habitat to information about educational events and volunteer resources in Central and Southwest Florida. The site includes up to date and historical data, trend analysis, historical maps and studies, water resource maps, and much more. It is a readily accessible way to find more information about local waterways.

Protecting Wetlands and Coastal Waters

CHNEP undertakes Research and Restoration Projects that implement living shorelines, flowway and wetland restoration, oyster and seagrass restoration, and other measures aimed at up taking and reducing pollutants in waterways.