Advancing Environmental Justice and Equity in the Region 4 Water Division

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June 1, 2022

Environmental Justice (EJ)

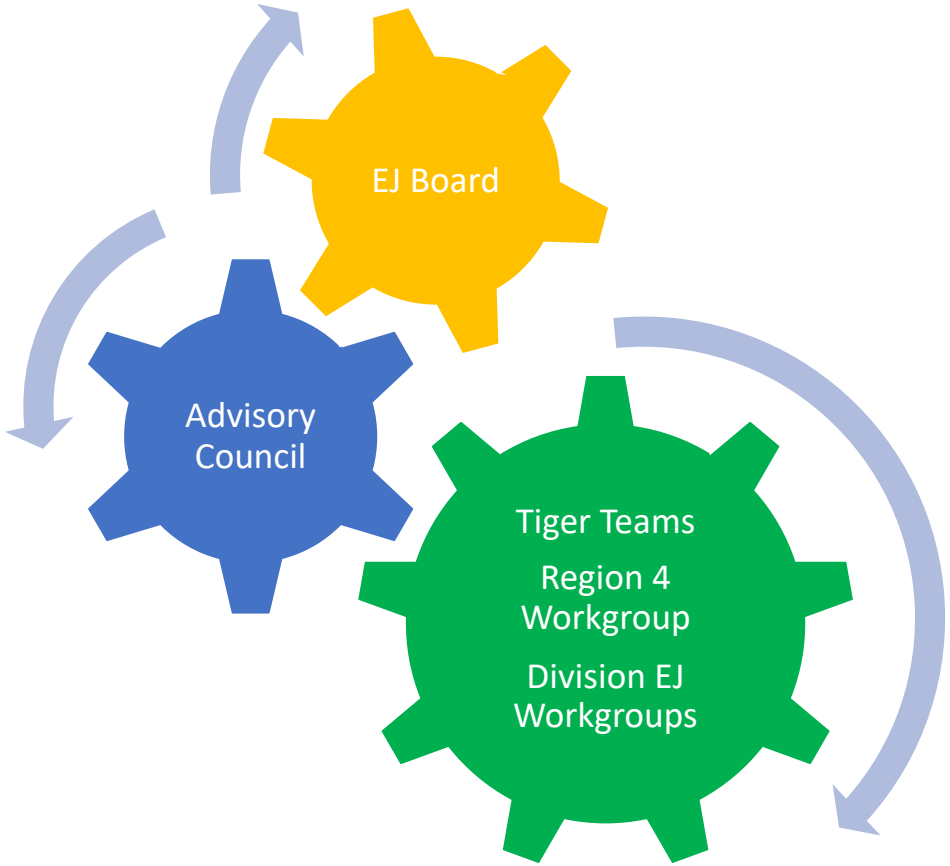
- **Fair treatment** and **meaningful involvement** of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.
- **Fair treatment -** No group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.
- **Meaningful involvement -** People will be considered, participate in, and influence decision-making about activities that may impact their environment and health.

New EJ Policies

Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad

Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

The Region 4 Environmental Justice Advisory Council (Council) was established to provide coordination, direction, and day-to-day oversight of the Region's cross media and divisional EJ work.



General Environmental Justice Integration Practices

- The Water Division Environmental Justice (EJ) Workgroup was formed to help facilitate EJ integration in the Division.
- The workgroup is comprised of representatives from each Branch, and it holds monthly meetings.
- Representatives participate on the Regional EJ Workgroup and other program specific National Workgroups.
- A Division EJ lead acts on environmental justice complaints that come from Region 4 and OEJ offices, sends them to the appropriate program and reports the outcomes.
- Each Branch and/or Section identifies investments or environmental justice related activities that will be addressed by programs within the Branch and provides updates.

EJ Workgroup

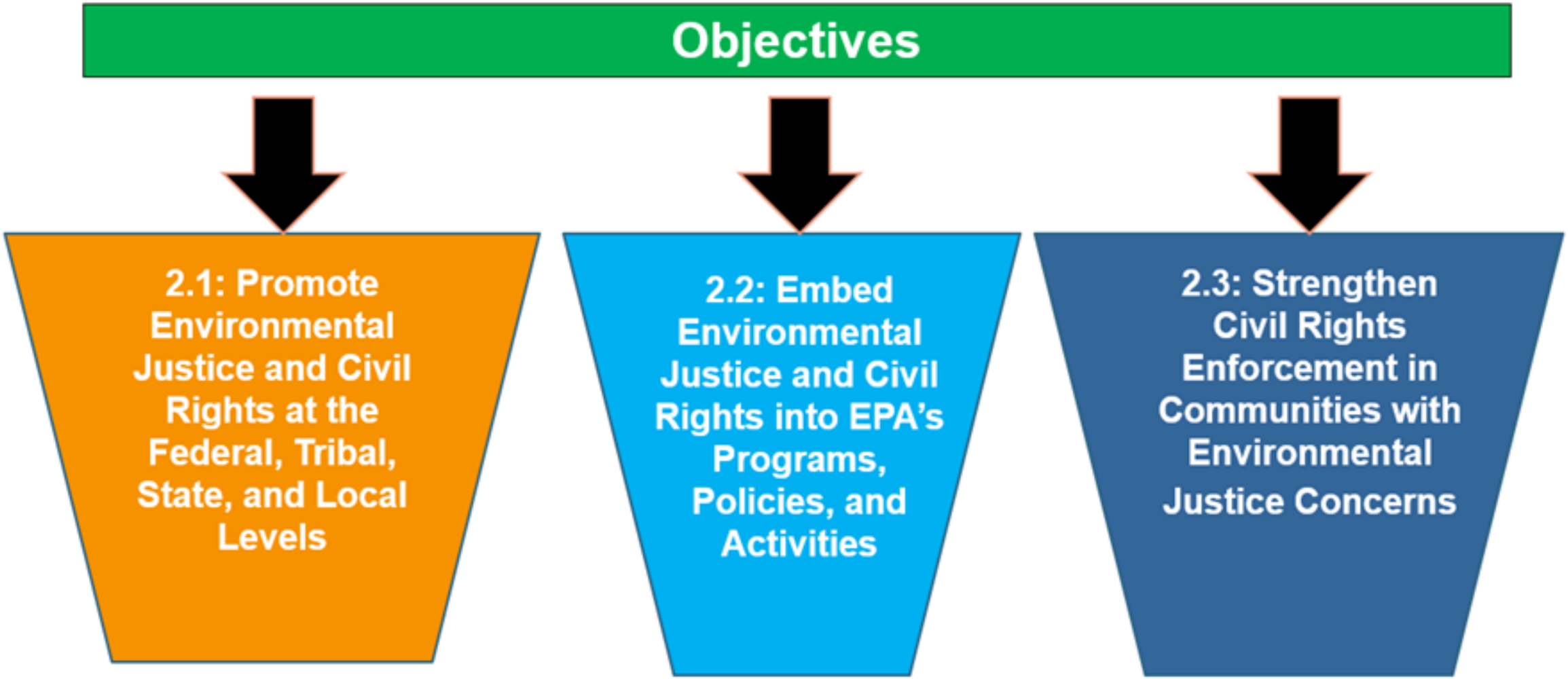
- Denisse Diaz, Deputy Director
- Bonita Johnson, Co-lead
- Erica Jones, Co-lead
- Erskine Benjamin
- Janine Morris
- Jennifer DiMaio
- Meghan Wahlstrom-Ramler
- Emma Inhorn
- Chauncey Orr
- Margaret Stebbins
- Karrie-Jo Shell
- Lauren Petter
- Cynthia Van Der Wiele
- Sylvester Stokes
- Rainey Ragland
- Sibyl Cole
- Lapapa, Brianna (DW-ECAD)
- Arzon, Arturo (DW-ECAD)

Region 4 Water Division
(Draft) Environmental Justice Strategic Plan

FY 2022-2026

1/10/2022

Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights



EJ INVESTMENTS

- Capacity Develoment/Training
- Community Focused Technical Assistance
- Cross-Programmatic Collaborations
- Engagement/Outreach
- Funding Support
- Identifying/Targeting Communities with EJ Concerns
- Policy Development/Review
- Tool Development

Examples of Investments

Policy and Methods Development/Review - Developing a DWS EJSCREEN SOP to target public water systems that potentially serve areas of EJ concern.

Policy and Methods Development/Review - Working with FDEP Water Quality, Monitoring, TMDL, and EJ programs to develop approaches to integrate EJ into monitoring and TMDL development decision-making processes.

Examples of Investments

Capacity Development/Training - Providing analytical assistance to inform watershed projects and other actions by state NPS programs.

Cross-Programmatic Collaborations – Providing technical support to the South River community and USFWS on possible dam removal to aid water quality and climate resiliency.

Community-Focused Technical Assistance – Aiding in the development of a Communication Plan for the Indian River Lagoon NEP to develop engagement opportunities for underserved communities.

Examples of Investments

Water Division Representative on the Region's EJ GIS Tiger Team

Engagement/Outreach - Providing Children's Health presentations to students living in underserved communities and attending five Title I partnering schools in Georgia and one in Alabama.

Funding Support - Helping to identify funding sources to implement green infrastructure, flood mitigation, climate adaptation and resiliency plans

Identifying/Targeting Communities with EJ Concerns - Targeting communities for resilience efforts using "socioeconomic" metrics and "social vulnerability" from various screening tools

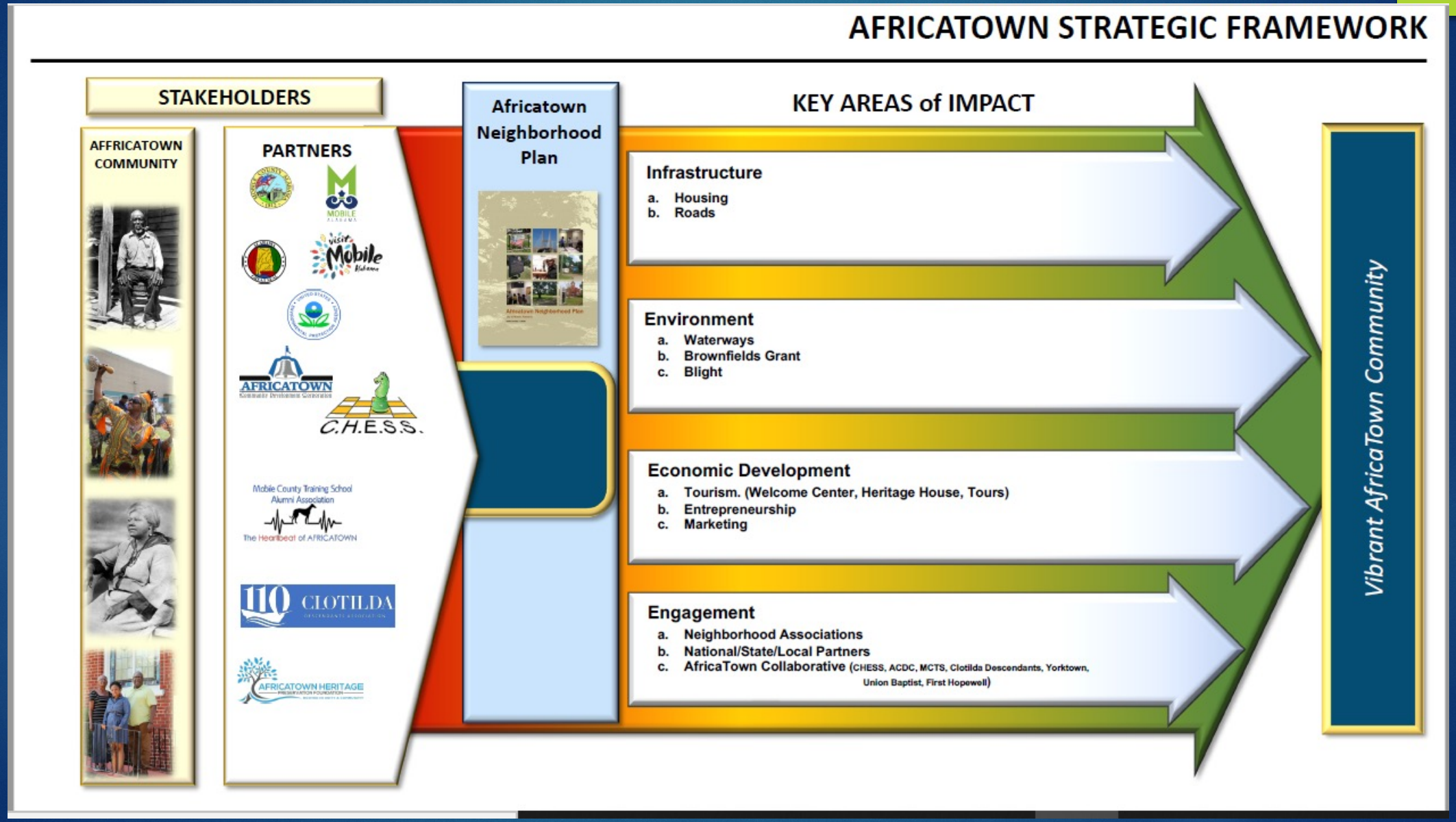
Common Coastal Community Issues

- Storm surges and hurricanes
- Flooding
- Adverse environmental impacts from industries
- **Water Quality**
- Erosion and sea level rise
- Loss of economy
- Uninhabitable houses and businesses

AfricaTown, Alabama

- Founded in 1866 by 32 of the last 110 Africans documented to have been brought to the United States via the Middle Passage
- The oldest settlement in Alabama
- Sits on the bank of the Tensaw River Delta
- Shares land with Mobile and Prichard
- Chemical corridor was filled with factories and mills that emitted pollution for decades

AfricaTown Strategic Framework



North Port St Joe, Florida

- Lack of reinvestment after industries closed
- Brownfields, blight, decay, economic and environmental issues
- Lingering concerns regarding air, soil, and **water contamination**

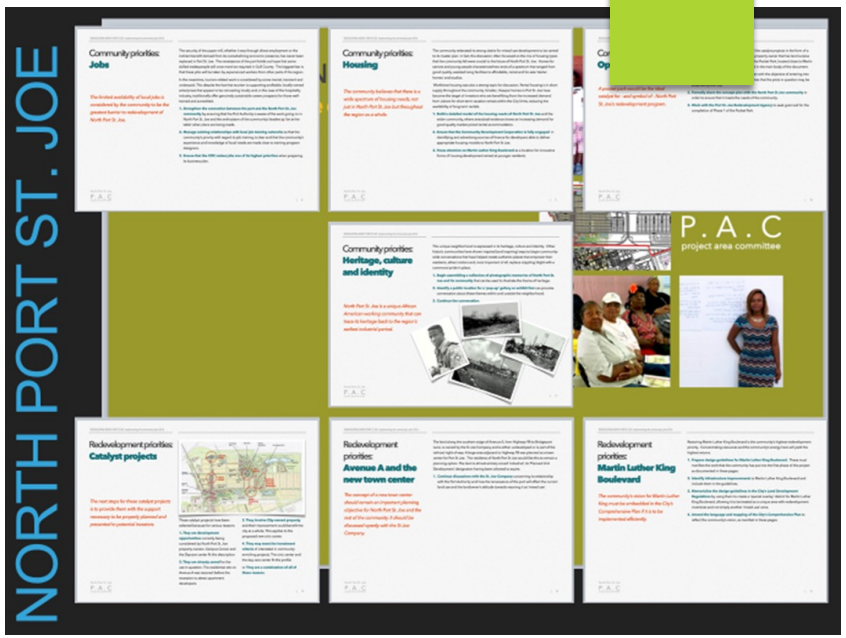
North Port St Joe Collaborative

North Port St. Joe
P.A.C
project area coalition

- Florida Brownfields Association - Environmental Justice and Public Health Committee
- EPA Region 4 Environmental Justice Program
- EPA Region 4 Water Division and Brownfields Program
- University of West Florida
- University of South Florida
- University of Memphis
- Cardno
- Gulf County Health Department
- FDEP Brownfields and EJ Programs
- Florida A & M University
- University of Florida
- ReGenesis Institute

Best Service-Learning Project

- Dr. Kwame Owusu-Daaku of the University of West Florida and 24 students
  - Conducted research and engaged with community members
  - Developing a Community Environmental Injustice Profile
    - Community Snapshot, Community History, Environmental Injustices, Public Health, Redress Actions, and a Project Area Coalition Profile
    - Results will be used to help secure funds to address issues



Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences
UNIVERSITY of WEST FLORIDA

Greening Gullah/Geechee Communities: Advancing Community Resiliency through a Living Landscape

Climate Adaption, Flood Mitigation, Sea-level Rise, Green Infrastructure, Water Qu

A collaborative comprised of the Gullah/Geechee Nation community, Gullah/Geechee Sustainability Think Tank, Beaufort County, EPA Office of Community Revitalization-Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program Region 4 Water Division; Land, Chemicals and Redevelopment Division; Office of the Regional Administrator – College/ Underserved Community Partnership Program, The College of Charleston, University of South Carolina Beaufort, University of Minnesota

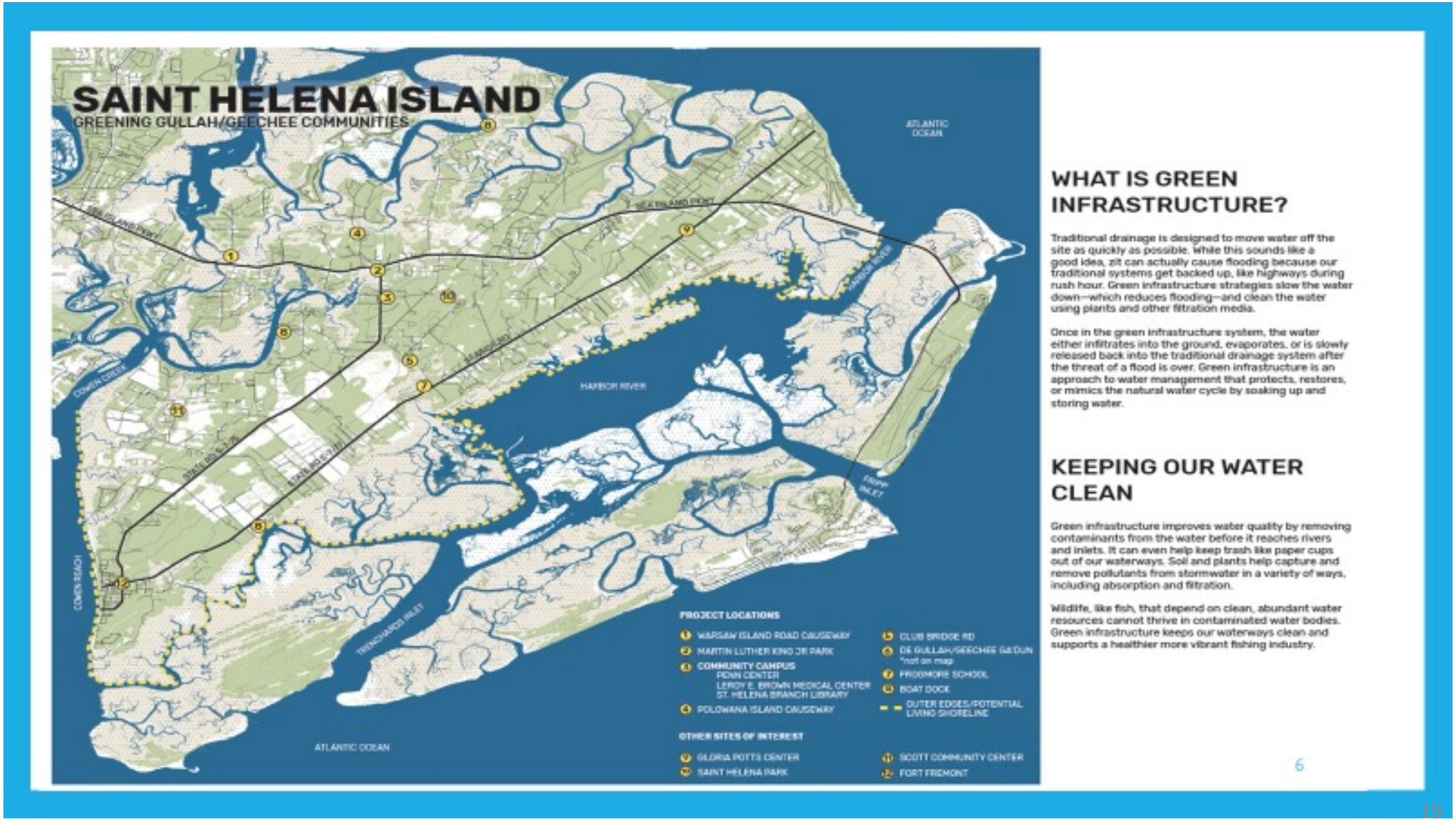
Community-Driven, Cross Programmatic, Local Government, Academia, Public, Private Partnership Collaboration

Community Star Award Ceremony for Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation

EPA and SC DEHC

February 22, 2022

Greening Gullah Geechee

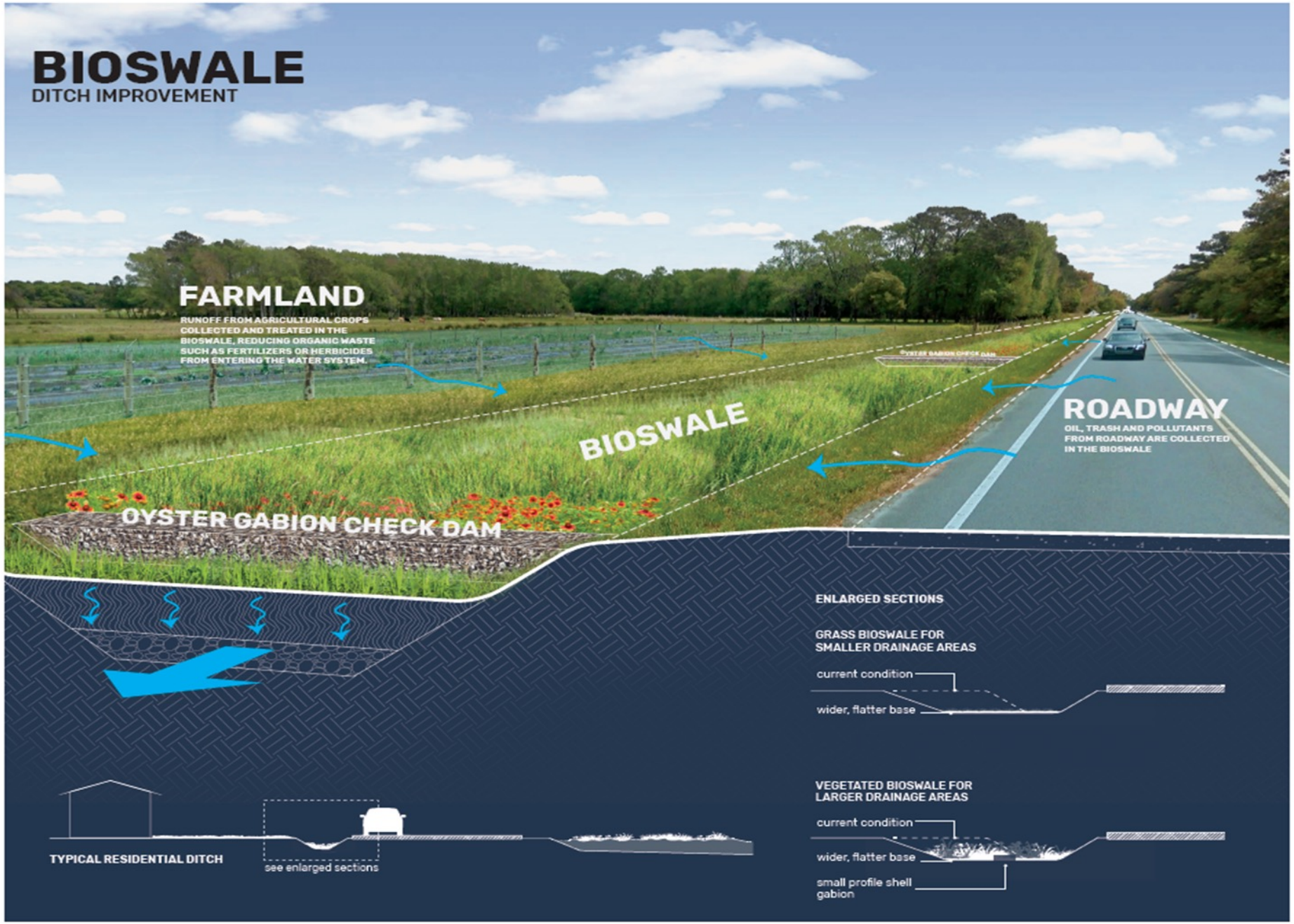


SALT MARSH

PRESERVATION

WHAT IS A SALT MARSH?

Salt marshes are coastal wetlands that are flooded and drained by salt water brought in by the tides.These intertidal habitats are essential for healthy fisheries, coastlines, and communities—and they are an integral part of our economy and culture. They provide essential food, refuge, or nursery habitat for more than 75 percent of fisheries species, including shrimp, blue crab, and many finfish. Salt marshes also protect shorelines from erosion by buffering wave action and trapping sediments. They reduce flooding by slowing and absorbing rainwater and protect water quality by filtering runoff, and by metabolizing excess nutrients.



DITCHES THAT CLEAN THE WATER

The ditches along the side of the roads—also called bioswales when designed to clean water—are filled with plants that clean the water as it moves through the system. They slow the flow of water in some rain events to reduce flooding downstream. They create habitat for birds, butterflies, and local wildlife. Bioswales are beneficial for the environment because they reduce the amount of pollutants from cars (oil, gas, dirt) and runoff from agriculture or lawns (fertilizers, pesticides, or silt) keeping our waterways clean.

A well-designed bioswale will both move water when needed and slow water when that is appropriate. In some bioswale systems with a small amount of water, the plants slow the water flow during a light rain, but are pushed down during heavy rains to let the water flow. Larger bioswales have check dams that slow the water during light rains, but are not as tall as the sides of the ditch to let water flow when needed.

In both cases, large pieces of trash are collected before they enter the marsh, and microscopic pollutants are captured by the plants and degraded biologically.

Recap Opportunities for CWA 303(d) Program Activities

- Utilizing EJSCREEN
- Working with other programs to apply tools that will help to identify and target focus areas-communities, waterbodies, unassessed waters, etc.
- Participating in community listening sessions
- Providing resources to states and tribes
- Promoting citizen science-Sanitary survey app training
- Working collaboratively with outside entities and stakeholders to maximize data accessibility, information sharing, and resources
- Coordinating across programs and divisions, other governmental departments and agencies, and nongovernmental entities to identify and achieve shared goals

Questions?

Coordination
collaboration
Funding
communication
Resources
Best practices
Standards
clarity
Money
guidance
Access
Knowledge
Structure
leadership
Data
Support
Sharing
Local
Teamwork
Diversity
Flexibility
Buy-in
Longevity
cohesion
Pollen
Workflow
an ecosystem
Comprehensive
simplicity
None
Assessments
Accountability
Secondary consumers
evaluation
coherence
Organizing framework
knowledge-communities
Rewards
Societal understanding
Metrics for success
Network
Inter-connectiveness
Interpretation
Accurate
Easy navigation
Coordinatination
Salient
Authoritative
Climate therapist
Down-scaling
shared goals
instructions
Bipartisanship
Relevant data
Proven
Resourcea
Friendliness
Transparent incentives
Theory
Single portal
Consideration
Partnerships
Decomposers
Insights
a starting point
an access point
Plain language
Menu
opportunity
Encouragement
Connectivity
Getting to the decision
Streamlined
Having a One stop shop
Cohesive
Projections
Public-support
Localization
Locality
shared purpose
Database
Catalogue
Real world
Connection
Metrics
scalability
Processes
Repository
Citizen
Concise
Strategy
Community
compassion
Simplicity
Governance
Market
Incentives
awareness
Hyper-local
global
Jobs
Action
Time
urgency
Certainty
Integration
good colors
Management
Purposeful
Shared