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The Nature Conservancy entrusts CH2M to design oyster habitat restoration in Florida

DENVER, Colorado, September XX, 2016— The Nature Conservancy selected CH2M to manage the monitoring, permitting and design of a 6.5-mile restoration project, which will help restore a healthy, functioning oyster habitat in East Bay near Pensacola, Florida. The Pensacola East Bay Oyster Restoration project is the first phase in a multi-year effort to restore this critical estuarine habitat system that has been significantly reduced from its former range across the Gulf's bays and estuaries.

Phase 1 of the project, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, provides for 3 years of pre-restoration monitoring, project design and permitting to develop the most effective and efficient blueprint. Reef construction will follow in later phases of the project. The project is being implemented by CH2M, Ecology & Environment and the Conservancy. These organizations will apply their proven strategy of close collaboration among engineers, ecologists and area stakeholders in this oyster restoration project.

"Most oyster restoration projects are small scale. The Pensacola East Bay Oyster Habitat Restoration Project will be a model for large-scale coastal habitat restoration," said Jeff DeQuattro, Gulf Program Manager for the Conservancy. "Science and engineering will drive the solutions, with full-scale design and modeling, to ensure lasting resilience and durability."

Healthy oyster reefs and other estuarine and marine habitats help protect coastlines from wave damage and erosion, but 85 percent of oyster reefs have been lost worldwide, largely through overharvesting, pollution, habitat loss and other factors, making them the most severely affected marine habitat on Earth. The Gulf of Mexico and Pensacola Bay region are no exception. This restoration project, the most significant on the Gulf Coast and the largest CH2M has designed, will begin to restore oyster reefs in East Bay where they were once plentiful while also providing shoreline protection, nursery and a foraging habitat for other aquatic life. Reef restoration is also expected to complement the commercial oyster reefs and industry that have been hit hard over the years.

"By designing and constructing oyster reefs, we'll promote oyster settlement on the reef, provide for an additional aquatic habitat and reduce shoreline erosion," said David Stejskal, CH2M's project manager. "The coast will see great restoration benefits such as enhanced fish and bird habitat and more sea grasses, and protect the vulnerable shoreline." Stejskal and the CH2M team have been providing preliminary assistance to the Conservancy on this project since February 2015.

Sharing a passion for natural infrastructure as a viable way to increase coastal and climate change resilience, the Conservancy and CH2M are creating groundbreaking collaborations with scientists and engineers on these types of projects and opportunities to examine and compare nature-based solutions for risk reduction. The Conservancy selected CH2M for this project because of its in-house ecology, modeling, coastal engineering and design experience on oyster habitats and living shoreline projects, combined with its local homegrown knowledge of the Gulf of Mexico.

CH2M plans to complete design and permitting of the Pensacola East Bay Oyster Restoration project by early 2018 while working in conjunction with Ecology and Environment, Inc., who will conduct baseline and water quality monitoring for the Conservancy. With monitoring estimated to be complete by November 2018, the Conservancy will seek additional funding for construction from a variety of sources.

About CH2M

CH2M leads the professional services industry delivering sustainable solutions benefiting societal, environmental and economic outcomes with the development of infrastructure and industry. In this way, CH2Mers make a positive difference providing consulting, design, engineering and management services for clients in [water](#); [environment](#) and [nuclear](#); [transportation](#); [energy](#) and [industrial](#) markets, from iconic infrastructure to global programs like the Olympic Games. Ranked among the World's Most Ethical Companies and top firms in environmental consulting and program management, CH2M in 2016 became the first professional services firm honored with the World Environment Center Gold Medal Award for efforts advancing sustainable development. Connect with CH2M at www.ch2m.com; [LinkedIn](#); [Twitter](#); and [Facebook](#).

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