



NOAA

**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA celebrates Recovery Act project restoring wetlands, creating habitats and supporting local jobs

NOAA, the Ecosphere Restoration Institute, state and local partners celebrated in Ruskin, Fla. today the completion of an American Reinvestment Recovery Act project that restored nearly 70 acres of wetlands that feed into Tampa Bay. The project restored fish and wildlife habitat lost in the 1950s when the wetlands were filled for development.

NOAA provided \$750,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funding to Ecosphere Restoration Institute for the project. Hillsborough County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District also contributed funding for the restoration.

"The restoration work has helped support jobs for the community and improve important nursery habitat for fish, which is so vital to local recreational and commercial fisheries," said Dr. Larry Robinson, NOAA's assistant secretary of commerce for conservation and management.

Ecosphere Restoration Institute, a Tampa-based non-profit organization which assists local governments and landowners in the restoration and enhancement of natural ecosystems, hired local contractors to remove invasive tree species like Brazilian pepper, transform stagnant and abandoned ponds into thriving wetlands, and reconnect those wetlands to the waters of Tampa Bay.

"Without NOAA's Recovery Act funding, this project would have taken many years to complete since it would have required piecemeal implementation as funding became available," said Thomas Ries, president of Ecosphere Restoration Institute. "Instead we've been able to construct it in a short amount of time and with significant cost savings."

This project expands upon a 17-year restoration effort of the adjacent Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve, which is nearing its final stage of completion. The restored wetlands provide important nursery and foraging habitat for numerous fish, wading birds, and frogs.

The Recovery Act was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. The program was a combination of tax relief, financial assistance and infrastructure projects designed to cushion the impact of the downturn and lay a foundation for economic recovery. Over the last two years, the Recovery Act has played a significant role in the turnaround of the economy, which has now grown for six straight quarters and added 1.8 million private sector jobs over the past 13 months.

Most of the 50 projects will be completed within the next year. These projects are supporting thousands of short- and long-term jobs. When complete, these projects will have restored 8,700 acres of habitat and opened access to 700 stream miles for fish passage that had been blocked by obsolete and unsafe dams. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of abandoned fishing gear and other marine trash, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reefs.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.

On the Web

NOAA Recovery Act web site: www.noaa.gov/recovery