

SARASOTA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM WETLANDS COORDINATOR

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

Scheda has been the 'Wetlands Coordinator' for the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) since 1997. This contract has recently been re-awarded for the third consecutive time. Scheda provides identification of habitat restoration sites, design, permitting, and construction management services for the entire SBEP watershed, which encompasses the majority of Manatee and Sarasota Counties. In addition, Scheda recently completed a comprehensive Five-Year Restoration Plan for the SBEP that includes a series of restoration projects throughout the area, focusing on intertidal and oligohaline habitat creation.



The SBEP Five-Year Habitat Restoration Plan is a geographical information systems (GIS) driven planning tool that provides a quantitative assessment that allows the proposed projects to be ranked and then categorized by the fiscal year for which implementation is planned. The GIS maps initially allowed Scheda to identify public lands located within a mile of the coastline that were greater than five acres in size. Once the list was generated and reviewed by regional experts with extensive knowledge of the Sarasota Bay watershed, Scheda scientists utilized GIS-based maps to develop target areas for restoration. Project boundaries were digitized based on aerial photointerpretation of existing exotic vegetation and disturbed conditions. Additional evaluation criteria were used to prioritize the potential restoration project. The criteria included: cost per acre, proximity to natural habitat, potential fisheries habitat, salinity classification, potential stormwater quality improvement, potential restoration magnitude, construction feasibility, priority bay segments, and existing funding/public interest. All of this information was used to produce a concise ranking matrix and produce the Five-Year Habitat Restoration blueprint.

Thirty potential coastal restoration sites have been evaluated and conceptual designs submitted within the SBEP's Comprehensive Habitat Restoration Progress Report. To date, eleven sites – Robinson Preserve, South Lido Beach Phase I and II, Hog Creek, Ken Thompson Park, GWIZ, Perico Bayou, Bird Colony Keys, Crosley Mansion, Cortez School site, and Durante Park - have been constructed. Five additional sites are in design and permitting (Grassy Point, Neal Preserve, Bowles Creek, Fish Preserve and Honi Hanta Girl Scout Camp). Scheda coordinated the restoration design, permitting, and assisted in the construction oversight of all these sites. In addition, we recently designed and permitted two oyster restoration projects (Turtle Beach and White Beach), both of which are now constructed and functioning as envisioned.

The restoration and stormwater retrofit projects range in size and complexity from less than one acre (Grassy Point) to regionally significant tracts such as the 697 acre Robinson Preserve Site in Manatee County.

