

Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline Project

Phase III Proposed Early Restoration Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline project would provide for construction of up to 5.9 miles of living shoreline. In addition, approximately 46 acres of marsh would be constructed to protect and enhance the existing shoreline, and 46 acres of subtidal oyster reef would be created in Heron Bay to increase secondary productivity in the area. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is partnering with the State of Mississippi on this proposed project. The estimated cost is \$50 million.

Located between Bayou Caddy and the mouth of the East Pearl River, the project area falls within the 20,909-acre Hancock County Marsh Preserve. This complex, one of the largest in Mississippi, is part of the Pearl River estuary in the western Mississippi Sound and managed as part of the Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program.

Once, extensive, prolific reefs of the American Oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) were found in the shore zone and nearshore areas of lower Hancock County. These reefs provided natural protection from shoreline erosion. High erosion rates recorded over the years, particularly at St. Joseph's Point, make this area a priority for protection and marsh creation.

Anticipated outcomes are

- shoreline erosion reduction,
- creation of habitat for oysters and other secondary productivity, and
- protection and creation of marsh habitat.

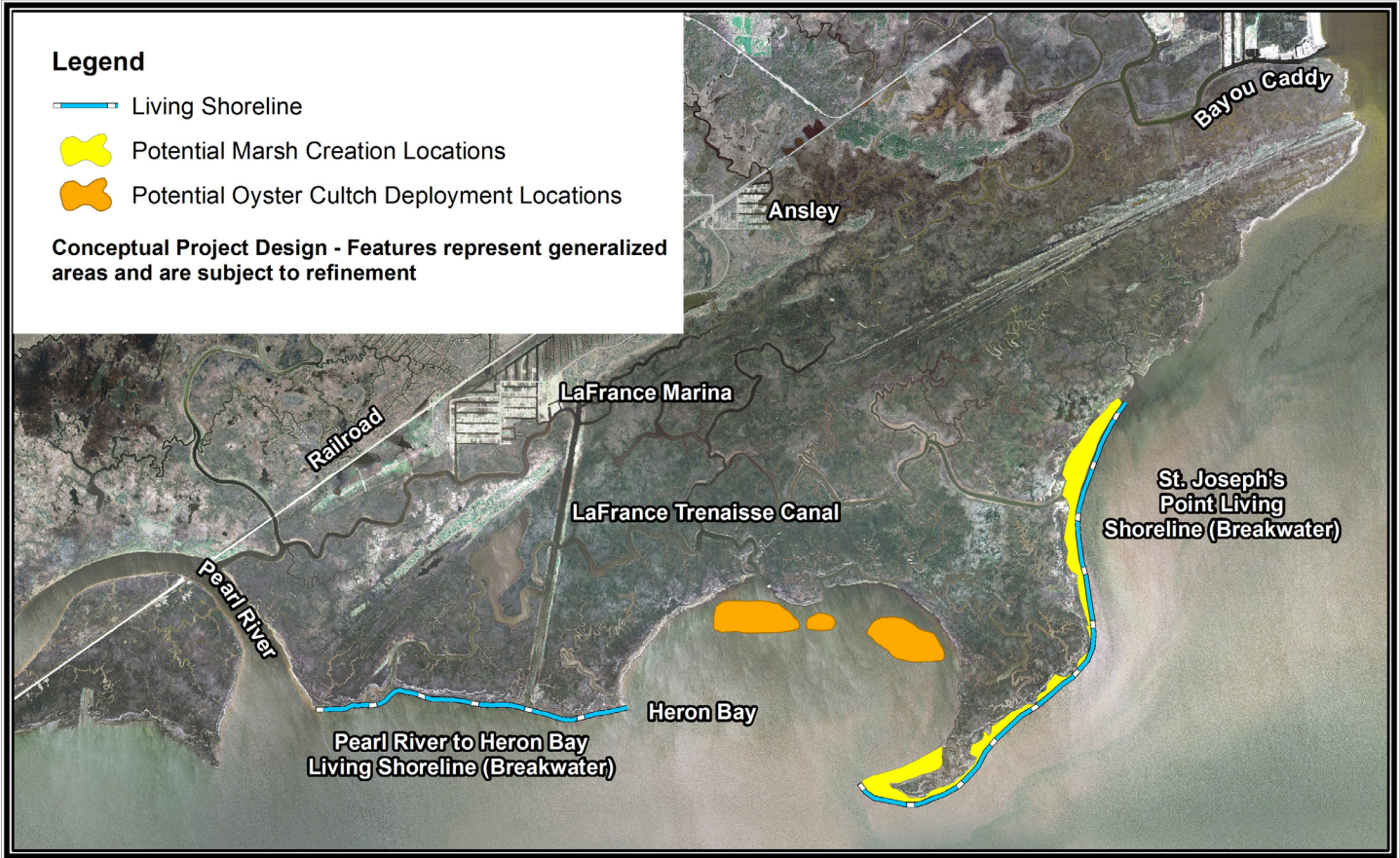
It also would help protect the Hancock County Marsh complex that includes freshwater, estuarine, marine, and submerged habitats. There are emergent, forested and scrub-shrub wetlands in the marsh complex. Proposed design techniques for the living shoreline would incorporate natural and artificial breakwater materials. Near Heron Bay, some 46 acres of marsh creation and 46 acres of subtidal oyster reefs are being proposed in combination with the living shoreline. Breakwaters would be constructed along the marsh shoreline in two locations; from the mouth of the Pearl River on the west to approximately 1.86 miles past the heel of St. Joseph's Point, including Heron Bay.

ESTIMATED COST \$50 million.



Pictured above is an example of a living shoreline protecting a marsh in the background. With calm, protected waters between the structure and the shore, a diverse habitat for plants and organisms, such as attached animals (like oysters) that provide food for fish and birds, is possible.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
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