

**STATE OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
GRANT WORK PLAN
DEP AGREEMENT NO.: SD017**

ATTACHMENT 3

PROJECT TITLE: Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP)

PROJECT LOCATION: The CHNEP, which is hosted by Charlotte County (Grantee), is a partnership working to protect the natural environment in Florida, focusing on the ten-county area in Central and Southwest Florida. The jurisdiction includes Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Charlotte, Manatee, Sarasota, Lee, and portions of Highlands, Hendry, and Glades Counties.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: On March 7, 1995, the State of Florida, through the Governor's Office, submitted a National Estuary Program (NEP) nomination for the "Charlotte Harbor Estuarine Ecosystem Complex." The nomination responded to Federal Register Volume 59, number 247, Pages 66533-4, Dated December 27, 1994. The document stated that the proposed NEP was "Florida's last, best chance to manage the estuarine and watershed impacts of an exponentially growing human population." The problem areas identified in the nomination packet included hydrologic alterations, eutrophication, and habitat loss. Addressing these problems continue to form the basis of the CHNEP, originally called the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program and now named the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership.

Section 320 of the 1995 Clean Water Act amendment established the Grantee. The Grantee was one of seven "Tier V" NEPs established in 1995. Section 320 further requires a NEP to adopt a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) and a federal consistency review procedure. The CHNEP Management Conference adopted the CCMP in 2000 and it has been updated periodically, most recently in 2019. The jurisdiction includes Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Charlotte, Manatee, Sarasota, Lee, and portions of Highlands, Hendry, and Glades Counties. It is one of four NEPs in Florida and one of three NEPs on Florida's gulf coast. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has been an active participant in the CHNEP's Management Conference since its inception.

In 2019, the CHNEP expanded its area from 4,700 to 5,416 square miles to encompass the freshwater basin of the Caloosahatchee River from the previous Tidal Caloosahatchee boundary at the Franklin Locks in Lee County, up to Lake Okeechobee in Glades and Hendry Counties. This change increased opportunities to better protect and restore the Caloosahatchee River and is consistent with the CHNEP's watershed approach to managing the two other major rivers in the region: the Peace and Myakka Rivers. Additionally, to better reflect and acknowledge its many Heartland partners, the CHNEP changed its name to the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP). The evolution of CHNEP and its CCMP positioned the organization to be even more effective in protecting and restoring our waterways and other critical natural resources.

Since then, the Partnership has continued to evolve in creating a new 2025 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which continues the goals of improving water quality, restoring hydrology, protecting fish, wildlife and their habitats, as well as educating and engaging the public. The 2025 CCMP maintains existing identified actions and activities in support of achieving those goals, as well as adds some new ones – notably around supporting resiliency and assisting in extreme weather event response with respect to the protection of natural resources in the area. The CCMP was crafted and approved by Florida Department of Environmental Protection, in addition to the other members of the Partnership, to provide a regional collaborative framework amongst local, state, and federal governmental bodies for further natural resource protection.

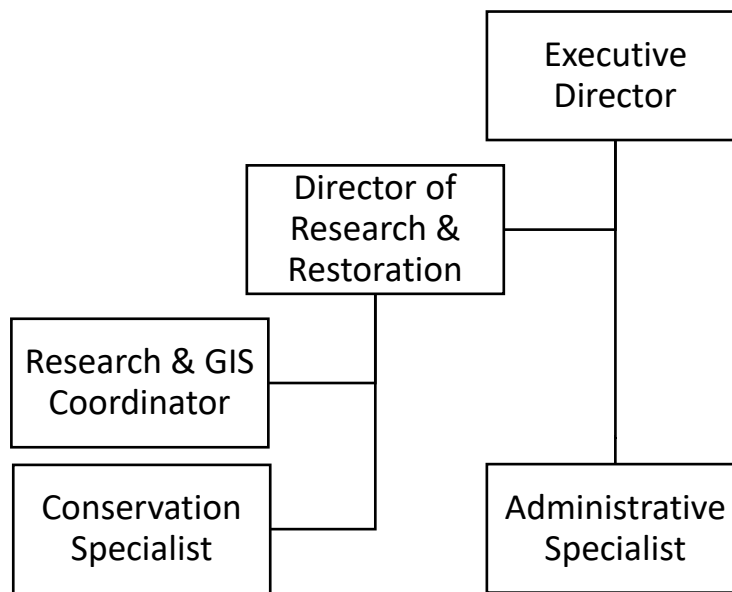
PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The work under this Agreement includes the conduct and completion of activities previously approved by the CHNEP Management Conference in the CHNEP Fiscal Year 2026 Work Plan under Work Plan Tasks 2, 3, and 4 (herein referred to as Tasks 1, 2, & 3 respectively).

The objective of Task 1 under this Agreement (CHNEP Task 2) is to provide people with information and ways to be engaged in the stewardship of their local natural resources and assist them in making daily choices that protect and improve estuaries and watersheds. Most projects are developed in a collaborative way and typically receive funding from a broad partnership. Many of the events are developed to fill gaps in the environmental education opportunities provided within the watershed. Conservation Grants for community-based environmental protection, restoration, or education activities broaden participation of individuals and groups for implementation of the CCMP.

The objective of Task 2 under this Agreement (CHNEP Task 3) is to protect and restore natural systems throughout the CHNEP study area by enhancing understanding of current environmental conditions, trends, and complex interactions, as well as identifying critical conditions and locations where restoration efforts can most effectively be directed. Activities focus on coordinating partner organizations and contracted entities to collect, analyze and communicate water quality, hydrologic and biological data as well as to fill gaps in essential data needed to support sound resource management and decision-making. Research topics focus on those identified by the Technical Advisory Committee. Funding supports staff coordination of monitoring, data collection and analysis and reporting efforts.

The objective of Task 3 under this Agreement (CHNEP Task 4) is to restore natural systems throughout the CHNEP study area by identifying critical water quality, hydrologic and habitat needs and working with partners to design, fund and implement effective restoration projects in a technically sound manner. Activities focus on participating in regional resource management and planning initiatives, reviewing watershed assessments and plans, providing data and maps, and tracking project implementation. Funding supports implementation of priority restoration projects identified by the Management Conference and staff participation in restoration planning, design and implementation activities. Projects are designed to be technically sound and include monitoring to assess effectiveness.

The present FY26 CHNEP staffing plan includes five full-time professionals, as follows:



Executive Director: Responsible for overall program management including cultivating and strengthening partnerships, soliciting funding for the program and projects, and is the liaison to Policy and Management Committees.

Director of Research & Restoration: Responsible for research and restoration initiatives, public engagement and education initiatives, and is the staff liaison to Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees.

Research & GIS Coordinator: Responsible for GIS coordination, assisting project management of scientific research projects and initiatives, as well as drafting the technical content for articles, grant proposals and reports.

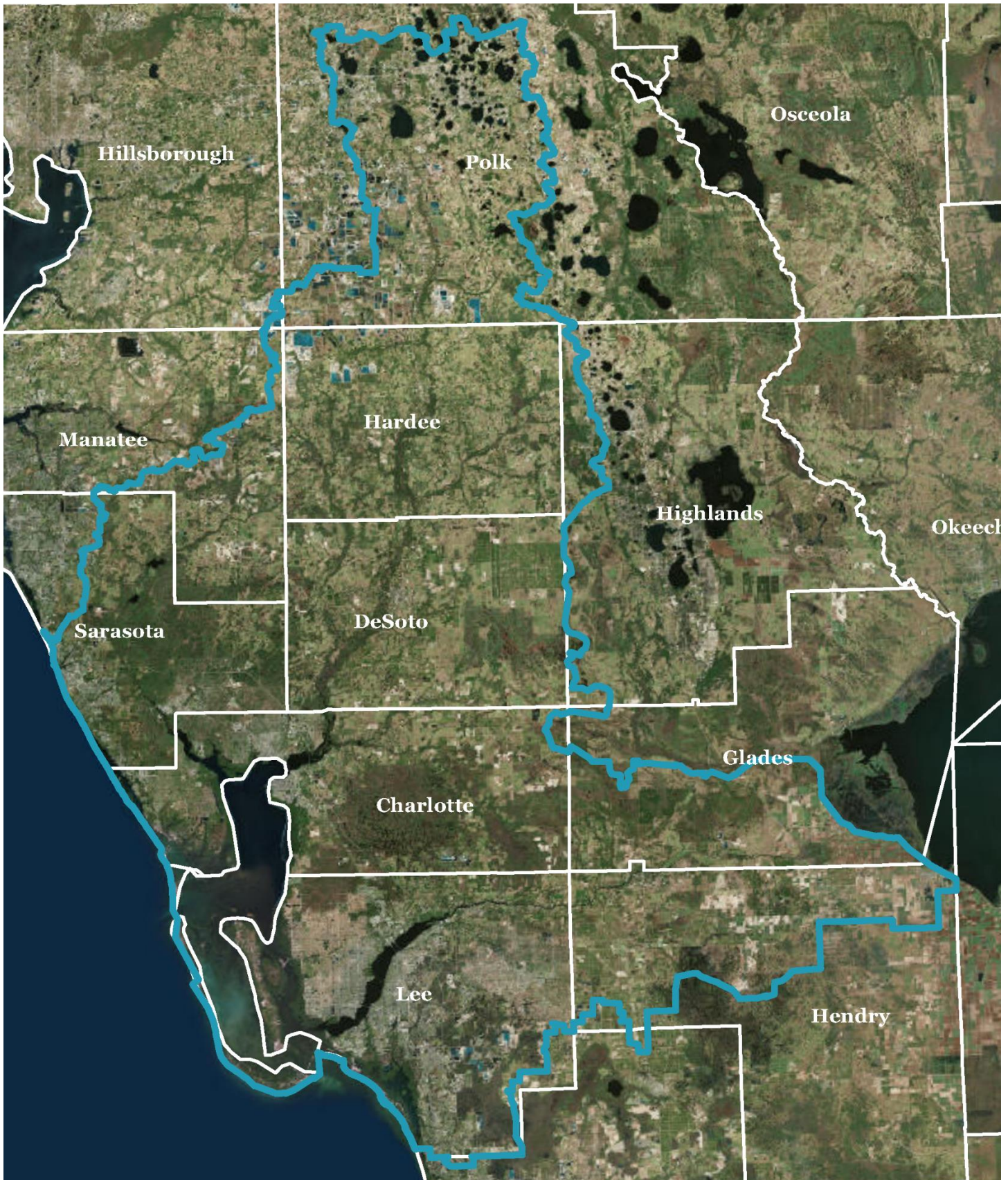
Conservation Specialist: Responsible for organizing and conducting public engagement and education initiatives, as well as overseeing volunteer management.

Administrative Specialist: Responsible for providing a variety of program support functions including administrative support, database management, etc.

The task numbers and description given below are based on the Fiscal Year 2026 Work Plan for the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership. Note: though FY26 staff salaries can be accurately estimated prior to the next fiscal year, the fringe rates cannot so the fringe in work plan is based on FY25 fringe rates for current staff in these positions and likely will differ from that in the reimbursement request. The Grantee fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) only contributes funding through this Agreement to CHNEP Tasks 2, 3 and 4; therefore, CHNEP Task 1 is not shown as part of this Agreement.

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LOCATION MAP



TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

TASK 1: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Task Description:

The Grantee collaborates with partners to conduct events and workshops for citizens, resource managers, professionals, and decision-makers. Events are developed to fill gaps in environmental education opportunities that are provided within the region's watersheds. CHNEP also produces outreach materials such as periodic publications, fact sheets, volunteer events, and web content to inform people about the CHNEP watersheds. Additionally, the CHNEP awards Conservation Grants to assist with projects that involve people in the stewardship of their local natural resources.

Activities:

- a. Maintain continuous online communications through website and social media regarding upcoming public meetings, educational events, volunteer activities, and educational resources.
- b. Organize and host routine environmental education and citizen science events.
- c. Administer and award Conservation Grants to community partners to implement CCMP activities.

Deliverables: The Grantee shall prepare and deliver to the Department's Grant Manager the following documents in accordance with the schedule provided below. Documents can be submitted in the following formats: hard copy or electronically (i.e., emailed as a PDF, JPEG, MSWord, Excel, or PowerPoint).

- 1.1 Summary of online communications, including analytical metrics from online communication software sources used (a)
- 1.2 Summary of environmental education and citizen science events held (b)
- 1.3 Summary of Conservation Grants awarded (c)

Performance Standard: The Department's Grant Manager will review the deliverables to verify that they meet the specifications in the Grant Work Plan and this task description. Upon review and written acceptance by the Department's Grant Manager of all deliverables under this task, the Grantee may proceed with payment request submittal.

Payment Request Schedule: Grantee may submit a payment request for cost reimbursement upon completion of the task and Department approval of all associated task deliverables.

Task Budget: \$37,286.14 for Personnel Expenses

Task 1 Staff (Public Engagement)	Hourly Rate	Task 1 Hours	Task 1 Salary Total	Task 1 Fringe Rate	Task 1 Fringe Total	Task 1 Combined Total
Executive Director	\$62.65	125	\$7,831.25	\$27.76	\$3,470.00	\$11,301.25
Director of Research & Restoration	\$38.60	145	\$5,597.00	\$21.61	\$3,133.45	\$8,730.45
Research & GIS Coordinator	\$26.00	189	\$4,914.00	\$9.48	\$1,791.72	\$6,705.72
Conservation Specialist	\$20.38	330	\$6,725.40	\$11.58	\$3,821.40	\$10,546.80
						\$37,284.22

Grantee will not be reimbursed for travel by CHNEP staff.

Task Start and End Dates: Execution to June 15, 2026.

Deliverable Due Date: No later than June 15, 2026. All task related work must be completed by, and all deliverables must be received by, the task end date.

TASK 2: RESEARCH COORDINATION

Task Description:

CHNEP coordinates the Coastal Charlotte Harbor Monitoring Network (CCHMN) and supports the FDEP Charlotte Harbor Estuaries Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Network (CHEVWQMN) and the Water Management Districts' seagrass aerial mapping projects. CHNEP works with partners to identify and resolve gaps in water quality and biological data, specifically through refinements to Monitoring Strategy. In addition, CHNEP assists partners with compiling, analyzing, mapping and conveying complex technical information in an understandable manner so it can be used to implement effective resource protection and restoration projects. The resulting data is used to assess resource status and trends, assist TMDLs and Minimum Flows and Levels development, and are incorporated into resource management plans such as SWFWMD Charlotte Harbor and SFWMD Lower Charlotte Harbor SWIM plans.

CHNEP staff work with USF to revise and update the Water Atlas as needed, and to ensure Water Quality data is uploaded. CHNEP continues to work with the FDEP Aquatic Preserves and both Water Management Districts to maintain a Water Atlas landing page that presents the seagrass monitoring data to the public.

Activities: CHNEP Staff will perform the duties previously described and related to the following activities which have been previously reviewed by the Department:

- a. **Water Atlas:** Review and assess uploaded water quality sampling data.
- b. **Water Quality Monitoring:** Lower CCHMN monthly water quality data, and CCHMN annual field audits.
- c. **Data Management:** Biannual up-dates of water quality data.
- d. **Data Access:** On-going access to water quality data, graphing and analyses and response to data requests.
- e. **Data Analysis and Use:** Periodic updates of water quality contour maps and periodic refinement of regional Monitoring Strategy.

Deliverables: The Grantee shall prepare and deliver to the Department's Grant Manager the following documents in accordance with the schedule provided below. Documents can be submitted in the following formats: hard copy or electronically (i.e., emailed as a PDF, JPEG, MSWord, Excel, or PowerPoint).

- 2.1 Water Atlas, copy (or screen shots) of data uploading and summary of revisions (a, c, d, e)
- 2.2 Lower CCHMN data sheets, quarterly reports (b)

Performance Standard: The Department's Grant Manager will review the deliverables to verify that they meet the specifications in the Grant Work Plan and this task description. Upon review and written acceptance by the Department's Grant Manager of all deliverables under this task, the Grantee may proceed with payment request submittal.

Payment Request Schedule: Grantee may submit a payment request for cost reimbursement upon completion of the task and Department approval of all associated task deliverables.

Task Budget: \$30,230.32 for Personnel Expenses

Task 2 Staff (Research Coordination)	Hourly Rate	Task 2 Hours	Task 2 Salary Total	Task 2 Fringe Rate	Task 2 Fringe Total	Task 2 Combined Total
Executive Director	\$62.65	90	\$5,638.50	\$27.76	\$2,498.40	\$8,136.90
Director of Research & Restoration	\$38.60	130	\$5,018.00	\$21.61	\$2,809.30	\$7,827.30
Research & GIS Coordinator	\$26.00	330	\$8,580.00	\$9.48	\$3,128.40	\$11,708.40
Conservation Specialist	\$20.38	80	\$1,630.40	\$11.58	\$926.40	\$2,556.80
						\$30,229.40

Grantee will not be reimbursed for travel by CHNEP staff.

Task Start and End Dates: Execution to June 15, 2026.

Deliverable Due Date: No later than June 15, 2026. All task related work must be completed by, and all deliverables must be received by, the task end date.

TASK 3: WATERSHED COORDINATION**Task Description:**

Provide staff support for restoration mapping efforts and restoration project implementation. Tracking of restoration plan implementation is performed annually through the annual development of the Government Performance and Review Act (GPRA) National Estuary Program Online Reporting Tool (NEPORT) report.

The CHNEP also participates in Everglades Restoration projects relevant to the CHNEP Study Area; this includes participating on the Science Coordination Group on behalf of Southwest Florida Restoration Task Force Working Group.

Finally, the CHNEP participates on the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Environmental Advisory Committee, which brings together governmental and non-governmental leaders across the CHNEP watershed in the SWFWMD area to collectively discuss and advise the SWFWMD on environmental matters that affect the management of water and wildlife resources.

Activities: Grantee staff will prepare for, attend, and participate in meetings, review meeting briefing materials, assist partners with identifying relevant data and analyses, submit comments as appropriate, brief CHNEP Management Conference on meeting outcomes and next steps, and undertake the following watershed coordination activity:

- a. Government Performance and Review Act (GPRA) NEPORT reporting

Deliverables: The Grantee shall prepare and deliver to the Department's Grant Manager the following documents, in accordance with the schedule provided below. Documents can be submitted in the following formats: hard copy or electronically (i.e., emailed as a PDF, JPEG, MSWord, Excel, or PowerPoint; or provided on a thumb drive).

3.1 Copy of the Annual GPRA NEPORT Report for Fiscal Year 2024

Performance Standard: The Department's Grant Manager will review the deliverables to verify that they meet the specifications in the Grant Work Plan and this task description. Upon review and written acceptance by the Department's Grant Manager of all deliverables under this task, the Grantee may proceed with payment request submittal.

Payment Request Schedule: Grantee may submit a payment request for cost reimbursement upon completion of the task and Department approval of all associated task deliverables.

Task Budget: \$7,483.54 for Personnel Expenses

Task 3 Staff (Watershed Coordination)	Hourly Rate	Task 3 Hours	Task 3 Salary Total	Task 3 Fringe Rate	Task 3 Fringe Total	Task 3 Combined Total
Director of Research & Restoration	\$38.60	10	\$386.00	\$21.61	\$216.10	\$602.10
Research & GIS Coordinator (NEPORT)	\$26.00	194.0328	\$5,044.85	\$9.48	\$1,839.43	\$6,884.28
						\$7,486.38

Grantee will not be reimbursed for travel by CHNEP staff.

Task Start and End Dates: Execution to June 15, 2026.

Deliverable Due Date: No later than June 15, 2026. All task related work must be completed by, and all deliverables must be received by, the task end date.

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PROJECT TIMELINE: The tasks must be completed by the corresponding task end date and all deliverables must be received by the designated due date.

Task/ Deliverable No.	Task or Deliverable Title	Task Start Date	Task End Date	Deliverable Due Date/ Frequency
1	Public Engagement	Upon execution of Agreement	June 15, 2026	June 15, 2026
2	Research Coordination	Upon execution of Agreement	June 15, 2026	June 15, 2026
3	Watershed Coordination	Upon execution of Agreement	June 15, 2026	June 15, 2026

BUDGET DETAIL BY TASK:

Task No.	Budget Category	Budget Amount
1	PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$37,284.22
	Total for Task:	\$37,284.22
2	PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$30,229.40
	Total for Task	\$30,229.40
3	PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$7,486.38
	Total for Task	\$7,486.38
	Project Total:	\$75,000.00

PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY: Cost reimbursable grant funding must not exceed the category totals for the project as indicated below.

Category Totals	Grant Funding, Not to Exceed, \$75,000.00
PERSONNEL EXPENSES	\$75,000
Total:	\$75,000