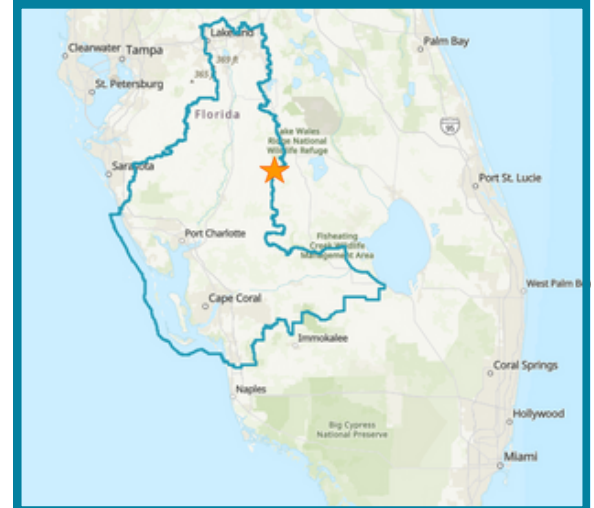


Highlands County Adaptation Action Areas Project

HYDROLOGIC RESTORATION



Summary

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) is providing funding toward a *Highlands County Adaptation Action Areas Project* to enhance community resiliency in Highlands County.

CHNEP and partners will be developing the Adaptation Action Areas (AAA) based on the Highlands County Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment. This includes identifying priority AAAs as well as assessing added vulnerabilities and risks to critical assets needed to protect public health and safety. These assets can be impacted by extreme rainfall, increased temperatures, increased extreme storm and wind events, etc. Final plans will be consistent with the Florida Adaptation Planning Guidebook.

CHNEP also plays a vital role in enhancing community resiliency by bringing federal, state, and local governments together to share resiliency knowledge and technologies, as well as implement resiliency projects across jurisdictional boundaries. This information sharing, funding, and technical assistance is allowing CHNEP to further local efforts in Highlands and the other 9 counties it serves.

Location: Highlands County

Partners: Highlands County & Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Implemented: 2023

Status: Ongoing

CHNEP Cost: \$200,000

Funding Source: EPA IIJA

2025 CHNEP Plan Activity:



Hydrologic Restoration 3.3: Develop and support implementation of vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan recommendations to protect water quality and hydrology. Participate in regional collaborations to address vulnerabilities identified in vulnerability assessments and increase resiliency.

Project Elements

Vulnerability Assessment

An inventory was undertaken of critical County and community assets including things like health care facilities, government buildings and libraries/community centers, schools, water/wastewater facilities, public safety facilities (police, fire, etc.), energy facilities, parks and natural areas, as well as roads and evacuation routes. The most up to date information on current and future rainfall flooding was used to project potential impacts to those critical assets from future storms and other events. The projected level of impact to these critical community assets helps the County prioritize critical action areas and plan projects to protect them. The final Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment report includes maps of critical assets, providing the necessary foundation for the County and its partners to identify funding needs and to implement projects that reduce risks to critical county infrastructure and facilities. This enhances Highlands County's resiliency to reduce flooding and impacts from future severe storms and extreme rainfall events.



Adaptation Action Area (AAA) Plans

Input is being gathered from County and municipal staff, Community Organizations, and Public in areas within Highlands County to inform the Adaptation Action Area (AAA) Plans. AAAs will be identified and prioritized based on the critical assets identified, exposure and sensitivity analysis, flood modeling, results of public meetings, input from the County, and guidelines from the Florida AAAs Planning Guidebook. Specific adaptation strategies and projects will be identified for the top three priority AAAs to address the threats identified in the County's Vulnerability Assessment. These adaptation strategies can include protection, accommodation, relocation, and avoidance. The proposed projects will consider 1) Recommended Infrastructure Improvements (physical grey and green infrastructure with a focus on nature-based solutions), (2) Recommended Building Codes and Standards, (3) Resiliency Hub Needs (shelter in place, food, water, energy, communications, etc.), and (4) Funding and Financing needs (i.e. estimated costs for implementation of each recommended strategy, project) for implementation in order to enhance Highlands County's resiliency.

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Uniting Central and Southwest Florida to protect water and wildlife