

June 21, 2021

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor
Plaza Level, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

The Honorable Wilton Simpson
President
The Florida Senate
409 The Capitol
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

The Honorable Chris Sprowls
Speaker
The Florida House of Representatives
420 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

RE: Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. Semi-Annual Report January 2021 – June 2021

Dear Governor DeSantis, President Simpson and Speaker Sprowls:

Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. continues to provide funding for high wage economic development projects and workforce training to support new opportunities across the eight counties that were disproportionately affected by the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon disaster. The need to promote a stronger and more diversified economic base for coastal Northwest Florida was intensified by Hurricanes Michael and Sally and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In compliance with s. 288.8013 FS, by the end of the June 2021 reporting period, Triumph Gulf Coast has committed \$287 million in court-ordered BP funds to 47 economic development and diversification projects across all eight counties of coastal Northwest Florida (See Attachment A). Grant awards to date include:

- \$63 million for 27 workforce education and training programs in every county in the region, preparing students from 4th grade through retiring military for high demand jobs paying higher than average wages.
- \$15 million to local governments and school districts to replace ad valorem property tax losses caused by hurricanes.

- \$185,400,000 in public infrastructure projects building and expanding seaport capacity, a maritime industrial park, an aviation maintenance repair and overhaul campus, a major roadway expansion to support military bases and mission expansion and substantial industrial park improvements across the region.
- \$733,000 in marketing and regional economic development research and promotion efforts including workforce gap identification and assessments.

The impact of Triumph's first \$287 million in committed funding on the regional economy is measured in milestones that directly affect family incomes, business payrolls and the availability of trained, certified workers qualified to fill the high-demand jobs being created by Triumph projects:

- * 14,013 new jobs paying from 115% to 150% more than average local wages
- * 19,157 high-skill workers trained and credentialed with industry certifications
- * \$18.90 in increased personal income for every Triumph dollar invested
- * \$725,836,000 in matching funds attracted from private and public sources; for every Triumph dollar, \$2.30 more invested in Northwest Florida projects
- * \$5.618 billion in positive economic growth generated for local economies

The foregoing results represent the first four years of Triumph Gulf Coast as an operating entity. This month the Triumph Board begins its changeover to new appointees -- three new board members serving four years beginning this month and our remaining four board members commencing their final year in office ending June 2022.

Board members appointed in 2015 served in an unofficial capacity and without funding authority until the board was formally constituted when the first court-ordered BP payments were made to the State of Florida on behalf of Triumph Gulf Coast in June 2017. The June 2021 Semi-Annual Report, therefore, reflects a Triumph Gulf Coast milestone. Three of our Board members have now completed their terms of office. Dr. Pam Dana, appointed by Pam Bondi, Attorney General, and Stephen Riggs, IV, appointed by Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater and Lewis Bear, Jr., appointed by Governor DeSantis to fill a vacancy left when Stan Connally, an original appointee of Governor Rick Scott, resigned due to business obligations. Mr. Bear's term expired on June 2, 2021, as well. All of these gifted individuals brought their business expertise and sound advice to the Triumph Board and helped to guide us through our start-up years. We welcome Collier Merrill, newly appointed by Attorney General Ashley Moody, and look forward to working with him and with members expected to be appointed by Governor DeSantis and Chief Financial Officer Patronis.

During the original Board's term of office, Triumph Gulf Coast reviewed 248 proposals (Pre-Applications), with 102 resulting in applications. Of those 102 applications, 47 are either awarded funds or are in the process of completing the award process. Twenty nine applications received economic impact scores below the threshold for Board consideration. All other applications are in the process of staff review or have been withdrawn by the applicants.

As Triumph Gulf Coast funded projects come to fruition across Northwest Florida, many organizations are celebrating with dedication and grand opening ceremonies. Since our last report such events have included the Franklin County School District Welding Facility, the Walton Works Public Safety Complex in DeFuniak Springs, the Port of Panama City East Terminal and East Channel, and the Northwest Florida State College Aviation Center of Excellence in Crestview. Eastern Shipbuilding is planning a Grand Opening Ceremony for its new facility in Port St. Joe on July 8.

Funding from Triumph Gulf Coast has already resulted in CAPE (Career and Professional) certificates and industry credentials earned across the region ranging from digital tools to pipefitting, HVAC and welding, nursing, commercial driving licenses and unmanned vehicle operations. As we continue to work with area educational institutions to identify and address the needs of the business community Triumph funding is committed to support another 16,000 CAPE certificates over the next several years.

Triumph only funds those projects that are priorities for local governments. Every application for funding approved by the Triumph Board of Directors has first been recommended by the board of county commissioners of the county where the project is to be located.

The Triumph Board understands that our region, while coastal and contiguous, is still diverse economically. While complying with statutory requirements that Triumph never be the sole source of funding for any project, our Board has provided substantial flexibility in matching funds requirements and performance timelines to applicants from our smallest counties. Our Executive Director and small team of professional advisors work with applicants, sometimes for months, to create business plans that recognize local conditions and, in most cases, attract significant private and public matching funds. To date, Triumph projects have attracted more than \$665,000,000 in matching funds, a ratio of \$2.3 for every \$1 committed by Triumph.

Contracts between Triumph Gulf Coast and applicants contain rigorous accountability provisions, including monitoring and oversight of ongoing projects, specific economic outcomes with deadlines and clawbacks of Triumph dollars if contracts are not fulfilled. Our professional staff is actively managing 41 Grant Awards for contract compliance while three proposals are in the process of final review and approval.

Triumph Gulf Coast's Board of Directors knows that, regardless of the disaster that caused the loss, a family without a job, a young person without qualifications for employment and a community without an economic engine halts and hobbles economic recovery and progress. In that regard, Triumph Gulf Coast has worked with our Awardees and has granted sixteen Covid-19 related time extensions, considering the difficulties faced by our educational institutions in bringing students into the classroom for hands on training, and the labor and supply shortages being faced by the construction industry relative to our infrastructure projects.

Triumph Gulf Coast board members serve without pay, are subject to the highest ethical requirements and are not eligible for reappointment. Triumph's operations, including legal and professional fees and all other costs, cannot exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% of our funds. Triumph consistently operates below those allowable overhead limits. Compliance management is of the utmost importance to us and we will continue to make it our top priority to assure that the funds given to the State of Florida to assist with the Deepwater Horizon recovery are allocated in the most effective way possible to strengthen and diversify the economies of coastal Northwest Florida.

Over the next several months, the Triumph Board is aware of and expects to review more major projects that have the potential to further substantially expand and broaden our coastal economy. We are mindful of our responsibility to ensure that future Triumph initiatives must continue to help our region rebuild and diversify. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our communities and our state.

On behalf of Lewis Bear, Speaker Allan Bense, Dr. Pam Dana, Ben Lee, Stephen Riggs IV, and Matt Terry,

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Gaetz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Don Gaetz, Chair

Attachment (Review of Annual Reports, Annual Reports, Pre-Applications, Applications, News Stories)

Cc: Cabinet Members

Members of Northwest Florida Delegation

Representative Matt Gaetz, M.C.

Representative Neal Dunn, M.C.

Members of Triumph Gulf Coast Board

| Pre-App # | APPLICANT | PROJECT | AMOUNT REQUESTED | COUNTY | Eligible |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|------------------|------------|----------|
| Current Pre-Applications | | | | | |
| 244 | Bay District Schools | Thunderbird Tech Program | \$ 155,432.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 250 | Santa Rosa BOCC | Whiting Aviation Park Taxiway | \$ 8,200,000.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 251 | Santa Rosa BOCC | Milton Interchange Park | \$ 15,878,683.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| | | | | | |
| Archived Pre-Applications | | | | | |
| 2 | Miracle Strip Mgmt, LLC | Lynn Haven Office/Warehouse | \$ 3,670,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 3 | Miracle Strip Mgmt, LLC | Miracle Strip Warehouses | \$ 4,100,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 6 | Robert Condon | Petrochemical Clean Up Co. | \$ 2,100,000.00 | Escambia | No |
| 7 | Dr. Phillip Renfro | Airport Multispecialty Medical Clinic | \$ 3,500,000.00 | Escambia | No |
| 8 | City of Destin | Crosstown Connector | \$ 5,700,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 12 | Escambia County | OLF8/OLFX Land Swap with DOD | \$ 29,900,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 13 | Escambia County | Beulah Interchange Connector | \$ 11,250,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 15 | La Vie Et Belle | Papillion Pavillion | \$ 1,632,700.00 | Walton | No |
| 16 | Cellarus Partners, LLC | Emerald Coast Motorsports Park | \$ 70,000,000.00 | | No |
| 17 | FSU College of Law | Center for Econ Opportunity for Veterans | \$ 600,000.00 | Wakulla | No |
| 18 | North Pt St Joe PAC | MLK Boulevard Redevelopment Project | \$ 5,750,000.00 | Gulf | No |
| 21 | Santa Rosa Co. School Dist. | Innovation High School | \$ 40,000,000.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 22 | City of Carrabelle | Northwest Downtown Rivotilization - Ave B | \$ 860,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 23 | City of Carrabelle | Carrabelle Airport Improvements | \$ 30,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 24 | City of Carrabelle | Carrabelle City Hall Construction | \$ 280,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 25 | City of Carrabelle | Carrabelle Septic Tank Abatement | \$ 590,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 30 | Okaloosa Co School District | Vocational Ed in Need of Support Project | \$ 45,000,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 31 | St. Marks Refuge Association | Lighthouse Repair and Improvements | \$ 300,000.00 | Wakulla | No |
| 33 | City of Apalachicola | Workforce Housing Revolving Fund | \$ 400,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 36 | South Walton Fire District | Training/Maintenance Facility | \$ 3,300,000.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 37 | SocialDesk Enterprises | Tri-Net Fiber Optic Project Planning | \$ 600,000.00 | Multi | No |
| 39 | Okaloosa County | Bridge to Bridge Multi-Use Path | \$ 5,500,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 40 | Okaloosa County | Digital Okaloosa Phase 1 | \$ 6,352,814.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 41 | Okaloosa County | Eastern Crestview Bypass | \$ 4,500,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 42 | Okaloosa County | Forensic Hospital Pilot Diversion Program | \$ 5,000,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 45 | Okaloosa County | P.J. Adams Parkway Phase IV | rolled into 46 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 47 | Wakulla County | Wakulla County Library Construction | \$ 2,900,000.00 | Wakulla | Yes |
| 50 | Town of Jay | Water Quality Improvement Project | \$ 1,000,000.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 51 | PC - Bay Co Airport District | ECP Crosswind Runway | \$ 15,600,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 52 | PC - Bay Co Airport District | ECP SoHo Infrastructure | \$ 3,400,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 53 | PC - Bay Co Airport District | ECP Hangar Facility and Infrastructure | \$ 7,000,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 57 | City of Lynn Haven | Emergency Operations Center | \$ 1,800,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 62 | Bay District Schools | Environmental Sciences Center | \$ 4,500,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 63 | Bay District Schools | Triumph Pre-K Academy | \$ 10,000,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 66 | B & C Technologies | Manufacturing Partnership | \$ 5,000,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 67 | Pumpout USA, Inc. | Gulf Coast Economy Preservation Project | \$ 11,590,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 68 | Florida State University | FSU-Panhandle Aging Research Center | \$ 78,000,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 71 | Good Samaritan Institute | Green Jobs for Walton County | \$ 200,000.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 74 | Town of Jay | Makerspace Initiative | \$ 375,000.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 75 | City of Lynn Haven | Marina Island Boulevard Project | \$ 10,000,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 76 | City of Gulf Breeze | TownCenter Infill Redevelopment Project | \$ 15,817,500.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 77 | City of Gulf Breeze | MedicalTechnologyPark Infill Redev Project | \$ 15,253,125.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 78 | City of Pensacola CRA | Youth Environmental Empowerment Prog. | \$ 1,000,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 79 | City of Pensacola CRA | West Moreno Stormwater and Streetscape | \$ 9,100,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 80 | City of Pensacola CRA | Downtown Infrastructure Project | \$ 20,800,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 81 | City of Pensacola CRA | Hollice T. Williams Greenway | \$ 12,500,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 82 | City of Pensacola CRA | W Cervantes St - Mobile Hwy Corridor | \$ 30,000,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 86 | TechFarms Capital Mgmt | Triumph Angel Fund - TechFarms Capital | \$ 8,000,000.00 | Multi | No |
| 88 | City of Fort Walton Beach | Landing Ferry System and Dock Expansion | \$ 7,500,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 89 | City of Fort Walton Beach | Municipal Marina | \$ 10,000,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 92 | Panacea Oyster Co-op | Oyster Processing Expansion & Ecotourism | \$ 2,036,000.00 | Wakulla | No |
| 93 | Panacea Oyster Co-op | Value Added Oyster Processing | \$ 1,720,599.00 | Wakulla | No |
| 94 | Bay Defense Alliance | Defense Technology Innovation Center | \$ - | Bay | No |
| 96 | City of Pensacola | Unity Project | \$ 3,000,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 97 | City of Pensacola | Affordable Housing Program | \$ 15,000,000.00 | Escambia | No |
| 99 | Walton County Sheriff | Public Safety Communications Training Fac | \$ 8,000,000.00 | Walton | Yes |

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|-------|--|--|------------------|------------|-----|
| 101 | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Advanced Animal Medical Facility | \$ 1,750,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 102 | Stone Clinical Laboratories | Clinical Lab and Training Facility | \$ 6,914,368.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 103 | Medical Risk Solutions | Primary Care/Pharmacy | \$ 900,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 104 | Flotilla 1-4 | Multi-purpose Vessel | \$ 437,000.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 106 | Pens/Escambia PEDC | The Bluffs Corridor-Beck's Lake Rd Segment | \$ 8,000,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 107 | Destin Fisherman's Co-op | Fisherman's Boatyard Construction-Freeport | \$ 1,275,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 107.1 | #107 Amended Destin Fisherman's Co-op | Fisherman's Boatyard Construction-Freeport | \$ 1,275,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 109 | Walton County BOCC | Education and Research Center at Owls Head | \$ 10,000,000.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 110 | St. Andrews Bay Center | The Ark of the Bay | \$ 584,743.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 111 | Walton County School District | Emerald Coast Technical College | \$ 2,931,000.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 112 | Lake Erie College Osteo Med | Academic Health Clinic Expansion | \$ 3,623,736.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 113 | Finch Transportation | Walton County Transit System | \$ 2,190,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 114 | Walton County BOCC | Broadband Initiative | \$ 900,000.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 115 | City of Pensacola | Morris Court Complex | \$ 18,000,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 116 | The Seaside School, Inc. | STEM Center of Excellence | \$ 5,000,000.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 117 | Bruce Craul/Dr. Mark Bonn | Hospitality Development Center | \$ 5,000,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 118 | Ron & Peggy Childs | Port Theater & Cultural Center | \$ 60,000.00 | Gulf | No |
| 121 | Quiq Silver | Comm. Kitchen Equip. Assembly Plant | \$ 6,120,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 122 | Fish 2.0 | Aquaculture Investment | \$ 250,000.00 | | No |
| 123 | FGNW | | | | WD |
| 124 | Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge | Wildlife Recovery Funding | \$ 233,130.00 | Multi | No |
| 125 | NWF Black Business Chamber | MLK Blvd Mixed Use Corridor | \$ 5,750,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 127 | Pensacola Heritage Foundation | THE GALVEZ MONUMENT PROJECT | \$ 50,000.00 | Escambia | No |
| 128 | Franklin County Schools | STEM in Education Program | \$ 720,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 129 | Franklin County Schools | Workforce Dev. And Voc Training | \$ 2,955,700.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 130 | Florida A&M University | Construction & Infra Tech Innovation Center | \$ 35,000,000.00 | Multi | No |
| 131 | Pensacola State College | Co:Lab Expansion | \$ 5,000,000.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 132 | OWV Company, LLC | Sweetwater Springs Marketing | \$ 2,898,000.00 | Santa Rosa | No |
| 134 | Coast Watch Alliance | Lion Fish Harvesting Program | \$ 1,121,600.00 | Escambia | No |
| 136 | City of Laurel Hill | Water System Upgrades | \$ 872,662.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 137 | American Marine Research Co. & CWA | Protection for Marine Fisheries Against Lionfish | \$ 1,242,180.00 | Escambia | No |
| 138 | Division of Aquaculture, FDACS | Shellfish Aquaculture Economic Incubator | \$ 750,000.00 | Multi | No |
| 139 | Panama City Rescue Mission | Facility Construction and Remodeling | \$ 3,000,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 140 | Opportunity Place, Inc | Shelter Services and Landscaping of Family Area | \$ 30,000.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 141 | St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc | Revised St. Marks Lighthouse Restoration Project | \$ 300,000.00 | Wakulla | No |
| 142 | Panama City Beach Public Library | Community Program Room Expansion | \$ 200,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 144 | North Bay Haven Career Academy | Athletic Field Complex Project | \$ 4,500,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 145 | Emerald Coast Baseball League | Start-up Expenses | \$ 150,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 146 | Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Cen | Construction of New Facility | \$ 1,800,000.00 | Santa Rosa | No |
| 149 | Gulf District Schools | School Bus Fleet Expansion | \$ 600,000.00 | Gulf | No |
| 150 | Hanning LLC DBA STEMWERX | STEMWERX Mobile STEM Lab | \$ 1,342,867.00 | Multi | Yes |
| 151 | Biotech Restorations Holdings, LLC | Biotech Gulf Coast | \$ 4,000,000.00 | Multi | No |
| 152 | Point Washington Medical Center | Operating Funds | | Walton | No |
| 156 | Range Project LLC | Range Project | \$ 3,000,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 158 | Biotility - University of Florida | Secondary Biotechnology CTE Programs | \$ 275,000.00 | Multi | Yes |
| 159 | Panhandle Affordable Housing LLC | Walton County Workforce Housing | \$ 5,500,000.00 | Walton | No |
| 160 | Casa Laxmi Foundation, Inc. | Centre for Excellence | \$ 20,000,000.00 | Bay | No |
| 162 | CareerSource Gulf Coast | Triumph Workforce Consortium | \$ 22,283,836.00 | Multi | Yes |
| 164 | The Joe Center for the Arts | Community Arts and Cultural Center | \$ 350,000.00 | Gulf | No |
| 165 | Twin Rivers Land & Timber, Inc. | St. Joe Port Project | \$ 47,066,695.00 | Gulf | No |
| 166 | Gulf County Board of County Commission | Local Government Funding Assistance | \$ 21,680,000.00 | Gulf | Yes |
| 170 | N/A | | | | |
| 171 | N/A | | | | |
| 172 | Air Force Enlisted Village, Inc. | All-Service Military Retirement Village | \$ 172,000.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 173 | Port of Pensacola | Marine Modification Maintenance Repair Overh | \$ 16,329,406.00 | Escambia | Yes |
| 174 | Bay Economic Development Alliance | Project Clear | \$ 7,350,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 175 | Bay Economic Development Alliance | Project Purple | \$ 4,635,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 176 | Fran Vellanti | Mental Health Out Patient Day Treatment Program | | N/A | No |
| 178 | City of Apalachicola | Workforce Housing and Infrastructure | \$ 800,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 179 | The Oyster Restoration Company & Hatchery | Apalachicola Bay One Billion Oyster Restoration | \$ 15,000,000.00 | Franklin | WD |
| 181 | Coastline Environmental Materials | Artificial Reef Creation Project | \$ 6,510,000.00 | Franklin | WD |
| 182 | Port Authority of the Port of Port St. Joe | Dredging of Shipping Channel | \$ 15,000,000.00 | Gulf | Yes |
| 183 | Liberty Fire District | Aerial Ladder Apparatus for North Walton County | \$ 720,000.00 | Walton | Yes |

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|------------------|------------|-----|
| 184 | Liberty Fire District | North Station | \$ 962,500.00 | Walton | Yes |
| 188 | City of Lynn Haven | ACMT Tax Abatement | \$ 104,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 192 | FSU Panama City | Engineering, Science, Technology & Workforce C | \$ 14,700,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 193 | City of Destin | Public Beach Initiative Project | \$ 12,000,000.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 194 | Port Theater Art and Cultural Center | Art and Cultural Center | \$ 575,000.00 | Gulf | Yes |
| 195 | City of Panama City | Panama City Marina Convention Center | \$ 40,000,000.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 196 | City of Carrabelle | Carrabelle-Thompson Airport Improvements | \$ 2,000,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 197 | Keep Pushing Foundation, Inc | Help Empower Our Youth | \$ 1,825,000.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 199 | The BioCarburante Company | Port St. Joe Biorefinery Project | \$ 25,250,000.00 | Gulf | No |
| 203 | Earth Steps LLC | Renewable Energy Product Manufacturing | \$ 13,000,000.00 | Wakulla | No |
| 204 | Rocky Bayou Christian School | STEM Training and Certifications | \$ 215,730.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 208 | Re-Entry Alliance Pensacola, Inc. ("REAP") | Re-Entry Workforce Training and Housing | \$ 2,500,000.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 212 | Freedom Life Compass, Inc. | Life Recovery Center | \$ 150,000.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 214 | Project Star | Project Star | \$ 750,000.00 | Walton | N/A |
| 218 | Bay District Schools/Haney Technical Center | Project Good Wrench Phase 1 | \$ 2,498,475.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 219 | Northwest Florida Beaches International Air | Aviation Center of Excellence MRO Campus | \$ 35,178,050.00 | Bay | Yes |
| 220 | City of Milton | Project Recall | \$ 6,000,000.00 | Santa Rosa | Yes |
| 225 | FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Servic | Apalachicola Bay Oyster Aquaculture Training Pr | \$ 75,000.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 226 | Economic Development Council of Okaloosa | Project Reese | \$ 34,822,786.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 232 | Northwest FL State College | GED Plus Program | \$ 793,560.00 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 235 | Andrews Research & Education Foundation | Center for Human Healthspan, Resilience & Perf | \$ 4,000,000.00 | Santa Rosa | No |
| 236 | Franklin County Schools | Career and Technical Training, Phase III | \$ 6,585,568.00 | Franklin | Yes |
| 238 | Okaloosa School District | Increasing Technology Capacity in CTE Labs | \$ 262,185.44 | Okaloosa | Yes |
| 239 | Northwest Florida Supercomputer Research | Operation of Supercomputers | \$ 964,170.00 | Walton | No |
| 241 | Lamar West Townhomes HOA | Hurricane Sally Restoration | \$ 100,000.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 242 | Northwest Florida Supercomputer Research | Operation of Supercomputers | \$ 2,159,800.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 247 | Emerald Coast Fitness Foundation | Destin Aquatic Center | \$ 2,000,000.00 | Okaloosa | No |
| 248 | Kuhn Strategic Consulting | Gulf Coast Digitized Campaign | \$ 254,100.00 | All | No |
| 170 | N/A | | | | |
| 171 | N/A | | | | |

| pre-app | APPLICANT | PROJECT | AMOUNT REQUESTED | COUNTY | Score | Application Received |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------|------------|-------|----------------------|
| Grants Awarded | | | | | | |
| 29 | Wakulla County School Board | Career and Technical Education Center | \$ 3,926,867.00 | Wakulla | A | 2/12/18 |
| 49 | Panama City Port Authority | PC Port Authority Eastern Terminal Dev. | \$ 10,000,000.00 | Bay | A | 2/23/18 |
| 120 | City of Pensacola | Comm. Aircraft Maintenance Campus | \$ 66,000,000.00 | Escambia | A | 3/16/18 |
| 43 | Okaloosa County | Hwy 90 East Water and Sewer Expansion | \$ 1,500,000.00 | Okaloosa | A | 3/22/18 |
| 143 | Bay District Schools | HVAC | \$ 847,955.00 | Bay | A | 4/13/18 |
| 72 | Santa Rosa County | Whiting Aviation Park | \$ 8,523,655.00 | Santa Rosa | A | 4/18/18 |
| 69 | FSU Marine Lab | Apalachicola Bay System Initiative | \$ 7,998,678.00 | Franklin | A | 4/20/18 |
| 46 | Okaloosa County | Southwest Crestview Bypass | \$ 64,100,000.00 | Okaloosa | B | 5/22/18 |
| 153 | Gulf County School District | Unmanned Systems | \$ 750,000.00 | Gulf | A | 8/28/18 |
| 157 | Franklin County School District | Franklin Environmental Career and Technica | \$ 2,327,322.00 | Franklin | A | 10/8/18 |
| 148 | Gulf District Schools | Agri-Science Program Expansion | \$ 125,000.00 | Gulf | A | 11/5/18 |
| 98 | Walton County Sheriff | Vocational/Technical Training Program | \$ 2,417,965.00 | Walton | A | 11/19/18 |
| 180 | Gulf County School District | WHS Welding Program | \$ 250,000.00 | Gulf | A | 1/8/19 |
| 185 | City of Panama City | Panama City Industrial Complex | \$ 20,000,000.00 | Bay | A | 2/20/19 |
| 186 | Gulf County Board of County Commis | Hurricane Michael Recovery Ad Valorem Re | \$ 4,271,683.00 | Gulf | A | 3/7/19 |
| 187 | Northwest Florida State College | Walton Works Training Center of Excellence | \$ 2,763,716.00 | Walton | A | 3/7/19 |
| 189 | Bay County Board of County Commis | Hurricane Michael Recovery Ad Valorem Re | \$ 10,728,317.00 | Bay | A | 3/19/19 |
| 190 | Walton Economic Development Allia | US 331 Infrastructure | \$ 1,742,407.00 | Walton | A | 3/28/19 |
| 198 | Wakulla County School Board | UAS/VSO Certification Program | \$ 1,780,000.00 | Wakulla | A | 5/19/19 |
| 200 | Franklin County School District | Career and Technical Training, Phase II | \$ 1,215,000.00 | Franklin | A | 5/24/19 |
| 191 | Franklin County BOCC | Apalachicola Regional Airport Fuel System U | \$ 1,059,000.00 | Franklin | B | 7/17/19 |
| 202 | Gulf Coast State College - Gulf/Frank | Tech Center for Emergency Response and Co | \$ 5,147,750.00 | Gulf | B | 8/7/19 |
| 209 | Santa Rosa County BOCC | Project Lionheart | \$ 3,484,728.00 | Santa Rosa | A | 11/15/19 |
| 211 | Pensacola State College | Truck Driver Training Program and Facility | \$ 5,500,000.00 | Santa Rosa | A | 2/1/21 |
| 213 | Florida's Great Northwest (FGNW) | Education ROI Research and Marketing | \$ 733,000.00 | ALL | A | 11/25/19 |
| 207 | Gulf Coast State College - Gulf/Frank | Nursing Simulation Center | \$ 2,200,358.00 | Gulf | B+ | 12/4/19 |
| 210 | Gulf Coast State College | UAS Pilot Boot Camp for Exiting Military | \$ 2,259,063.00 | Gulf | B+ | 2/14/20 |
| 216 | Northwest FL State College | Center of Aviation Excellence: Airframe & Pd | \$ 7,064,665.00 | Okaloosa | A | 2/14/20 |
| 215 | Wakulla County School Board | Wakulla/Lively Tech A&P Cert Program | \$ 3,250,000.00 | Wakulla | A | 2/18/20 |
| 221 | Locklin Technical College | Hurricane Michael Skilled Labor Recovery Fu | \$ 182,000.00 | Santa Rosa | A | 2/21/20 |
| 222 | Okaloosa Technical College | Hurricane Michael Skilled Labor Recovery Fu | \$ 200,000.00 | Okaloosa | A | 2/21/20 |
| 223 | Emerald Coast Technical College | Hurricane Michael Skilled Labor Recovery Fu | \$ 200,000.00 | Walton | A | 2/23/20 |
| 224 | Wakulla County School Board/Lively | Hurricane Michael Skilled Labor Recovery Fu | \$ 200,000.00 | Wakilla | A | 2/24/20 |
| 217 | AMIKids Pensacola Inc. | AMIKids Pensacola Workforce Development | \$ 408,000.00 | Escambia | A | 4/13/20 |
| 228 | Pensacola State College | Infrastructure and Logistics Training Fund | \$ 74,000.00 | Escambia | A | 4/27/20 |
| 229 | Tallahassee Community College | Infrastructure and Logistics Training Fund | \$ 276,500.00 | Wakulla | A | 4/28/20 |
| 227 | Panama City Port Authority | Intermodal Distribution Center Expansion | \$ 3,000,000.00 | Bay | A | 4/29/20 |
| 206 | AMIKids Panama City Marine Institut | STEM AND BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP L | \$ 1,737,500.00 | Bay | A | 6/15/20 |
| 230 | Walton County School District | IT and Healthcare Certification Program | \$ 3,846,000.00 | Walton | A | 6/27/20 |
| 240 | Santa Rosa County BOCC | Santa Rosa Industrial Park East | \$ 6,000,000.00 | Santa Rosa | A | 9/11/20 |
| 233 | IHMC | Center for Human Healthspan, Resilience an | \$ 6,078,795.00 | Escambia | A | 11/18/20 |
| | | | \$ 264,169,924.00 | | | |
| Current Applications | | | | | | |
| 5 | Escambia Co. School Board | Workforce Education Director | \$ 2,329,302.74 | Escambia | A | 3/26/18 |
| 26 | City of Apalachicola | Port of Apalachicola Improvements/Mgmt | \$ 1,100,000.00 | Franklin | A | 5/4/18 |
| 167 | Tallahassee Community College | WEI Unmanned Vehicle Systems Center of E | \$ 1,959,382.00 | Wakulla | B | 11/29/18 |
| 48 | Wakulla County | First Response Communications System | \$ 7,000,000.00 | Wakulla | | 5/19/20 |
| 231 | Northwest Florida Beaches Airport | Project Gator | \$ 4,780,800.00 | Bay | A | 7/7/20 |
| 234 | Walton Economic Development Allia | Woodlawn Industrial Park | \$ 471,500.00 | Walton | | 11/17/20 |
| 237 | Port St. Joe Port Authority | Dredging of Shipping Channel | \$ 17,500,000.00 | Gulf | | 3/11/21 |
| 243 | Okaloosa Co School District | Artificial Intelligence Learning Institutes | \$ 2,840,000.00 | Okaloosa | A | 4/5/21 |
| 245 | Florida A&M University | AI and Data Science Edu and Training in Aqu | \$ 5,900,000.00 | Okaloosa | | 4/6/21 |
| 246 | Florida State University, Panama City | ASCENT Cybersecurity and New Technologies | \$ 11,500,702.00 | Bay | A | 4/16/21 |
| 249 | Gulf County Board of County Commis | Floating Drydock | \$ 26,000,000.00 | Gulf | | 5/12/21 |

Archived Applications

| | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------|--|------------------|---------|----|---------|
| 59 | Bay District Schools | STEM Workforce Training Center | \$ 10,000,000.00 | Bay | C | 2/27/18 |
| 60 | Bay District Schools | Manufacturing Academy Expansion | \$ 965,000.00 | Bay | WD | 2/27/18 |
| 61 | Bay District Schools | Haney Industrial Pipefitter Prog Expansion | \$ 584,000.00 | Bay | NA | 2/27/18 |
| 83 | City of St. Marks | ADA Compliant Kayak Launch | \$ 65,000.00 | Wakulla | C | 2/27/18 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--|------------------|------------|----|----------|
| 84 | City of St. Marks | River Walk | \$ 1,295,000.00 | Wakulla | C | 2/27/18 |
| 28 | Wakulla County School Board | Career and Prep Academy | \$ 5,396,521.00 | Wakulla | WD | 3/5/18 |
| 70 | University of West Florida | Innovation Network Project | \$ 14,500,000.00 | Escambia | WD | 3/7/18 |
| 90 | E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Camp Longleaf | \$ 600,000.00 | Walton | C | 3/7/18 |
| 11 | Escambia County | Downtown Sports Complex | \$ 25,000,000.00 | Escambia | C | 3/8/18 |
| 54 | Panama City Beach CVB | Sports Park/Stadium Complex | \$ 23,658,000.00 | Bay | H | 3/12/18 |
| 65 | Bay Youth Summer Work Fnd | BayYouth Summer Work Foundation | \$ 71,271.40 | Bay | H | 3/12/18 |
| 38 | Okaloosa County | Bob Sikes Water Reclamation Facility | \$ 1,500,000.00 | Okaloosa | C | 3/22/18 |
| 44 | Okaloosa County | N. Gulf of Mexico FAD Network | \$ 500,000.00 | Okaloosa | C | 3/22/18 |
| 85 | Westonwood Ranch | Autism Job Training Facility | \$ 1,078,230.00 | Walton | C | 4/3/18 |
| 14 | Northwest FL State College | NWFSC Regional Trifecta Project | \$ 22,630,000.00 | Multi | WD | 4/9/18 |
| 135 | Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance of NW | Gulf Coast Economy Preservation Project | \$ 11,273,070.00 | Okaloosa | H | 4/9/18 |
| 73 | Santa Rosa County | NW FL Industrial Park@ I-10 - Phase 2 | \$ 5,301,164.00 | Santa Rosa | H | 4/18/18 |
| 58 | City of Mexico Beach | Mexico Beach Pier | \$ 3,700,000.00 | Bay | C | 5/15/18 |
| 105 | Project Lead The Way | STEM Training | \$ 4,000,000.00 | Multi | C | 5/18/18 |
| 9 | FL Comm. Svcs Corp - Utility | US 331 Water Transmission Line - Phase One | \$ 4,410,113.77 | Walton | C | 5/22/18 |
| 27 | Gulf County BOCC | Port of Port St Joe Project | \$ 28,425,000.00 | Gulf | WD | 5/22/18 |
| 32 | City of Apalachicola | Johnson Center Renovations | \$ 1,750,000.00 | Franklin | C | 5/30/18 |
| 35 | City of Apalachicola | Stormwater/Wastewater Improvements | \$ 2,660,000.00 | Franklin | C | 5/30/18 |
| 133 | FGNW | RISE Fund | \$ 15,000,000.00 | Multi | C | 5/30/18 |
| 20 | Franklin County BOCC | Fort Coombs Armory Renovation | \$ 1,800,000.00 | Franklin | C | 6/6/18 |
| 55 | Eastern Shipbuilding Group, Inc. | EastShip Manufacturing/Haul Out Facilities | \$ 20,025,000.00 | Bay | A | 6/6/18 |
| 119 | Smart Horizons COHS | Career Online High School (revised) | \$ 1,816,562.00 | Multi | C | 6/21/18 |
| 4 | City of Pensacola | CDOT-Port of Pensacola | \$ 15,000,000.00 | Escambia | A | 6/22/18 |
| 10 | Base IT, Inc. | Mobile STEM Workshops | \$ 170,000.00 | Bay | C | 6/28/18 |
| 19 | City of Niceville | Niceville Landing Project | \$ 180,000.00 | Okaloosa | C | 6/28/18 |
| 56 | City of Lynn Haven | Sports Park Expansion | \$ 15,843,762.00 | Bay | C | 7/13/18 |
| 108 | Walton County BOCC | US 331 & US 90 Water/Wastewater Expansion | \$ 14,247,468.00 | Walton | C | 8/14/18 |
| 147 | Gulf District Schools | Culinary Arts Center and Electives Suite | \$ 300,000.00 | Gulf | H | 8/30/18 |
| 95 | Gulf Specimens Marine Lab | Infrastructure Upgrades and Operations | \$ 4,950,000.00 | Wakulla | C | 9/9/18 |
| 1 | Bryant Enterprises (BEOP) | Curriculum Development | \$ 585,000.00 | Multi | F | 9/15/18 |
| 126 | HSU Educational Foundation | Hsu Innovation Institutes | \$ 7,160,000.00 | Multi | H | 9/18/18 |
| 64 | Gulf Coast State College | Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Inst. | \$ 17,112,356.00 | Bay | WD | 9/27/18 |
| 87 | City of Milton | N. Santa Rosa Reg. Water Reclamation Fac. | \$ 9,000,000.00 | Santa Rosa | C | 10/5/18 |
| 34 | City of Apalachicola | Apalachicola Solar Project | \$ 900,000.00 | Franklin | C | 11/16/18 |
| 91 | Tallahassee Comm College | WEI Ocean Shellfish Nursery Hatchery Project | \$ 13,500,000.00 | Wakulla | C | 11/28/18 |
| 168 | Tallahassee Community College | WEI Elevated Technology Training (ETT ²) | \$ 2,593,083.00 | Wakulla | C | 11/29/18 |
| 100 | Veterans Lodge | Veterans Lodge Village | \$ 25,000,000.00 | Walton | F | 12/7/18 |
| 177 | Tallahassee Community College | WEI Marine Service Occupational Training Program | \$ 1,500,000.00 | Wakulla | WD | 12/13/18 |
| 154 | Panacea Oyster Co-op | Wakulla Oyster and Aquaculture Expansion | \$ 19,241,000.00 | Wakulla | WD | 2/1/19 |
| 169 | City of Lynn Haven | Industrial Park Expansion | \$ 15,764,360.00 | Bay | H | 2/27/19 |
| 161 | Children's Home Society of Florida | Creating Tomorrow's Workforce with Weis | \$ 3,283,484.00 | Escambia | C | 6/28/19 |
| 201 | Wakulla County | Wakulla Community Hub | \$ 9,625,148.00 | Wakulla | WD | 9/30/19 |
| 155 | City of Mexico Beach | Artificial Reef | \$ 970,000.00 | Bay | C | 1/6/20 |
| 163 | Santa Rosa County | Project Runner Ad Valorem Tax Reduction | \$ 3,500,000.00 | Santa Rosa | A | 7/26/19 |
| 205 | Santa Rosa County BOCC | Project Runner Infrastructure | \$ 4,500,000.00 | Santa Rosa | A | 7/29/19 |

2021 Spring Review of Annual Grant Award Reports

Triumph Staff reviewed the information provided by Grantees with projects due for annual review under s. 288.8016 , F.S. and recommended the following determinations which were accepted by the Triumph Board.

s. 288.8016, F.S. Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.; duties.

(3) Monitor, review, and annually evaluate awardees and their projects or programs to determine whether an award should be continued, terminated, reduced, or increased.

186 Bay County Hurricane Michael Ad Valorem Relief was recommended by Staff to be deemed complete.

Staff recommended to continue to fund the following grant:

69 Florida State University, Apalachicola Bay Systems Initiative

Triumph Grant Award – \$7,998,678

Grantee Match – \$1,501,323

Total Project Cost- \$9,500,001

For deliverable 1, “Assess temporal and spatial changes in oyster communities in Franklin County,” the FSUCML team has examined and characterized reports and obtained access to GIS. Item 2 is “construct a pilot-scale oyster hatchery.” TGC score progress on these first two deliverables as acceptable given the constraints imposed by Covid. Item 3 “bio-physical modeling,” where an appropriately qualified consultant has been retained and a contract entered into, and Deliverable 4, “monitoring of oyster communities and their environment,” were scored by TGC staff score as having made good progress. Deliverable 5 is “oyster population genetic structure,” which was only scheduled to begin in the last quarter of the first project year. It is behind schedule because of the severe depletion of subtidal oysters in Apalachicola Bay. It is hoped that the spring spawn may generate sufficient numbers of juveniles this summer to conduct the study, so that the new target start date is summer 2020. TGC staff score deliverable 5 progress as good. Deliverable 9 is “targeted outreach to community,” which entails development of a community advisory board, and other activities. The project awarded a two-year contract to the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium (FCRC) in May 2019 and it has begun its work.

In total, progress on the ABSI project is good, and recommended to be continued.

ANNUAL REPORT TO TRIUMPH GULF COAST INC.

Project #69: Apalachicola Bay System Initiative (ABSI)

Awardee: Florida State University

Reporting Period: March 15, 2020-March 14, 2021



ABSI LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dr. Sandra Brooke (Principle Investigator)

D. Joel Trexler (Co-Principle Investigator February 2021)

Dr. Gary Ostrander (Professor, College of Medicine)

Submitted: March 31, 2021

REPORT OVERVIEW

The Apalachicola Bay System Initiative comprises a number of deliverables, each of which has a timeline for completion over the duration of the award. These deliverables are summarized below (Table 1). Some of the deliverables comprise multiple parts; for example, Experimental Ecology includes a number of research studies, but others are very specific, such as the population genetic study. This report presents accomplishments for the second year of this large multi-disciplinary effort and encompasses incomplete objectives from year 1. Discrepancies between target and completed deliverables are addressed. In addition, there is a section on personnel hires and other items that are not directly associated with the specific objectives.

Table 1: Summary of timeline for project deliverables.

| Project Deliverables Timelines | Yr-1 | Yr-2 | Yr-3 | Yr-4 | Yr-5 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Assess temporal and spatial changes in status of oyster communities | | | | | |
| Construct a pilot-scale oyster hatchery | | | | | |
| Bio-physical modeling | | | | | |
| Monitoring of oyster communities and their environment | | | | | |
| Oyster population genetic structure | | | | | |
| Experimental ecology | | | | | |
| Coupled Ecosystem-Life History model | | | | | |
| Management and restoration plan development | | | | | |
| Targeted outreach to the community | | | | | |

In March 2020, Florida State University initiated restrictions on personnel access to laboratories and offices as safety precautions against Covid-19 transmission. Those personnel that could work from home were allowed to do so, with restricted hours if there was insufficient desktop work for full time employment. These restrictions significantly impacted our ability to work on some of the ABSI deliverables, particularly those that required personnel to conduct fieldwork or laboratory analyses. Work on the hatchery was also impacted as access by contractors and FSU hatchery personnel was limited. In May, field and laboratory work was allowed to resume with stringent Covid safety precautions including limited personnel in the offices, labs and vessels. Over the summer, FSUCML initiated regulations that would allow laboratory access, and by the beginning of 2021, activities were allowed to resume, with safety precautions, at a functional capacity. Despite these restrictions, ABSI made progress on a number of deliverables and has established several new studies during the past year, as well as expanded our virtual outreach efforts.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES FOR YEAR 2

1. Assess temporal and spatial changes in oyster communities in Franklin County (continuation from year 1)

This objective was initially planned for year 1 only, but since there is no end point for gathering supporting information and data, we will continue to work on this objective throughout the life of the project. We have continued to gather historical and contemporary sources for data on oyster reef distribution, reef associated fish and invertebrate communities, oyster ecology and biology, and environmental conditions within Apalachicola Bay and adjacent waterways. This information has provided a baseline from which to evaluate changes observed during ABSI, and help generate target metrics for future restoration and management decisions

Deliverables for this component include a database with information on spatial and temporal changes in oyster reef distribution, productivity and environmental conditions. Digital GIS-based maps and reports will be available through the project website and updated annually.

Accomplishments during year 2

We continue to update the literature database, which currently has more than 325 reports, peer-reviewed manuscripts, maps and data sets which have been assimilated and catalogued into a number of different categories (ecology, ecosystem services, environmental conditions, genetics, hydrodynamics etc.). Historical environmental data, oyster population data, and fisheries independent monitoring data for non-oyster species have been obtained from different sources (ANERR, FDACS, FWC, manuscripts and reports) and have been incorporated into a number of ArcGIS layers for integration into a number of web-based products. This deliverable is still in development as we are continuing to produce a series of compelling and interactive data products that will provide public access to complex information. The optimal platform for most of this information is the ArcGIS-based story map (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/>), which can be used to combine maps with text, images and data. To accomplish this, FSUCML has obtained access to the FSU online ArcGIS account, and over the past summer, we have created the first story map of a historic timeline of the Apalachicola Bay, which can be accessed through the ABSI website community engagement page (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/commengage/>)

Additional web-based products will show spatial and temporal patterns in environmental conditions using long term environmental data from a number of sources. This is expected to be available soon through our website. Another product in development is a story map of historical through contemporary bathymetry and oyster habitat distribution, showing changes in available habitat over time.

Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

There are no specific discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables, we have been working on creating engaging public-facing products from our data and literature and have several more in progress.

2. Construct a pilot-scale oyster hatchery (continuation from year 1)

The construction of a research oyster hatchery is a critical component of the ABSI; however this was estimated to take more than 2 years. In order to expedite some of the hatchery tasks, the FSU matching infrastructure funds covered the cost of a small interim hatchery to support operations while the permanent hatchery is being constructed.

Accomplishments during year 2

The interim hatchery was completed in September 2020 and comprises a broodstock conditioning room housed in a modified laboratory, a 50 x 30 ft greenhouse for spawning and larval culture and two large setting tanks, fed with raw seawater for larval settlement and spat grow-out. the first spawning was attempted on October 6, 2020 but unfortunately this effort did not result in egg release, so no larvae were produced. We are currently conditioning oysters collected from Apalachicola Bay and will attempt our first major spawn on April 5th. We have obtained and conditioned oyster shell to set the larvae and will use the resulting spat on shell for restoration experiments to be deployed in late spring 2021.

The permanent hatchery will be housed in a 50 x 70 ft metal building (to avoid some of the temperature problems encountered with the greenhouse) and will replace two existing CML greenhouses. The plans for the permanent hatchery have been completed and approved by Triumph, the old greenhouses removed, and construction contracts have been approved. Construction will begin as soon as final permits are in place and is expected to be operational before the 2022 spring spawn.

Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

The interim hatchery was on schedule to be operational for the spring 2020 oyster spawn; however, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, completion of the hatchery was slowed considerably due to staff and purchasing limitations. The interim hatchery was operational in September 2020.

3. Bio-physical modeling

Freshwater flow dynamics is being addressed through a 2-year consultancy contract with Dr. Steve Leitman with the following objectives: 1) Develop a set of metrics to define optimal management of the watershed with regards to sustainable ecological productivity of both the river and estuarine aquatic resources; 2) Examine potential modifications to the current Water Control Manual operations, taking into account the metrics developed in objective 1; 3) Test current and proposed revised operations against alternative climate scenarios with regard to changes in both the volume of water being delivered to the river and estuary and the timing of rainfall events; 4) Encourage an adaptive management approach based on the outputs from the objectives above.

Bio-physical modeling of the ABSI system is being conducted by Dr. Steven Morey, a physical oceanographer at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), and his post-doctoral researcher Dr. Xu Chen. Specific objectives of this work are: 1) Configure a hydrodynamic model for the lower Apalachicola River, Apalachicola Bay and the surrounding coastal and inner shelf regions (including Cape San Blas through Cedar Key, FL) based on the latest bathymetric and topographic data; 2) Run hindcast and future climate and management scenario simulations, incorporating flow inputs from Dr. Leitman's model; 3) Perform analyses of the simulations to characterize the variability of hydrographic properties throughout Apalachicola Bay; 4) Using a

numerical particle tracking approach to simulate oyster larvae, conduct and analyze larval transport simulations to quantify factors such as larval recruitment, retention and inter-estuarine exchange.

Freshwater dynamics will be combined with near-shore coastal hydrodynamic models to create a composite physical flow model for the ABSI region and beyond. Physiological data from oyster larvae (produced by the hatchery) will be incorporated into the physical oceanography model, to create a tool for estimating dispersal pathways and predicting connectivity among oyster populations. The final deliverable is an integrated model that combines habitat distribution, water flow and larval dispersal data to predict oyster recruitment patterns under different climatic regimes. Interim products include models of freshwater flows under management and climate scenarios, and hydrodynamic models of water flows into, around and out of the ABSI area.

Accomplishments during year 2

Dr. Leitman, has been using a Stella river-basin model, to define a range of freshwater flow scenarios under varying climatic regimes and management practices. Below is a summary of accomplishments since March 2020.

1. Completed the calibration of the ACF STELLA model with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) HEC Res Sim model under the current operating rules for the basin and received approval from ACOE head of reservoir operations.
2. Evaluated performance of the Water Control Manual under 100 different realizations of the historic climate and provided results to the ACOE.
3. Initiated work on two technical papers for publication: 1) the evaluation of the Water Control Manual under alternative realizations of the historic climate and 2) the extent which flows in the Apalachicola River and into Apalachicola Bay are driven by management of the ACF basin's storage reservoirs and by climate.
4. Defined riverine metrics to be used in modeling evaluations and initiated work on defining estuarine metrics to evaluate alternative operations of the ACF reservoir system, including the development of a web-based program to evaluate alternative operations.
5. Initiated evaluation of alternative operations of the ACF reservoir system.
6. Made several presentations on this project to the ABSI Community Advisory Board

Dr. Morey brought Dr. Xu Chen into the coastal hydrodynamic modeling project as a post-doctoral scientist in July 2020, initially through FSU and subsequently at Florida A&M University. Dr. Chen's focus has been on the tasks associated with the first project objective of configuring a hydrodynamic model, specifically, developing an improved bathymetry dataset and developing a refined grid version of FVCOM simulation. The refined versions of the hydrodynamic model have undergone testing for computational timing and preliminary assessment with observations.

The unconstructed mesh grids for the FVCOM simulations are generated based on high-resolution bathymetry from NOAA with modification from the UF team. The mesh is configured with high resolution near features such as coastlines, oyster habitats, ship channels, and steep bathymetry slopes. Bathymetry of river channels and distributaries south of Sumatra including the Brothers river are corrected using a 3m-resolution sonar data from recent river surveys in

2020 and 2021 obtained through collaboration with Jiahua Zhou, Ken Jones, and Scott Walls. Two versions of the model grid have been developed: one with a highly refined mesh to simulate flow through the river and distributaries entering Apalachicola Bay and another reducing the domain size and resolution to 30m for faster computational speed. This second domain runs fast enough to be used for scenario simulations with freshwater inputs parameterized for multiple distributary sources based on results from the higher resolution mesh and communication with Ken Jones. The simulation is nested within the Navy Research Laboratory HYCOM Gulf of Mexico nowcast/forecast system to provide initial conditions and boundary conditions with tides. Initial scenarios are being run with historical forcing (boundary, surface, and riverine flow) for assessment. At this time, all scheduled tasks have been completed for 2020 and work is currently focused on running and assessing model hindcasting, which is expected to be completed on schedule (end of July 2021)

Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

No significant discrepancies exist between proposed and actual deliverables for the freshwater modeling. For the coastal hydrodynamic model, Dr. Xu Chen was hired as a Research Associate (postdoc) at Florida A&M University on 9/4/20. Dr Chen was previously at FSU and began work on the ABSI project on 7/1/2020. The initial project schedule anticipated hiring this position on 1/1/2020. The delay was due to Dr. Chen, the leading candidate for the position, being committed to an existing project early in 2020 and subsequent delays in position creation and hiring due to COVID restrictions. The project is a little behind schedule on developing the oyster larvae modeling component, but that is expected to be ready for preliminary analysis by October 2021.

4. Monitoring of oyster communities and their environment

Intertidal oyster populations have received relatively little research and monitoring attention in the ABSI region. Consequently, we do not have a good understanding of the temporal and spatial dynamics of oyster populations in intertidal habitats or their contribution to overall larval supply. The ABSI intertidal monitoring plan involves collecting information that is similar to subtidal data collected by FWC. In combination these data sets will provide a comprehensive overview of oyster populations in the ABSI study area. Deliverables from this objective include (but are not limited to): 1) databases containing environmental data; 2) monitoring data (including recruitment rates, juvenile survival and growth, adult size and abundance, and incidence of predators, parasites, and diseases) from a series of intertidal locations throughout Franklin County.

The FWC oyster team surveys specific subtidal reef areas monthly using SCUBA and obtains density samples from these sites twice annually. This effort generates a valuable dataset that shows trends over time in the same locations but does not provide a broad view of the oyster population status across the Bay. In October 2020, ABSI partnered with a former Apalachicola oysterman to survey subtidal oyster reefs throughout Apalachicola Bay using small oyster tongs. This sampling approach is faster and can be done in more inclement conditions than SCUBA diving. These data will be used to guide placement of restoration experiments and guide ecological studies to understand the observed patterns of distribution

The ANERR has five YSI Exo2 data sondes deployed in Apalachicola Bay; these instruments collect *in situ* data on temperature (°C), salinity, conductivity (mS), dissolved oxygen (%, mg/L) pH, turbidity (NTU). To provide a broader spatial understanding of environmental conditions,

ABSI planned to deploy additional instruments of the same type. Data from all of these instruments will be used to interpret ecological data, and to inform and ground-truth the hydrodynamic model. These data will be made available to the public once we develop a platform to allow easy access.

Accomplishments during year 2

Intertidal oyster surveys

Intertidal oyster reef monitoring continued with only a short lapse in April 2020 due to covid-19 safety restrictions (Table 2). Four areas were repeatedly sampled for oyster size, reproductive condition, disease, and recruitment: Alligator Harbor (AH), Carrabelle River (CR), East Cover/East Slough (EC), and St. Vincent Island /Indian Lagoon (IL). Five sites at each area were sampled for a total of 20 sites. A total of 34 sampling trips were completed, representing wide spatial-temporal coverage. Oysters from each site were subsampled to measure disease prevalence and reproductive condition. In total, 142 oysters were tested and indicated that disease prevalence is low in intertidal oyster populations. 195 spat traps were deployed in conjunction with sampling efforts to estimate oyster recruitment. In November and December of 2020, all 20 reefs were sampled for oyster density, as well as the standard monthly sampling metrics. These density samples match those taken by FWC for the subtidal reefs.

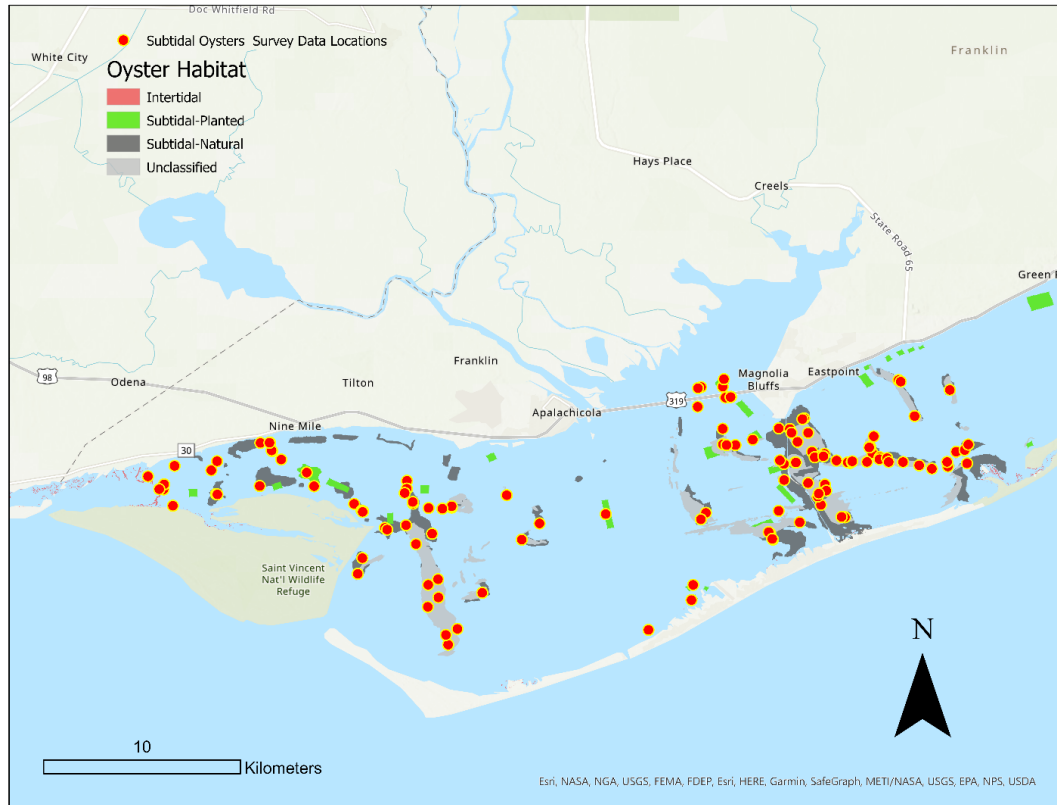
Table 2. *Intertidal monitoring sampling in Alligator Harbor (AH), Carrabelle River (CR), East Cover/East Slough (EC), and Indian Lagoon (IL) Sampling = collection of 15 oysters per site for condition index, reproduction and disease. Spat traps = monthly deployment/recovery to assess recruitment. *Density sampling occurred in addition to regularly scheduled sampling.*

| Sample Date | Site | Sample Date | Site |
|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| 3/10/20 | AH | 9/2/20 | AH |
| 3/10/20 | CR | 9/10/20 | IL |
| 3/30/20 | IL | 9/23/20 | CR |
| 5/13/20 | AH | 10/1/20 | EC |
| 5/20/20 | IL | 10/14/20 | AH |
| 5/27/20 | CR | 11/4/20 | IL* |
| 6/10/20 | EC | 11/19/20 | AH* |
| 6/16/20 | AH | 12/1/20 | CR* |
| 6/24/20 | EC | 12/10/20 | EC* |
| 6/24/20 | IL | 12/15/20 | IL |
| 7/1/20 | CR | 1/14/21 | AH |
| 7/8/20 | CR | 1/20/21 | CR |
| 7/8/20 | EC | 1/26/21 | IL |
| 7/22/20 | AH | 2/3/21 | EC |
| 7/29/20 | IL | 2/10/21 | AH |
| 8/12/20 | CR | 3/2/21 | CR |

Subtidal oyster surveys

The objectives of these surveys was to (1) prioritize areas for more detailed mapping efforts, (2) locate sites for oyster reef restoration experiments, (3) refine the current understanding of the extent of oyster reefs in Apalachicola Bay, and (4) detect patterns in live oyster density. Between 10/13/20 and 3/16/2021, 132 sites across Apalachicola Bay were surveyed between 10/13/20 and 3/16/2021 (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Map of subtidal reef survey locations.



At each station, six replicate single tong samples are taken from the bow, middle and stern of both sides of the vessel. The following parameters were recorded for each tong sample: volumes of total material, shell (non-living), live oysters and rock; numbers of spat (less than 25 mm), sub-legal oysters (25 mm – 75 mm), market-sized oysters (greater than 75mm), and boxes (dead, articulated shells). In addition, history of cultch planting and type of cultch (shell, limestone, fossil shell) planted. These subtidal surveys indicate that the current distribution of oysters populations in Apalachicola Bay is spatially patchy and sparse. There are very few areas that support market sized oysters, and those areas with significant numbers of live oysters were generally those that were recently planted (2017-2019) with limestone, particularly in the eastern part of the bay. ABSI is currently planning field experiments that will test and quantify these patterns with statistical certainty. Data collected during the subtidal surveys is being used in the site selection process. The subtidal sampling will continue monthly (or as weather allows) by

sampling a number (to be determined) of randomly selected locations over historical reef areas across the Bay. By visiting different sites each time, the data will provide an broad view of the status of oyster populations in the Bay over time.

In situ instrument deployment

ABSI has deployed six multiparameter sondes (YSI EXO2) strategically throughout Apalachicola Bay (Fig. 2) to address previously identified information gaps and provide a more complete overview of the ABS water quality parameters. Each instrument is equipped with sensors to collect hourly *in situ* data on temperature (°C), salinity, conductivity (mS), dissolved oxygen (%), mg/L pH, turbidity (NTU). Instruments were wrapped in copper tape and sensors surrounded by copper mesh cage to prevent fouling; however they will be examined bi-monthly for fouling. Data download and cleaning will also occur on this schedule and these data will be used to inform bio-physical modeling, GIS-based maps, and experimental ecology. ABSI will also contribute these data to collaborators such as ANERR, FWC and it will be made available to the public through a web-based platform.

Table 1. Summary of multiparameter sonde deployment dates and locations throughout the ABSI study area

| Deployment Date | Latitude | Longitude | Area/Site Description |
|------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 29 December 2020 | 29.63285 | -85.08116 | West Pass |
| 29 December 2020 | 29.68502 | -85.22139 | Indian Pass |
| 29 December 2020 | 29.72447 | -84.98046 | Apalachicola River |
| 29 December 2020 | 29.70725 | -85.11916 | St. Vincent Sound |
| 29 December 2020 | 29.72648 | -84.80716 | St. George Sound |
| 17 February 2021 | 29.62703 | -84.96905 | Sikes Cut |

Figure 2. Distribution of instruments (YSI EX02) deployed by the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR), Central Panhandle Aquatic Preserve (CPAP) and ABSI



Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

The April 2020 intertidal monitoring was omitted because of FSU Covid restrictions. Instrument deployment was delayed by ACOE permits and severe storms throughout the fall months of 2020

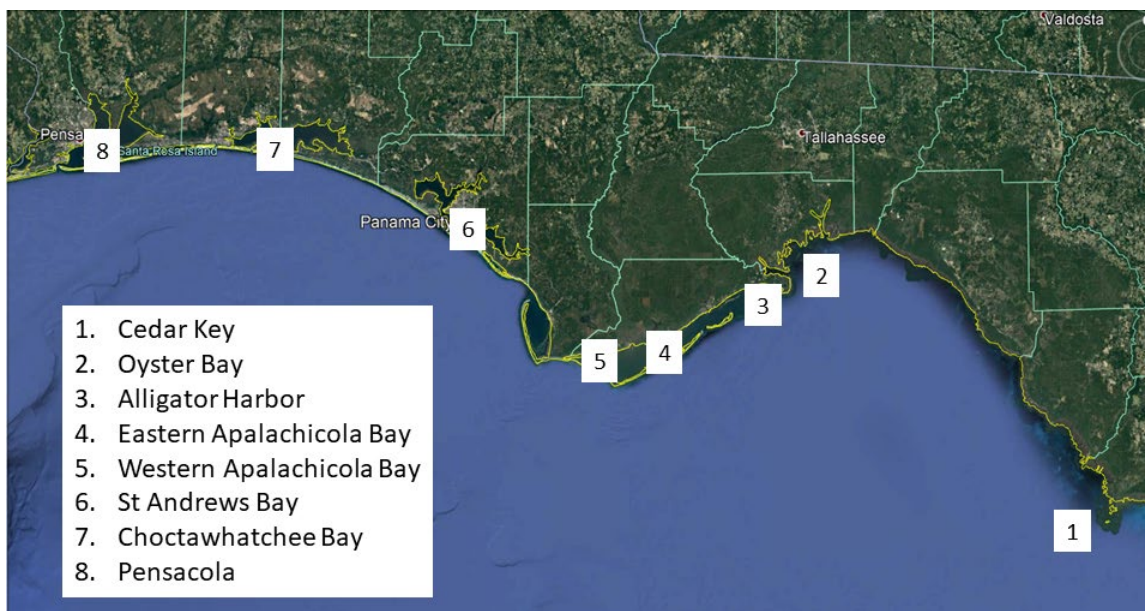
5. Oyster population genetic structure

Past research on population genetic structure of the eastern oyster indicated significant differentiation among sites across the Gulf of Mexico; for example, the northeast Gulf population (Anclote Keys to Mississippi River, approximately 800 km) is considered genetically different from the other regions of the Gulf. On a smaller scale, studies of oysters off North Carolina identified differences among populations north and south of the Pamlico Sound, a distance of less than 100 km. Population structure has not been studied within the northeastern Gulf of Mexico, but population differences are possible given the large number of embayments in the region. This component of the ABSI is intended to help identify distributions of oyster sub-populations, which has a number of important applications. Distinct sub-populations may have characteristics that enhance survival under particular environmental conditions, and thus could be used as different genetic lines of broodstock for restoration and aquaculture. With the expansion of aquaculture and importation of seed from elsewhere in the Gulf, it is important to understand local population structure so that genetic integrity (and therefore local adaptation) can be maintained. Analysis of population distribution will also help ground-truth connectivity predictions generated by the bio-physical model.

Accomplishments during year 2

This project was initiated in January 2021 through a contract with Dr. Amy Baco-Taylor, a population geneticist and faculty member within the Department of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences at FSU. This project will involve collecting a minimum of 30 samples from each of eight locations within and outside of the ABSI region (Fig. 3) The initial step of the processing for population genetics is extraction of DNA from each specimen to produce a genomic library. Microsatellites will be selected and amplified to provide initial data on population structure. An additional technique (RADSeq) will be explored to obtain higher resolution of relationships among populations and individuals. Sequences are analyzed with bioinformatic tools to reveal population genetic structure and connectivity among individuals. Expected completion of this work is December 2021.

Figure 3. *Sampling sites for oyster population genetic structure*



Genomic DNA has been successfully extracted from 182 oysters from sites 1, 3, 4 and 5. Of the available choices, 20 microsatellite loci were selected and tested on a small number of individuals, and 19 were considered suitable for further analyses. We are testing out the potential to multiplex PCR these loci and then will order appropriately labeled primers. The next step is mass-PCR of these markers in all individuals using the labeled primers. The RADSeq methods are also being explored as RADSeq methods are slightly more sensitive to population structure than microsatellites.

Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

This project was supposed to begin in the 4th quarter of year 1 (January 2020), but contract development was delayed because of personnel availability, then in March 2020, Covid restrictions prevented access to laboratories, which is critical for this research. Once restrictions were lifted sufficiently, the contract was established, and work began.

6. Experimental ecology

This category includes several projects that are designed to help understand the ABSI system, with a view to identifying and addressing specific ecological problems. These projects are described below; some are continuations from year 1, but most were initiated in year 2.

Habitat suitability model for eastern oysters in Apalachicola Bay

This project was initiated in year 1 and is being conducted by Adam Alfasso, a Ph.D. student at FSU. The overarching project objective is to create a series of habitat suitability models (HSM's) for the eastern oyster, specifically within Apalachicola Bay. These models will describe the distribution (or probability of presence) of oysters in the bay, and will represent: 1) current distribution using recently collected environmental data and oyster presence, 2) past distribution (before the fishery collapse to earliest reliable conditions), and 3) future distributions based on modeled hydrodynamic and sea level rise scenarios. The model outputs will be used to understand how suitable habitat distribution has changed over time, and what it might look like in the future in order to guide and inform restoration and management efforts.

Accomplishments during year 2

The past year was spent gathering and combining datasets from multiple sources for testing with the initial modeling technique MAXENT. This endeavor has highlighted the shortage of high-resolution datasets of most types within this region, a problem currently being addressed by multiple research efforts as part of the ABSI. The preliminary goal was to create a streamlined process for processing environmental data layers as the products became available, which was achieved, and to create new spatially explicit, higher resolution environmental datasets, which is progressing but still ongoing.

Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

None to report. This project is a PhD dissertation and the student is making good progress.

Apalachicola Bay food web and sediments: 1994-2020.

The principle investigator on this project is Dr. Jeff Chanton, a senior professor at FSU. The purpose of this research is to investigate changes to the Apalachicola Bay food web and carbon cycle with respect to a previous study conducted in the mid to late 1990's (Chanton and Lewis, 2002). The earlier study examined and quantified the relative importance of terrestrial versus marine carbon inputs to the bay. The goal the current study is to test the hypothesis that the bay has shifted rely more upon marine inputs relative to terrestrial carbon inputs due to waning freshwater delivery to the bay. Both studies rely upon variations in ^{13}C and ^{34}S values of the various pools examined. The values differ according to the relative inputs of marine and terrestrial carbon, with marine inputs being enriched in ^{13}C and ^{34}S while terrestrial inputs are depleted in ^{13}C and ^{34}S . The earlier study collected samples during periods of generally low river flow (September-November) and high river flow (April-June), to compare influence of seasonality on isotopic signatures. The current study is targeting a sub-set of the previous extensive sampling regime, and is focused on ^{13}C , ^{15}N and ^{34}S signatures in plankton, sediments,

fishes and oysters. These different components of the system will provide an indication of whether the system has shifted since the 1990's

Accomplishments during year 2

Collections of oysters and fishes was completed from similar locations to the previous study (Dry Bar and Hotel Bar) in the fall dry period, as well as plankton tow samples from similar locations as previously. Sediment samples (31) were collected from several north-south transects, from East Bay to across Dry Bar to compare to the earlier study values. Isotopic results indicate no shift in $d^{13}C$ that would be indicative of a decline in terrestrial inputs to the bay in either sediment or plankton samples. Fish and oyster sample analysis is in progress, and another series of samples are scheduled for collection in April 2021.

Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

Due to permitting issues, collection of some of the fish species was delayed until later in the season, and some of the target species are less available in the Bay during the colder months. However, enough species were available in sufficient numbers to conduct the analysis.

Analysis of fish communities in Apalachicola Bay

This study used long-term monitoring data collected monthly by the FWC Fishery-Independent Monitoring Program to investigate spatial and temporal changes in finfish community structure in Apalachicola Bay and St. George Sound. The overarching objective was to determine whether annual river flow rates, or other environmental factors, are drivers of the observed patterns of community structure. These data were also used to determine whether there were serial changes in communities from 2001 to 2018 that might indicate a decline in 'health' of the Bay. The data set includes three gear types (21 m haul seine, 183 m haul seine, and 6 m otter trawl), and 175 species of fishes and commercially-important invertebrates such as blue crabs and shrimp.

Accomplishments during year 2

All analyses for this project have been conducted and a manuscript draft is in its second round of revisions with coauthors at FSUCML and FWC. The manuscript will be submitted for peer review by the end of April. Results of this study suggest evidence of changes in communities that may be related to drought/wet years, but that communities tend to rebound following these perturbed states. Fish communities in Apalachicola are seasonal and mediated primarily by temperature, and there are spatial differences in communities along gradients of salinity and water clarity. While direct effects of annual river flow rates were relatively low in our quantitative analyses, our results suggest fish communities in Apalachicola Bay and St. George are mediated by freshwater inputs which maintain spatial salinity regimes and gradients important in structuring through assemblages.

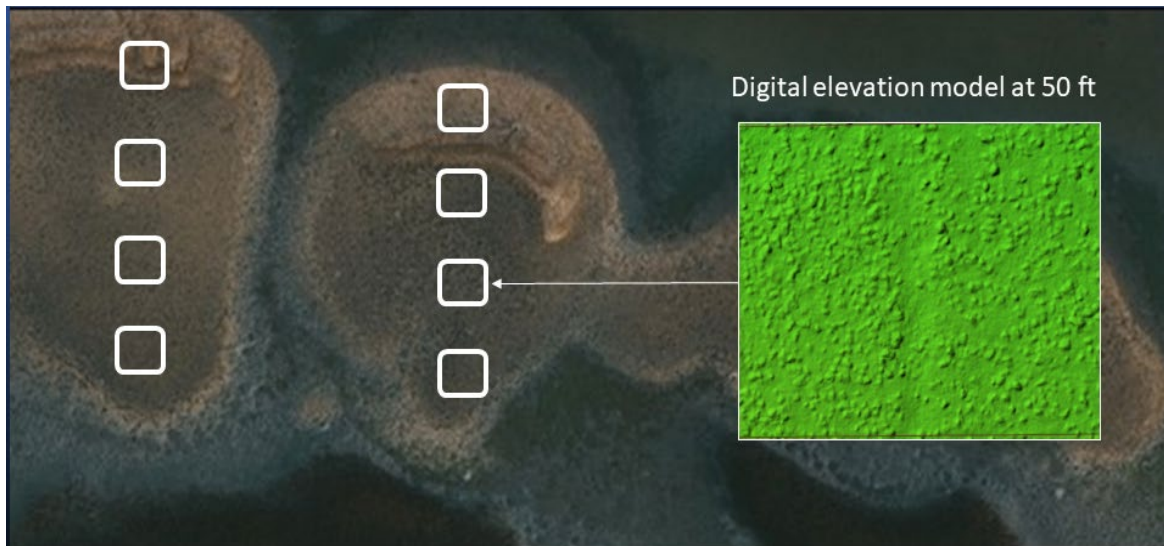
Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

The project was due for completion by the end of 2020; however delays in obtaining data and dealing with additional statistical analyses recommended by internal reviewers have set the manuscript submission date back.

Intertidal habitat dynamics

This project is part of a MSc thesis for Jenny Bueno, an FSU graduate student who joined the ABSI team in September 2020. Jenny is a certified drone pilot and her work builds on the earlier drone data collected by Duke University in year 1. This study aims to use UAS (unoccupied aerial systems), also known as drones, to obtain remotely sensed data at intertidal oyster reefs in Apalachicola Bay, FL. Drones are a low-cost, repeatable, and timely method of obtaining high-resolution imagery (Windle et al., 2019). The imagery is then processed using a photogrammetric software that detects similar features between each image to create a point cloud. The point cloud is then used to create digital elevation models (DEMs) and orthomosaics. The DEM is a raster that is georeferenced and contains elevation data (Fig. 4). The orthomosaic is an image mosaicked together from the collected imagery, free from distortion. These products will be used to look at the condition of the reefs. Some of the variables that can be assessed using DEMs include reef-height and rugosity. Reef-height can indicate whether there is reef accretion or erosion over time, and rugosity can be used to evaluate surface complexity, which is indicative of higher live oyster presence (Rodney & Paynter 2006). These variables will be analyzed to assess spatial and temporal dynamics of oyster populations on intertidal reefs. Using remote sensing techniques is an alternative way to assess the condition and distribution of marine ecosystems. It is more cost-effective than in-person sampling and reduces habitat impact

Figure 4. *Orthomosaic of an intertidal reef in Alligator Harbor, created from drone imagery. Inset is a digital elevation model of a sub-sample of the reef. White squares represent quadrats placed on the reef to ground-truth the drone images.*



Accomplishments during year 2

Test flights have been conducted over several intertidal reefs to determine optimal flight height to generate images of sufficient resolution for analysis.

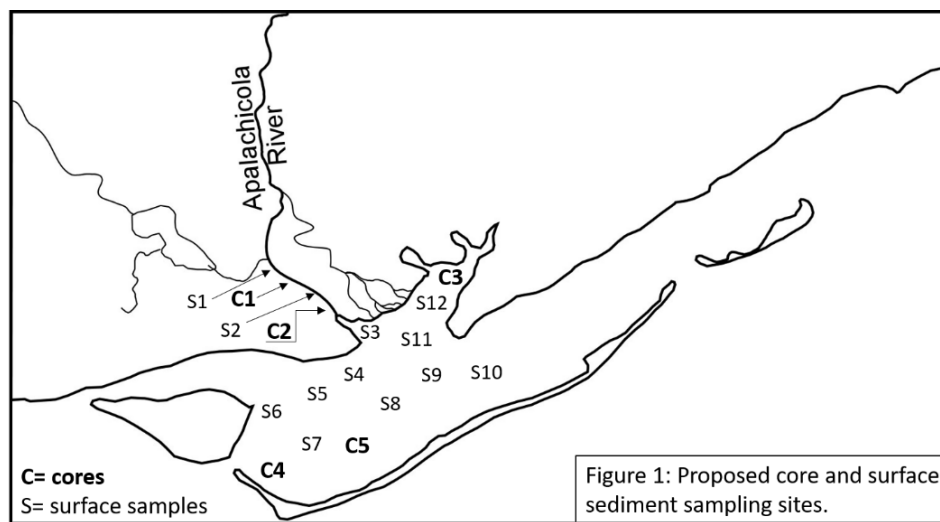
Discrepancies between proposed and actual deliverables

None to report

Pollutant distribution in Apalachicola Bay

In 2020, local community members expressed concerns that pollutants may be entering the Bay from upriver anthropogenic and natural sources. Shellfish can bioaccumulate some pollutants, such as heavy metals, creating a human health as well as ecological concern, and aquatic invertebrates are highly sensitive to some pesticides. In an earlier study (Apeti et al 2005), concentrations of 5 heavy metals (Copper, Zinc, Chromium, Cadmium and Lead) were measured in sediment from 6 locations within Apalachicola Bay, and a study of pesticides (organochlorines, organophosphates, Chlorinated phenoxy-acid, and polychlorinated bipenyls) in Apalachicola River sediments (Elder and Matraw 1984) showed levels lower than would be hazardous to aquatic animals. These studies will serve as ‘baseline’ comparisons for new data. In early March 2021, ABSI subcontracted Dr. Michael Martinez-Colon from FAMU in a collaborative effort to understand the concentration and distribution of 5 metals/metalloids (Copper, Zinc, Nickel, Arsenic, Selenium), and 7 pesticides (Aldrin, Dieldrin, Endosulfan, heptachlor, Methoxychlor, Chlordane, DDT) in Apalachicola Bay sediments. Samples include surface sediments (12) to examine contemporary levels and sediment cores (5) to examine historical conditions. Sampling locations are shown in figure 4

Figure 4. Sediment sampling locations for heavy metal and pesticide analysis across Apalachicola Bay. S1-12 = surface grabs, C1-5 = core samples.



Progress to date

Samples have been collected and processing is ongoing

7. Targeted outreach to the community

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a necessary adaptation in the ABSI outreach and engagement efforts. However, amidst travel restrictions and limited in-person meetings, ABSI’s engagement with the public and local stakeholders not only survived but thrived. These engagement endeavors include (but are not limited to) the continuation of the Community Advisory Board, the development of an Outreach and Education Subcommittee and Successor Group Subcommittee, creation of a bi-monthly ABSI newsletter, partnership and

participation with local organizations to host virtual events, and an expanded website that houses research data and educational materials.

Accomplishments in Year 2

Community Advisory Board

The Community Advisory Board (CAB), led by *Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium* (FCRC) Consensus Center facilitators Jeff Blair and Robert Jones (ret. Jan 2021), has continued to flourish. The over-arching objective of the CAB is to develop and agree on overall ABSI goals, objectives, and timelines; to seek consensus on actions and options informed by science for restoring the health of the Apalachicola Bay ecosystem; and agree on an overall management and restoration plan for the Apalachicola Bay system. The 23 CAB members* represent local stakeholders, including watermen, local, state, and federal government officials and business owners, seafood and recreational fishing industry workers, and environmental groups.

**Due to time commitment issues, a few Board members stepped down and were replaced with members of similar stakeholder organizations.*

Community Advisory Board Membership summary

Agency personnel: Lee Edmiston (*Retired*) - Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, Former Reserve Manager; Jim Estes* - Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission Division of Marine Fisheries, Department Deputy Director; Tom Frazer - Chief Science Officer for the State of Florida; Jenna Harper - Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, Reserve Manager; Erik Lovestrand - Florida Sea Grant, Extension Director for Franklin County; Alex Reed - Florida Department of the Environment, Director of Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection; Portia Sapp - Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Aquaculture, Director; Paul Thurman - Northwest Florida Water Management District, Environmental Scientist

Local government: Anita Grove - Apalachicola City Commissioner; Ricky Jones - Franklin County Commissioner

Local business: Chuck Marks - Acentria Insurance, Vice President; Mike O'Connell - Saint George Island Civic Club, 2025 Vision; Steve Rash - Water Street Seafood, Owner; John Solomon - Apalachicola Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director; Denita Sassor – Outlaw Oyster Company, Co-Founder

Non-governmental organizations: Georgia Ackerman - Apalachicola Riverkeeper, Executive Director; Chad Hanson - PEW Charitable Trusts, Fisheries Science and Policy Analyst

Non-profit organizations: Frank Gidus - CCA Florida, Director of Habitat & Environmental Restoration; Chadwick Taylor - Riparian County Stakeholder Coalition

Watermen: Chip Bailey - Peregrine Charters, Owner; Shannon Hartsfield - Waterman, Franklin County Seafood Workers Association; Roger Mathis - Waterman, R.D.'s Seafood; TJ Ward - Buddy Ward & Sons Seafood

**Jim Estes will be replaced by Alan Pierce, Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission Division of Marine Fisheries in May 2021*

The ABSI CAB web page contains detailed information on the CAB membership (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/people/community-advisory-board/>).

Development of Outreach and Community Engagement Subcommittee

Following the July 16th CAB meeting, a subcommittee of interested CAB members and ABSI project leaders met to discuss outreach and community engagement strategies. The Outreach and Community Engagement subcommittee was then formally formed in an effort to dedicate more time outside of regular CAB meetings to implementing outreach initiatives and events for the local community.

Subcommittee Meeting Dates:

August 4, 2020; November 19, 2020; December 15, 2020; January 20, 2021; March 2, 2021.
(Agendas/Minutes found here: <https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/cab/cab-subcoms>)

Members of the Outreach and Community Engagement Subcommittee:

FSU: Felicia Coleman (ret. Dec. 2020), Sandra Brooke, and outreach assistant, Maddie Mahood

ABSI CAB: Chad Hanson (Chair), The Pew Charitable Trusts; Georgia Ackerman, Apalachicola Riverkeeper; Anita Grove, Apalachicola City Commissioner, Michael O'Connell, St. George Island Civic Club, 2025 Vision.

Initiatives developed by this committee:

- Development and distribution of a bi-monthly ABSI Newsletter (via email). Following each Community Advisory Board meeting, a newsletter is created summarizing the progress of the CAB, ABSI research updates, and upcoming events and education opportunities. The ABSI Newsletter email list currently has ~315 subscribers. Previous issues can be found here: (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/commengage/newsletterarchive/>)
- Development of a media distribution plan for the ABSI newsletter and additional updates
 - Every ABSI update and newsletter are posted on Florida State University Coastal and Marine Laboratory's social media outlets: Facebook (@FSUCML), Twitter (@FSUMarineLab) and Instagram (@fsumarinelab)
 - Initiated relationship with Michael Allen, Oyster Radio; Petra Shuff, Wakulla Chamber of Commerce; and Lisa Munson, Carrabelle Chamber of Commerce. Each of these organizations share the ABSI newsletter on their respective Facebook pages,
 - Subcommittee members share with their respective organizations' social media pages and newsletters, including Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, Apalachicola Riverkeeper, Apalachicola City Commission, Franklin County Commission, Wakulla Citizens group, Focus on Franklin County, as well their individual social media accounts.
- Development of public workshops are slated to begin in late April/May 2021. With spring weather moving in, the Subcommittee has brainstormed presenting to smaller public groups in an effort to maintain COVID-19 safety precautions and social distancing. The Subcommittee is currently finalizing plans to present to the St. George Island Civic Club.
- Participation in local virtual events and panels (see ***Virtual Events***)

Development of Successor Group Subcommittee

Following the November 12th CAB meeting, a Successor Group Subcommittee was formed in an effort to ensure the continuation of the work of the ABSI/CAB. The purpose of this Subcommittee is to develop a strategy to form a permanent, representative stakeholder successor group to advocate for the adoption and implementation of the restoration plan.

Subcommittee Meeting Dates:

February 2, 2021; February 23, 2021 (Agendas/Minutes found here: <https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/cab/cab-subcoms/>)

Members of the Successor Group Subcommittee:

FSU: Joel Trexler

ABSI CAB: Georgia Ackerman (Co-chair), Apalachicola Riverkeeper; Shannon Hartsfield (Co-chair), Apalachicola Seafood Workers Association; Jim Estes, FWC; Anita Grove, Apalachicola City Commission; Chad Hanson, PEW Charitable Trusts; Ricky Jones, Franklin County Commission, District 1; Steve Rash, Water Street Seafood; Chadwick Taylor, Riparian County Stakeholder Coalition.

CAB Meetings

All meetings since May 22, 2020 have been held virtually via Zoom. Documents from each meeting have been posted on CAB website, including meeting agendas, copies of meeting presentations, meeting summaries, and meeting video and audio recordings. (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/cab/absi-cab-documents/>)

May 22, 2020 presentations: 1) Overview of Oyster Management (J Estes, FWC), 2) FWRI Oyster Monitoring and Restoration Efforts in Apalachicola Bay (M Parker, FWRI Oyster Program), 3) MK Ranch Hydrologic Restoration (D James, Ducks Unlimited), 4) Lake Wimico (L Stevens, The Nature Conservancy)

July 16, 2020 presentations: 1) Oyster Modeling Demonstration (E Camp, UF), 2) Oyster Habitat Suitability Model (L Geselbracht, The Nature Conservancy and ABSI Science Advisory Board)

September 9, 2020 presentations: 1) The Role of the CAB and Scope of the Project (F Coleman, FSU), 2) CAB Outreach Subcommittee Report (F Coleman, FSU), 3) Apalachicola Bay Wild Oyster Harvesting Closure Briefing (M Norberg, FWC), 4) Model Status Update (E Camp, FSU)

October 15, 2020 presentations: 1) FWC Update on Apalachicola Bay Closure (J Estes, FWC), 2) Contrasts in Apalachicola River Discharge Create Opportunities for Learning (B Pine, UF and ABSI Science Advisory Board), 3) Update on Freshwater Inflow Modeling for ABSI (S Leitman, FSU)

November 12, 2020 presentations: 1) ABSI Science Update and Model Development (S Brooke, FSU), 2) ABSI-NFWF Shared Components and Restoration Schedule (F Coleman, FSU and J Estes, FWC)

January 13, 2021 presentations: 1) ABSI Science and Data Collection Update (S Brooke, FSU), 2) Apalachicola Bay Wild Oyster Harvesting Closure Update (J Estes, FWC), 3) Overview of

Apalachicola Bay Mapping Project (R Grizzle, Univ. of New Hampshire and ABSI Science Advisory Board)

February 24, 2021 presentations: 1) ABSI Science Update (S Brooke, FSU) 2) Apalachicola Bay Oyster Monitoring Program (M Davis, FWC), 3) Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program (M Posner and D Killorn, PPBEP)

Oystermen's Workshop

In an effort to involve the local community in ABSI management and restoration discussions, the ABSI held its first Oystermen's Workshop on December 2, 2020 at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR). To abide by COVID-19 safety guidelines, eight oystermen were invited to attend in-person, along with the ABSI project leads and facilitator, Jeff Blair. The members of the Community Advisory Board and public were invited to view the meeting via Zoom. The purpose of the workshop was to hear from oysterman on suitable locations and materials for restoration and on management alternatives. A recording of the meeting and full summary report can be found here:

(https://marinelab.fsu.edu/media/4626/absi_oystermen_workshop_summary_report_2-dec-2020.pdf)

In-Person Attendees:

Oystermen: Michael Carmichael, Michael Dasher, Ronnie Gilbert, Shannon Hartsfield*, Brett Lolley, Roger Mathis*, Coy Shiver, Wayne Williams

ABSI Representation: Sandra Brooke, ABSI Principal Investigator; Joel Trexler, ABSI Co-Principal Investigator, Anita Grove*, Apalachicola City Commission

FCRC Consensus Center: Jeff Blair

*Members of the Community Advisory Board

A second Oystermen's Workshop will be held on Monday, April 15th at ANERR with the same COVID-19 safety guidelines in place.

Virtual Events

COVID-19 prompted a sharp increase in virtual webinars and presentations, and the ABSI has been fortunate to partner with local organizations to spread word of the project's progress and overall purpose. (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi/commengage/aboutoyster/absi-events/>)

WFSU Perspectives – January 28, 2021

- Community Advisory Board members Georgia Ackerman, executive director Apalachicola Riverkeeper; Sandra Brooke, FSU Coastal and Marine Lab; Jim Estes, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission fisheries researcher; Anita Grove, Apalachicola City Commissioner; Shannon Hartsfield, 4th generation Franklin County seafood worker; and Ricky Jones, chair, Franklin County Commission joined host Tom

Flanigan to talk about the Apalachicola Bay System Initiative, and what factors are impacting the loss of Apalachicola's world-famous oysters?

Apalachicola City Commission Meeting – February 2, 2021

- Sandra Brooke presented an update on the progress of ABSI to the Apalachicola City Commission. The presentation was well received and ABSI has agreed to present an update at the Commission meetings every couple of months.

ANERR Virtual Symposium – February 18 – 19, 2021

- ANERR hosted a two-day virtual science symposium free to the public to highlight all the research projects currently being conducted in the Apalachicola Bay System. Several different members of the Community Advisory Board and ABSI research teams presented their research.

ANERR Virtual SciCafé: Apalachicola Bay System Initiative – February 25, 2021

- Sandra Brooke provided an overview of ABSI and its purpose in partnership with ANERR's Virtual SciCafé series. Attendees (62) represented a broad cross-section of stakeholder groups (fishermen, business owners, NGOs, state agencies, etc.)

ABSI Website/Online Engagement

The ABSI has worked to improve the availability of information on the ABSI website. Information on research progress, Community Advisory Board meetings and documents, ABSI leadership and staff, and educational materials are present and updated on a regular basis. ABSI is trying new approaches to creating engaging outreach material. The use of ArcGIS StoryMaps is becoming increasingly popular as it is an effective community outreach tool. This interactive web-based map application allows the creator to display GIS-based maps with narrative text and other multimedia content in a dynamic format, and present complex analyses and concepts in a user-friendly format. ABSI has begun to create ArcGIS StoryMaps which will be published to the ABSI website.

Recently developed educational materials include:

- Historic timeline of the Apalachicola Bay System created via ArcGIS StoryMap (<https://cosspp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=c015817d93104f7fb7cbc35ae0a993cf>)
- Oyster Life Cycle animation (<https://youtu.be/-yw2euo1Bo4>)
- No Shell Left Behind: Bringing Shell Recycling Back to Franklin County report (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/media/4580/no-shell-left-behind.pdf>) and ArcGIS StoryMap (<https://cosspp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=e31ec37e7a574e229907f470254350d8>)
- A Historical Oyster Map is in its final development stages and will be published on the website by mid-April. This will take users through a timeline of the ABS and encourage them to interact with maps that will display how the system has changed over time regarding water quality parameters and oyster coverage. Included GIS maps will dynamically display historic

oyster coverage and planted areas (1930-1985), river flow data (1999 – current), water quality data (1999 – current), and current oyster distributions from ABSI sampling. Each layer will have a time feature that will allow the user to scroll through time and see how each map changes throughout the years and will be accompanied by other supporting multimedia.

Shell Recycling Program

An assessment of the feasibility of developing a successful shell recycling program for Franklin County has been completed (*See No Shell Left Behind report above*). Staff at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (ANERR) and the Conservation Corps of the Forgotten and Emerald Coasts are in the process of developing an OysterCorps Pilot Program for oyster recycling in Franklin, Gulf and Bay counties with the Northwest Florida Water Management District and The Nature Conservancy's GulfCorps Program. ABSI and the Florida State University Coastal & Marine Laboratory (FSUCML) were invited to join them as a partner in November 2020. ABSI's Hatchery Manager, Joe Rocco, and Hatchery Technician, Shannon Kirk, have been working with the program managers to initiate the next steps of program implementation.

ABSI personnel changes in Year 2

ABSI Leadership

In December 2020, Dr. Coleman (Co-PI) retired from FSU and no longer works on the ABSI. In early 2021, Dr. Trexler moved to the FSUCML to take over as Director of the Marine Lab and he also replaced Dr. Coleman as project Co-PI. In January 2021, Dr. Ostrander stepped down as Vice President for Research to become a faculty member in the College of Medicine, but he remains engaged in the ABSI.

Additional Technicians

- *Eve Moore*. Works part time on ABSI to help with field-work and lab processing
- *Shannon Kirk*. Hatchery technician hired in August 2020 to help with hatchery operations
- *Kevin Englebert*. Partly funded by ABSI, hired in October 2020 as technician to Dr. Josh Breithaupt, ABSI research faculty

Additional FSU graduate students

- *Adam Alfasso*, Ph.D., Earth Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences: Predictive Habitat Modeling for oyster communities in the ABS
- *Jenny Bueno*, MSc Geography: Use of drones in assessment of intertidal oyster reefs
- *Emily Fuqua*, Ph.D Biological Sciences: Understanding mechanisms and drivers of heritability of phenotypic traits in the eastern oyster

ABSI Research Faculty

Dr. Josh Breithaupt (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/people/faculty/breithaupt/>) joined the FSUCML on August 10th, 2020 as a member of the ABSI team. His research focuses on carbon, nutrients and sediment dynamics, and how these can be used to understand health and change in coastal

ecosystems. In the past six months he has begun work on several projects relevant to understanding ecosystem health and functioning in the Apalachicola Bay system:

- One of the uncertainties about oyster reef communities in the bay is the durability and fate of oyster shell. Dr. Breithaupt is initiating a system-wide research effort to quantify the rates of oyster shell dissolution in intertidal and subtidal habitats.
- A second project, related to the first, is examining sediment organic matter dynamics throughout the Bay. Sediment samples have been collected from the bottom of the Bay and analyzed for sediment organic matter and calcium carbonate content. These results are being compared with a similar mapping effort that was published in 1963. Additional work will be done to collect pore-water pH and microbial respiration measurements to determine the extent to which benthic sediment organic matter content is changing and whether it is influencing corresponding changes in bottom-water corrosivity for oyster shell.
- Dr. Breithaupt has begun work with collaborators at the Apalachicola NERR, the University of South Florida, the University of Florida, and Auburn university to document temporal differences in sediment accumulation as well as retention of C, N, and P in the wetlands on the barrier islands. Specific attention is being given to changes in riverine influence on sediment deposition in the past century, as well as climate-driven habitat shifts from saltmarsh to mangroves. Results of this work will be important for quantifying the carbon and nutrient stocks and sequestration rates over time.
- A separate, but similar project involves partnering with the ANERR in their monitoring of surface sediment accretion and elevation change in freshwater and saline wetlands. This project will be comparing short-term data (sub-decadal timescale) with centennial timescale records of sediment accumulation and vertical accretion to identify how these coastlines have responded to changing hydrology in the past and how they may respond to sea level rise.

Dr. Andrew Shantz (<https://marinelab.fsu.edu/people/faculty/shantz/>) joined the ABSI research team a month ago (February 15th, 2021), and is still organizing his office and lab. His research merges principles from physiological and community ecology to understand how environmental change impacts the structure and resilience of coastal ecosystems. He uses hypothesis-driven field and lab-based experiments, behavioral studies, and meta-analytical syntheses to explore how changing conditions impact species' physiology and in turn, the cascading consequences for the ecosystems in which they live. Two of the major questions he is interested in addressing are:

- How do anthropogenic forces alter important species interactions, such as herbivory, predation, competition, and facilitation?
- What effects do these changing biotic interactions have on ecosystem function and resilience?

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STATE OF FLORIDA AUDITOR GENERAL

Operational Audit

Report No. 2021-137
February 2021

TRIUMPH GULF COAST, INC.



Sherrill F. Norman, CPA
Auditor General

Board of Directors and Executive Director of Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.

Section 288.8013, Florida Statutes, establishes Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. (Triumph) as a nonprofit corporation that is not a unit or entity of State Government. Section 288.8014, Florida Statutes, provides for Triumph to be governed by a seven-member Board of Directors (Board). The Board is to include three private sector members appointed by the Governor, the Attorney General, and the Chief Financial Officer, respectively, two private sector members appointed by the President of the Senate, and two private sector members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. One of the two Board members appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives must represent one of the four least populous disproportionately affected counties.

During the period July 2019 through June 2020, Susan Skelton served as Executive Director of Triumph and the following individuals served as Board members:

| | |
|--|--|
| Governor Appointee: | Lewis Bear, Jr. |
| Attorney General Appointee: | Pam Dana |
| Chief Financial Officer Appointee: | Stephen Riggs, IV, Treasurer |
| President of the Senate Appointees: | Allan Bense, Vice Chair Matt Terry from August 13, 2019 |
| Speaker of the House of Representatives Appointees: | Don Gaetz, Chair Benjamin Lee |

The team leader was William Karalius, CPA, and the audit was supervised by Christi Alexander, CPA.

Please address inquiries regarding this report to Christi Alexander, CPA, Audit Manager, by e-mail at christialexander@aud.state.fl.us or by telephone at (850) 412-2786.

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State of Florida Auditor General

Claude Pepper Building, Suite G74 · 111 West Madison Street · Tallahassee, FL 32399-1450 · (850) 412-2722

TRIUMPH GULF COAST, INC.

SUMMARY

This operational audit of Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. (Triumph) focused on the administration of Triumph project and program awards and selected administrative activities. The audit also included a follow-up on the finding noted in our report No. 2020-057. Our audit disclosed the following:

Finding 1: Security controls over mobile device utilization continue to need improvement to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of Triumph data and information technology (IT) resources.

BACKGROUND

The Gulf Coast Economic Corridor Act¹ (Act) established Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. (Triumph) effective May 17, 2013, as a nonprofit corporation that is not a unit or entity of State Government to administer the funds to be used for the economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the areas impacted by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.²

State law³ specifies that 75 percent of the funds received by the State pursuant to the settlement agreement⁴ with the BP entities must be deposited into a trust account established by Triumph and that at least 40 percent of the funds received by the State before July 1, 2017, are to be allocated equally among the eight disproportionately affected counties (Bay, Escambia, Franklin, Gulf, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Wakulla).⁵ State law⁶ provides that Triumph administrative costs may not exceed 0.75 percent of the funds released to Triumph and that the annual salaries of employees and contracted staff may not exceed \$130,000 and associated benefits may not exceed 35 percent of salary.

Triumph is authorized⁷ to hire or contract for all staff necessary to properly execute its powers and duties to implement the requirements of the Act. According to Triumph records, as of June 2020, Triumph employed an Executive Director and utilized four independent contractors to carry out Triumph's responsibilities. During the period July 2019 through June 2020, Triumph paid salary and benefit expenses totaling \$383,155.

Pursuant to State law,⁸ Triumph is responsible for: responsibly and prudently managing all funds received; ensuring funds are used in accordance with all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements; administering the awards program created by the Act; and operating in a transparent

¹ Chapter 2013-39, Laws of Florida. Codified in Sections 288.80 and 288.8011 through 288.8018, Florida Statutes.

² On April 20, 2010, the oil rig Deepwater Horizon exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, resulting in an 87-day oil spill that impacted the coasts of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

³ Section 288.8013(2), Florida Statutes.

⁴ Section 288.8012(4), Florida Statutes, specifies that the settlement agreement is the agreement entitled, "Settlement Agreement Between the Gulf States and the BP Entities with Respect to Economic and Other Claims Arising from the *Deepwater Horizon* Incident," entered into on October 5, 2015.

⁵ Section 288.8013(2)(b)2., Florida Statutes, specifies that at least 32 percent of settlement agreement funds received after July 1, 2017, are to be allocated equally among the eight disproportionately affected counties.

⁶ Section 288.8013(2)(d) and (3), Florida Statutes.

⁷ Section 288.8014(9), Florida Statutes.

⁸ Section 288.8016, Florida Statutes.

manner, including providing public access to information, notice of meetings, awards, and the status of projects and programs. State law⁹ requires Triumph to make awards from available funds to projects or programs that meet the priorities for economic recovery, diversification, and enhancement of the disproportionately affected counties, including projects or programs that:

- Provide ad valorem tax rate reductions.
- Meet local match requirements for rural infrastructure projects.¹⁰
- Construct, expand, or maintain public infrastructure.
- Establish and maintain equipment and trained personnel for local action plans to respond to disasters.
- Prepare students for future occupations and careers at K-20 institutions.
- Provide participants with transferable, sustainable workforce skills that are not confined to a single employer.
- Promote and advertise tourism and Fresh From Florida and promote workforce and infrastructure.

Triumph awards may not finance 100 percent of any project or program, and contracts executed with an awardee must include provisions for a performance report on contracted activities, account for the proper use of awarded funds, and permit the recovery of awards in the event the award was based on fraudulent information or the awardee is not meeting performance requirements.¹¹ State law¹² specifies that Triumph is to monitor, review, and annually evaluate awardees' projects and programs to determine whether an award should be continued, terminated, reduced, or increased.

State law¹³ requires Triumph to establish an application procedure for awards and a scoring process to select projects and programs that have the potential to generate increased economic activity in the disproportionately affected counties. Accordingly, Triumph created the *Application for Funds Form* for applicants to include a detailed description of the proposed project or program, including the requested funding. According to Triumph records, during the period July 2019 through June 2020, Triumph received 11 *Application for Funds Forms* and approved 10 awards totaling \$13,096,586.

FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding 1: Mobile Device Security Controls

Security controls are intended to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data and information technology (IT) resources. Our audit procedures disclosed that certain security controls related to mobile device¹⁴ utilization continue to need improvement. We are not disclosing specific details

⁹ Section 288.8017(1), Florida Statutes.

¹⁰ Section 288.0655(2)(e), Florida Statutes.

¹¹ Section 288.8017(3) and (4), Florida Statutes.

¹² Section 288.8016(3), Florida Statutes.

¹³ Section 288.8017(2), Florida Statutes.

¹⁴ Mobile devices are portable devices, such as laptop computers, smartphones, and tablets, that allow storage and transmittal of entity data.

of the issues in this report to avoid the possibility of compromising Triumph data and IT resources. However, we have notified appropriate Triumph management of the specific issues.

Without appropriate security controls related to the use of mobile devices by Triumph management, Board members, and contracted employees, the risk is increased that the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of Triumph data and IT resources may be compromised. A similar finding was communicated to Triumph management in connection with our report No. 2020-057 (Finding 1).

Recommendation: We again recommend that Triumph enhance certain security controls related to Triumph management, Board member, and contracted employee use of mobile devices to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of Triumph data and IT resources.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The Auditor General conducts operational audits to provide the Legislature, Florida's citizens, public entity management, and other stakeholders unbiased, timely, and relevant information for use in promoting accountability and stewardship and improving operations.

We conducted this operational audit from July 2020 through December 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

This operational audit of Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. (Triumph) focused on the administration of Triumph project and program awards and selected administrative activities. For those areas, the objectives of the audit were to:

- Evaluate management's performance in establishing and maintaining internal controls, including controls designed to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse, and in administering responsibilities in accordance with applicable laws, administrative rules, contracts, grant agreements, and other guidelines.
- Examine internal controls designed and placed into operation to promote and encourage the achievement of management's control objectives in the categories of compliance, economic and efficient operations, the reliability of records and reports, and the safeguarding of assets, and identify weaknesses in those internal controls.
- Determine whether management had corrected, or was in the process of correcting, the deficiency disclosed in our report No. 2020-057.
- Identify statutory and fiscal changes that may be recommended to the Legislature pursuant to Section 11.45(7)(h), Florida Statutes.

In planning and conducting our audit, we assessed whether internal controls were significant to our audit objectives by considering the internal control integrated framework established by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations (COSO)¹⁵ and adapted for a government environment within the *Standards*

¹⁵ The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations (COSO) of the Treadway Commission was established in 1985 to develop guidance in the areas of risk and control which enable good organizational governance and reduction of fraud. Pursuant to their mission, COSO developed a framework for internal control that consists of five components and 17 underlying principles.

for *Internal Control in the Federal Government* issued by the United States Government Accountability Office. That framework is illustrated in the following table.

COSO Internal Control Integrated Framework

| Internal Control Component | Description | Underlying Principles (To be Applied by the Triumph Board and Triumph Management) |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Control Environment | Standards, processes, and structures that provide the basis for carrying out internal control across the organization. Represents the foundation on which an effective internal control system is built. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate commitment to integrity and ethical values. • Exercise oversight responsibility. • Establish structures and reporting lines and assign authorities and responsibilities. • Demonstrate commitment to a competent workforce. • Hold individuals accountable for their responsibilities. |
| Risk Assessment | Management's process to consider the impact of possible changes in the internal and external environment and to consider actions to mitigate the impact. The basis for how risks will be managed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear objectives to define risk and risk tolerances. • Identify, analyze, and respond to risks. • Consider the potential for fraud. • Identify, analyze, and respond to significant changes that impact the internal control system. |
| Control Activities | Activities in the form of policies, procedures, and standards that help management mitigate risks. Control activities may be preventive in nature or detective in nature and may be performed at all levels of the organization. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks. • Design control activities over technology. • Implement control activities through policies and procedures. |
| Information and Communication | Information obtained or generated by management to support the internal control system. Communication is the dissemination of important information to help the organization meet requirements and expectations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use relevant and quality information. • Communicate necessary information internally to achieve entity objectives. • Communicate necessary information externally to achieve entity objectives. |
| Monitoring | Periodic or ongoing evaluations to verify that the internal control system is present and functioning properly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct periodic or ongoing evaluations of the internal control system. • Remediate identified internal control deficiencies on a timely basis. |

We determined that all internal control components were significant to our audit objectives. The associated underlying principles significant to our objectives included:

- Board and management commitment to integrity and ethical values.
- Board exercise of oversight responsibility.
- Management establishment of an organizational structure, assignment of responsibility, and delegation of authority to achieve Triumph's goals and objectives.
- Management establishment of clear objectives to enable the identification of risks and define risk tolerances.
- Management identification and analysis of and response to risks.
- Management consideration of the potential for fraud.
- Management identification and analysis of and response to significant changes that could impact the internal control system.
- Management design of control activities to achieve Triumph's objectives and respond to risks.
- Management design of controls over information technology.
- Management establishment of policies and procedures to implement internal control activities.
- Management use of relevant and quality information to achieve Triumph's objectives.

- Management communication of information internally necessary to achieve Triumph's objectives.
- Management communication of information externally necessary to achieve Triumph's objectives.
- Management activities to monitor Triumph's internal control system and evaluate the results.
- Management remediation of identified internal control deficiencies on a timely basis.

This audit was designed to identify, for those programs, activities, or functions included within the scope of the audit, deficiencies in internal controls significant to our audit objectives; instances of noncompliance with applicable governing laws, rules, or contracts; and instances of inefficient or ineffective operational policies, procedures, or practices. The focus of this audit was to identify problems so that they may be corrected in such a way as to improve accountability and efficiency and the stewardship of management. Professional judgment has been used in determining significance and audit risk and in selecting the particular transactions, legal compliance matters, records, and controls considered.

As described in more detail below, for those programs, activities, and functions included within the scope of our audit, our audit work included, but was not limited to, communicating to management and those charged with governance the scope, objectives, timing, overall methodology, and reporting of our audit; obtaining an understanding of the program, activity, or function; identifying and evaluating internal controls significant to our audit objectives; exercising professional judgment in considering significance and audit risk in the design and execution of the research, interviews, tests, analyses, and other procedures included in the audit methodology; obtaining reasonable assurance of the overall sufficiency and appropriateness of the evidence gathered in support of our audit's findings and conclusions; and reporting on the results of the audit as required by governing laws and auditing standards.

Our audit included the selection and examination of transactions and records. Unless otherwise indicated in this report, these transactions and records were not selected with the intent of statistically projecting the results, although we have presented for perspective, where practicable, information concerning relevant population value or size and quantifications relative to the items selected for examination.

An audit by its nature, does not include a review of all records and actions of agency management, staff, and vendors, and as a consequence, cannot be relied upon to identify all instances of noncompliance, fraud, abuse, or inefficiency.

In conducting our audit, we:

- Reviewed applicable laws to obtain an understanding of the legal framework governing Triumph operations.
- Reviewed applicable laws, Triumph policies and procedures, and other guidelines, and interviewed Triumph's Executive Director, independent contractors, Board members, independent certified public accounting firm, and legal advisor to gain an understanding of Triumph controls for administering awards and managing financial and other administrative activities.
- From the population of 27 pre-applications for awards submitted to Triumph during the period July 2019 through June 2020, examined Triumph records for 11 selected pre-applications to determine whether pre-applications were evaluated based on the criteria established in Section 288.8017, Florida Statutes, and eligibility decisions were sufficiently documented and communicated to applicants.

- Interviewed Triumph management and reviewed Triumph policies and procedures to determine whether Triumph required management and independent contractors to attest, in writing, that they would comply with established Triumph conflict of interest policies and were independent of, and had no conflicts of interest related to, the applicants they were responsible for evaluating.
- From the population of 11 applications for awards received by Triumph during the period July 2019 through June 2020, examined Triumph records for 5 selected applications to determine whether applications were appropriately evaluated based on the criteria established in Section 288.8017, Florida Statutes, and approval or denial decisions were sufficiently documented and communicated to applicants.
- Examined the 5 applications for awards, totaling \$14,904,086, approved by the Board to enter into term sheet negotiations during the period July 2019 through June 2020 to determine whether Triumph staff obtained Board approval prior to negotiating terms with the applicants and whether Triumph posted its intent to award on Triumph's Web site in accordance with Section 288.8016(4), Florida Statutes.
- Examined the 10 award agreements, totaling \$13,096,586, executed by Triumph during the period July 2019 through June 2020 to determine whether Triumph included in the award agreements the provisions specified in Section 288.8017, Florida Statutes.
- From the population of 30 award agreements, totaling \$224,165,151, subject to Triumph monitoring during the period July 2019 through June 2020, examined Triumph records for 10 selected award agreements, totaling \$179,326,161, to determine whether Triumph monitored awardee compliance with award agreement terms and conditions.
- Examined the two Infrastructure and Logistics Fast Track Training award agreements, totaling \$350,500, executed by Triumph during the period July 2019 through June 2020 to determine whether the award agreements were to fund eligible technical colleges, school boards, or State colleges for construction trades workers and commercial drivers to aid in the economic recovery of Northwest Florida following the COVID-19 pandemic and were in accordance with Section 288.8017(1) and (3), Florida Statutes.
- Examined the four Hurricane Michael Skilled Labor Recovery award agreements, totaling \$782,000, executed by Triumph during the period July 2019 through June 2020 to determine whether the award agreements related to the education and training of construction trades workers to aid in the economic recovery from Hurricane Michael, pursuant to Section 288.8017(1) and (3), Florida Statutes.
- Examined Triumph records for both semi-annual reports due to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives during the period July 2019 through June 2020 to determine whether Triumph submitted the reports in accordance with Section 288.8013(4), Florida Statutes.
- Examined Triumph policies and procedures and Board meeting agendas and minutes for the period July 2019 through June 2020 to determine whether Triumph ensured that Board meetings were held in accordance with Section 288.8011, Florida Statutes, and whether Board members timely and properly disclosed possible direct and indirect conflicts of interest.
- Examined Triumph policies and procedures, performed inquiries of Triumph management related to the Triumph organizational structure, and reviewed disclosures of financial interests filed with the Commission on Ethics for Triumph's Executive Director and seven Board members to determine whether Triumph had established adequate processes to ensure that all parties filed disclosures of financial interests by July 1, 2019, in accordance with Section 112.3145, Florida Statutes.
- From the population of 74 general expenses, totaling \$99,200, incurred during the period July 2019 through June 2020, examined Triumph records for 10 selected general expenses,

totaling \$23,343, to determine whether general expenses were appropriately supported, approved, and timely and accurately recorded to Triumph financial records.

- From the population of 25 travel expenses, totaling \$3,725, incurred during the period July 2019 through June 2020, selected 10 travel expenses, totaling \$2,086, and examined Triumph records to determine whether travel expenses complied with applicable provisions of State law and whether expenses were timely and accurately recorded to Triumph financial records.
- From the population of 16 administrative contracts with expenditures totaling \$633,972, active at some point during the period July 2019 through June 2020, selected 8 administrative contracts with expenditures totaling \$531,762 and examined Triumph records to determine whether contracts were properly managed and payments were timely approved by the Board and appropriately recorded to Triumph financial records.
- Interviewed Triumph management, examined Triumph records, and evaluated Triumph processes to determine whether Triumph took steps to reasonably ensure that service organization and subservice organization controls relevant to the services performed on behalf of Triumph were suitably designed and operating effectively during the period July 2019 through June 2020.
- Evaluated Triumph actions to correct Finding 1 noted in our report No. 2020-057. Specifically, we evaluated Triumph policies and procedures and examined selected records to determine whether Triumph had established adequate controls over the use of mobile devices.
- Observed, documented, and evaluated the effectiveness of selected Triumph processes and procedures for:
 - Cash and revenue management and budgetary activities.
 - The administration of tangible personal property in accordance with Triumph policies and procedures. As of June 2020, Triumph was responsible for tangible personal property with related acquisition costs totaling \$4,298.
 - The administration of purchasing cards in accordance with Triumph policies and procedures. As of June 30, 2020, Triumph had one active purchasing card.
 - The assignment and use of mobile devices with related costs totaling \$900 during the period July 2019 through June 2020.
 - The acquisition and management of real property leases in accordance with Triumph policies and procedures. As of June 30, 2020, Triumph was responsible for one real property lease.
 - The administration of hurricane-related contracting and purchasing activities.
- Communicated on an interim basis with applicable officials to ensure the timely resolution of issues involving controls and noncompliance.
- Performed various other auditing procedures, including analytical procedures, as necessary, to accomplish the objectives of the audit.
- Obtained management's views concerning the conclusions in this audit report, prepared a summary of management's comments, and provide a copy of the summary to management to verify that the comments were accurately represented. In addition, we included the summary of management's response in this report under the heading **MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE**.

AUTHORITY

Section 288.8013(5), Florida Statutes, requires the Auditor General to conduct an operational audit of Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. annually. Pursuant to the provisions of Section 11.45, Florida Statutes, I have directed that this report be prepared to present the results of our operational audit.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherrill F. Norman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sherrill" and last name "Norman" clearly legible, and "F." as a middle initial.

Sherrill F. Norman, CPA
Auditor General

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE



Scott A. Remington
President / Managing Partner
Direct (850) 432-2399
sremington@clarkpartington.com

February 19, 2021

VIA U.S. MAIL

Sherrill F. Norman
Auditor General, State of Florida
Claude Denson Pepper Bldg, Suite G74
111 W. Madison Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1450

RE: Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. Response to 2020 Audit Findings

Dear Ms. Norman:

This letter follows receipt of the detailed explanation describing tentative audit findings and recommendation dated January 29, 2021 and supplemental confidential recommendations. Please accept this correspondence as Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.'s ("Triumph") written statement of explanation concerning the finding and recommendations highlighted in your preliminary and tentative findings.

Triumph acknowledges the concerns raised in the correspondence from your office. Triumph is in the process of enhancing its security controls by implementing actions to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of Triumph data and IT resources.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this matter. We appreciate the time, attention, and thought that went into the Auditor General's report & recommendations and look forward to working with your office in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott A. Remington', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Scott A. Remington
General Counsel, Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc.

cc: Don Gaetz, Chair
Susan Skelton,
Christi Alexander, CPA

(850) 434-9200 | 125 East Intendencia Street, Pensacola, FL 32502 | clarkpartington.com
Pensacola | Destin | Tallahassee | Santa Rosa Beach | Orange Beach

Contact: Susan Skelton
850-387-9405

For Immediate Release
May 19, 2021

\$18M Granted to Meet Growing Employer Needs Today and Tomorrow

Today Triumph Gulf Coast committed over \$18 million in new grants that will yield at least 5,380 new industry certifications for high paying, in demand jobs requested by employers to meet the region's needs for a trained workforce in Cyber Security, Logistics and Distribution and Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML).

The Board gave final approval to Pensacola State College's new Commercial Truck Driving training facility in Milton, moved forward Florida State University's Cybersecurity and New Technologies Program in Panama City as well as partnered with Okaloosa County School District to develop and implement a state-of-the-art AI/ML Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.

In collaboration with Triumph, Northwest Florida education institutions continue to submit proposals that break down traditional ways of educating students resulting in exciting new collaborations and outcomes. These projects set the stage for the region to be competitive in tomorrow's economy while also providing the education opportunities needed for jobs that support today's growing and resilient communities.

Santa Rosa County

The Triumph Board unanimously approved the final agreement with Pensacola State College for a \$3,862,950 grant towards the creation of a new logistics and distribution commercial vehicle driving (CDL) program in Milton that will result in at least 1000 CDL licenses. Grant funds will be used to provide students space for up-to-date instruction, simulation, and on-the-road training, in addition to a recognized official testing site that will better equip students for employment in the industry.

This project was created in response to a growing need expressed by employers to CareerSource Escarosa for trained/licensed commercial vehicle drivers and the desire of many of their clients to receive this training. Further research and examination of the labor market confirmed that there is need for the program.

The PSC training program will enable students to earn Commercial Class "B" Driving and Commercial Vehicle Driving Certifications (Class "A") making graduates eligible for many jobs requiring a CDL license including "long haul" trucking positions, local delivery truck positions and school bus drivers among others.

Bay

The Board moved forward Florida State University Panama City's (FSU PC) request for \$11,500,702 to establish the Advancing Science and Career Education in New Technologies (ASCENT) project which will result in at least 3,280 industry certifications.

Key highlights of the project include integrating cyber security education into numerous academic programs through an Interdisciplinary Cybersecurity Hub, supporting local industry cyber and new technology training needs and partnering with the region's K-12 school districts to recruit, hire, and train teachers to teach technical fields.

Recent discussions with local superintendents have highlighted a common challenge, a need for trained CTE teachers in the 8-county region. Through the ASCENT project, FSU PC will provide ongoing professional development and support for teachers including engaging FSU students and faculty to assist teachers with classes and teacher workshops. ASECNT will also provide support to career academies and summer camps building a robust pipeline of interest in new technologies among the region's youth.

Okaloosa

Okaloosa County School District's (OCSD) request for a \$2,840,000 Triumph grant to create the Artificial Intelligence Learning Institutes advanced toward a final agreement. Recognizing the intensity and pace at which the field of Artificial Intelligence is advancing OCSD plans to work with the University of Florida to develop and implement a model industry certification program in Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning for K-12 students that can be replicated across Northwest Florida.

AI/ML impacts every industry in Northwest Florida including drone technology and logistics and distribution. Building a long-term AI/ML talent supply in the region will give students an advantage when entering a career or continuing to postsecondary education in cutting edge fields including Data Scientists, Machine Learning Engineers, AI Architects, Big Data Engineers and Business Intelligence Developers.

The Artificial Intelligence Learning Institutes will also provide evidence to companies seeking to expand or relocate to Northwest Florida that the region's schools can serve as national model for Career Technical Education. This program will result in students earning at least 1,100 industry-recognized credentials in AI and related fields.

The Triumph Gulf Coast Board of Directors is appointed by the Governor, Chief Financial Officer, Attorney General and presiding officers of the Legislature. The appointees to the Triumph Board are Lewis Bear, Jr., Allan Bense, Dr. Pam Dana, Chair Don Gaetz, Ben Lee, Stephen Riggs, IV and Matt Terry. All meetings of the Board are public.

More information about Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc. is available at www.myfloridatriumph.com.

NEWS

Triumph Gulf Coast doles out nearly \$18 million ahead of the holiday season

Tom McLaughlin Northwest Florida Daily News

Published 3:21 p.m. ET Dec. 18, 2020

NICEVILLE — Perhaps it was holiday spirit, or maybe just looking to end a bad year on a good note.

Something sure had the Triumph Gulf Coast Board in a giving mood Thursday, as its membership voted to hand out nearly \$18 million in new grant awards.

Four grants were provided or agreed to in principle that will help fund projects in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Bay and Walton counties.

"Each of these programs will bring either or both new high-paying jobs and certified workforce training," a news release from Triumph said.

More: DON GAETZ: Can the Gulf Coast triumph? Yes

Santa Rosa County

The largest actual grant award — \$6 million — went to the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners for infrastructure improvements at Santa Rosa Industrial Park East.

Triumph dollars, secured from BP in a legal settlement following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, have been set aside to stimulate economic development in eight

Northwest Florida counties most significantly impacted by the spill.

The funds have greatly benefited Santa Rosa County. The grant approved Thursday is the third the county has received from Triumph to use to develop three industrial parks, all of which have recruited business to the region, said Erica Grancagnola, associate director of Santa Rosa Economic Development.

More: Early preparation key to economic development, experts tell Gulf Power symposium audience

"Our projects couldn't have moved forward without their support," Grancagnola said.

The 112-acre Santa Rosa Industrial Park East caters to heavy manufacturing companies and presently is working with three companies, including one that plans to occupy 40 acres and invest \$20 million, Grancagnola said. The other two companies will occupy a total of 8 acres, invest at least \$1 million each and bring 70 jobs to the county.

Grancagnola said the \$6 million grant approved Thursday will be used to build a road that essentially bisects the industrial park property, install utility hookups and dig a pond to hold stormwater runoff.

More: Triumph awards \$7 million grant to NWFSC

Bay County

Board members voted unanimously to provide a grant award of \$1,737,500 to AMIKids Panama City Marine Institute Stem and Business Entrepreneurship Labs in Bay County.

The Marine Institute is a non-profit originally created for at risk students, but it has expanded its reach over the course of its 40 years in existence, said Executive Director Ron Boyce.

The \$1.7 million from Triumph will be matched by the Marine Institute, according to Boyce, and be used to pay for vocational STEMM certification programs in aerospace technology (specifically unmanned vehicles, or drones), construction, to include programs in such fields as carpentry and masonry, and underwater robotics.

Underwater robotics is a new field of study at the Marine Institute and was recommended as a possible course by the Triumph Gulf Coast board, Boyce said.

The board also voted to grant a six month extension for completion of a \$20 million Panama City Industrial Complex project. The grant was originally provided to Eastern Shipbuilding to help the company fund a manufacturing project of Coast Guard patrol cutters.

The extension will allow the grantees six months to make up for construction work time lost in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff members told the board.

Walton County

The board also approved a term sheet for \$3,846,000 that will go to the Walton County School District for information technology and health care certification programs.

When a final grant is approved, funds will go towards providing career technical training to high school age students in IT fields and in health care professions such as nursing, nursing assistance and phlebotomy, according to Triumph Board Chairman Don Gaetz.

More: Education chancellor highlights workforce training in visit to Okaloosa Technical College

Based on a staff recommendation, Gaetz urged the School District to seek an interlocal agreement with Northwest Florida State College to create a means by

which students working toward industry certification in a selected field can receive college credits while pursuing certification.

"That way we can assure the courses that are taught meet college level standards as well as industry training standards," he said.

Triumph Gulf Coast has been "a very strong supporter" of career technical training at the high school and college level, having funded more than 20 such projects over the eight counties it works with, Gaetz said.

Escambia County

The board also voted to direct its staff to begin negotiations that should lead to a grant for \$6,078,795 to be given to the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition in Escambia County.

The grant would represent about 20% of an overall \$31 million project at the institute's Center for Human Healthspan Resilience and Performance.

IHMC is well-known for two distinct fields of research, humanoid robotics and artificial intelligence, according to its grant request.

"The envisioned new center, focused on human healthspan, resilience and performance, will establish a powerful, one-of-a-kind capstone for research and development in Northwest Florida – thus having a transformational regional impact," the grant paperwork said.

The work done will complement the institute's current NASA and DoD-funded research in this area, the paperwork said. IHMC will utilize the most modern equipment, technology and tools to conduct state of the art research in the field of human performance optimization.

Triumph board members also agreed Thursday to the withdrawal of a grant application put forward by the University of West Florida. The board and the

university had worked together for about a year to find a way to fund a grant in the area of cybersecurity, Gaetz said.

"The hope was to provide about \$11 million to UWF for the university to use to develop expanded cybersecurity training," Gaetz said.

Cybersecurity training is crucial at this moment in history and Northwest Florida is a major player in the field, he said.

"We want to fund a major cybersecurity project in this area," Gaetz said. "But the university could not seem to put together a plan that would work."

UWF officials were seeking about \$3 million more than the grant amount to cover indirect costs, Gaetz said. Triumph has historically rejected doling out money to pay for such costs.

Since Triumph Gulf Coast received the initial payment from the Deepwater Horizon BP Oil Spill Settlement with the state of Florida it has committed to 44 grant awards for public infrastructure improvements, workforce development education and marketing/promotion of the diversification of the regional economy, the news release sent out following Thursday's meeting said.

The awards total more than \$264 million in direct funding to each of the eight disproportionately impacted counties, the release said.

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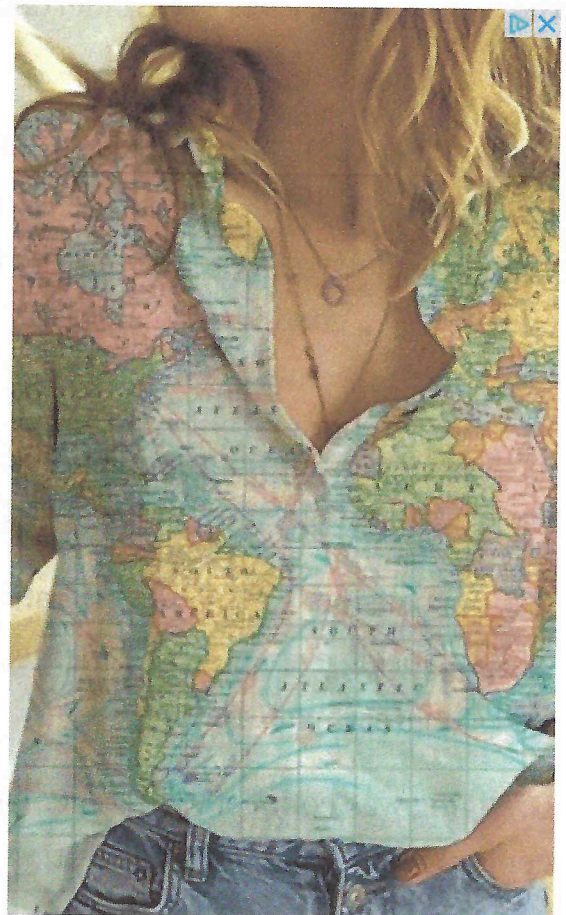
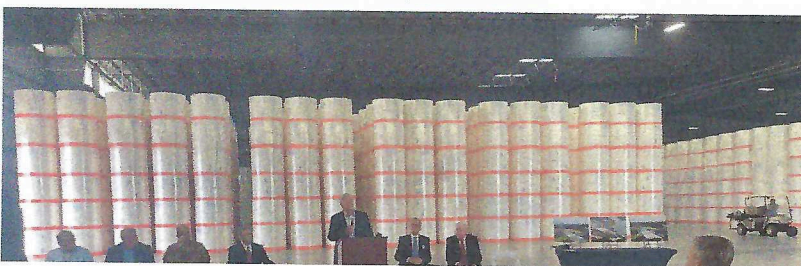
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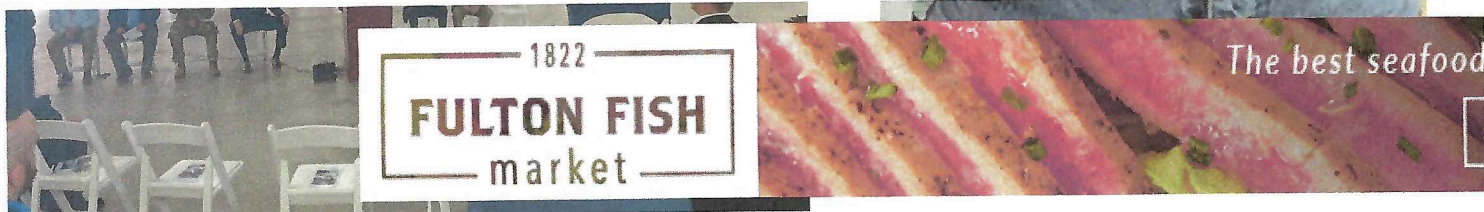
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LOCAL NEWS

East Terminal and East Channel Dedication at the Port means big strides for Bay County's future





by: [Madalyn Bierster](#)

Posted: May 12, 2021 / 03:02 PM CDT / Updated: May 12, 2021 /

03:04 PM CDT

PANAMA CITY, Fla. (WMBB) — The Port of Panama City is continuing to grow, and leaders of the port authority hosted a dedication for the new East Terminal on Wednesday morning.

The new site is on S. East Ave near the paper mill. This project has been in the works for nearly five years, and the expansion will provide a huge opportunity for growth in the local region.

The new East Terminal project is the largest project the port authority has ever undertaken, costing over \$60 million.

“Triumph Gulf Coast put in \$10 million, the Florida DOT stood up for \$27 million. We so much appreciate the trust and confidence they had in us and making a good investment here,” said Port Executive Director, Wayne Stubbs.

At the ceremony, Congressman Neal Dunn said the project will provide continued growth for the port.

“This expansion is going to generate over 300 direct jobs and bring even more businesses to our region,” said Congressman Dunn.

Dredging was completed in December and the center has been open and operating since February

LATEST LOCAL NEWS VIDEO

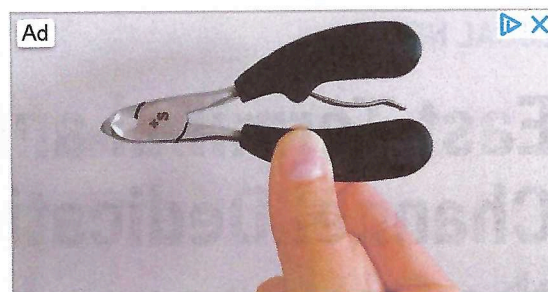


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of 2020. The dedication ceremony was the next step.

“The new East Terminal will forever be dedicated to the safety and well being of the men and women who work at this facility and to the success of the companies who ship their products over the docks of Port Panama City’s East Terminal,” said Port Board Vice-Chairman Dr. James Cook.

“So what you see here now is really just phase one. Its one 900 foot birth, a 260,000 foot warehouse, a 40 car rail yard. We can probably handle about 350,000 to 400,000 tons of cargo through here. Long term phase two will be a second birth, and another warehouse. We have an option to purchase another 30 acres behind here,” said Stubbs.

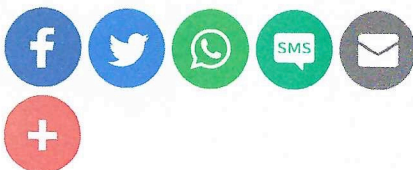
A new kind of cargo will be leaving this specific terminal.

“This gives the port an opportunity to keep growing, and a whole new niche of cargo activity, with forest product exports on big ships, to the far east and other far destinations. It really opens the door for this port to be a much more relevant and important port on the Gulf Coast,” said Stubbs.

The final phase two is set to be completed in 2024.

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by: [Madalyn Bierster](#)

Posted: Apr 1, 2021 / 04:57 PM CDT / Updated: Apr 1, 2021 / 07:39 PM CDT

FRANKLIN COUNTY, Fla. (WMBB) — A fresh beginning for the Franklin County School District, as brand new welding facility has opened its doors for high school students.

The new welding lab at the Franklin County School costs approximately 2.1 million dollars. It was made possible by two Triumph Gulf Coast grants.

The 4,300 square foot facility has state-of-the-art resources, 15 welding bay as well as virtual technology welding.

“It used to be we were outside, and we couldn’t get out if it rained or lightning or weather was too bad. Now we’re in here and they can keep going right on through what they need to be doing,” said Welding Instructor, Mike Youngblood.

So far 45 students have been enrolled in the program since the past three years of its been in existence.

“People out there need to come do this class. And get this under their belt. Things might not always happen for them in the long run, they at least have this under their belt.” said 11th Grader, Blakely Curry.

“I barely knew what welding was when I started and now I already have one of my certifications. So it’s pretty fun.” said 11th Grader, Jamal Robinson.

“Sometimes it’s kinda hard to believe I’m in here for

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almost an hour ½ because sometimes it really doesn't feel like it." said 10th grader, Thomas Wagner.

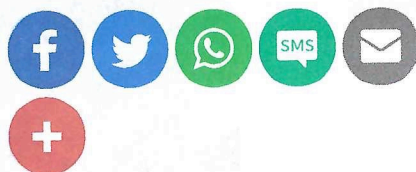
Having this program available allows students to get ahead of the curve in technical education and earn their certifications for welding.

"If we can catch them in the 9th grade here, and run them through a program, like welding or culinary or medical or any of the others we have like drones, they get a head start. They can start taking classes in 9th grade, by the time they are a senior they can be earning college credits, certifications, and industry credentials," said CTE Coordinator, David Hughes.

The hope is for the facility to eventually host night welding classes for adults in Franklin.

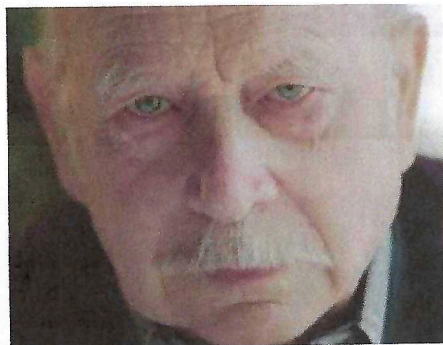
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Breaking fresh ground



(/uploads/original/20210319-132530-7c64d615-a12b-4d80-893c-6e2bb38af874-gulffranklin_23.JPG)

Fourteen shovels went into the ground together, and lifted up at roughly the same moment.

[DAVID ADLERSTEIN | THE TIMES]



Posted Wednesday, November 25, 2020 9:40 am

David Adlerstein, The Star

They broke ground last week on the first expansion of the Gulf Franklin campus in 22 years.

The administrators, board of directors and instructors, and the state representative, on a sunny Thursday afternoon, each took a shovel and in unison joined in the flinging off first dirt for what is going to be a nursing simulation center, and just across the way, a modular building to house components of a pilot boot camp for unmanned aerial systems.

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LOCAL NEWS
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Dunn rallies GOP to take back House (/stories/dunn-rallies-gop-to-take-back-house,3798)

EASTPOINT - It would not be an apt description to say U.S. Rep. Neal Dunn served up red meat in a fiery speech to a hungry Republican audience last week. Rather, the three-term congressman in the ...



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Watchful sentinel (/stories/watchful-sentinel,3801)

On Memorial Day morning, people gathered to honor the nation's fallen soldiers, sailors, and aviators, at Veterans Memorial Park at Beacon Hill.

With the help of \$2.2 million from Triumph Golf Coast, and another \$1 million match, Gulf Coast State College plans to have by the spring for nursing a modular building bustling with hospital beds, with mannequins being treated behind curtains, an obstetrical newborn simulation room, and a classroom for instruction.

They're doing it for students like Heather Kemper.

She graduated from Franklin County High School in 2010, an honors student, and headed off to Florida State University, to a dorm on one of the state's giant campuses, in Tallahassee.

"Being from a small school, when you move away, it may work for some, with a class of 200 to 300 people and you can function," said Kemper, now married, last name Hunter.

"In all honesty, it didn't work for me that way," she said. "I came back kind of defeated. The Gulf-Franklin campus is individualized, supportive in a way a large college may not be able to be."

One of those who joined in the ground breaking, health science professor Debra Brzuska, who coordinates the nursing program at the Gulf County campus, taught Kemper, and followed her through earning her practical nursing degree, then her RN and then her bachelor of science, and after that offered her a chance to teach, first part-time and now - full time.

She's now close to earning a master's degree, intent on a specialty as a family nurse practitioner.

"I did everything at the Gulf Franklin Center," said Hunter. "It's small, and Miss B, she will take you and build you up and make you believe in yourself."

"I see it in a lot of students," she said. "I left FSU with no degree; I see a lot of them had the same stories. They came back, with no degree, still defeated. They get pushed and it's hard, but they feel the support of the staff here."

Whether they are right out of high school, or returning with a different bachelors degree to study nursing, Hunter has encountered a variety of fellow students, many now among her pupils.

"They're committed to the practical nursing program. It's so fast-paced that they learn very carefully, and quickly, that if they want it they have to commit to it," she said. "It encompasses your whole life for a year."

"Some are kids right out of high school. some have bachelors degrees in other areas, from age 18 to in their 60s coming into this program," Hunter said. "I've seen all of them be successful."

"You see them graduate. I remember one year that I thought 'You guys are smarter than me.' You see that progress, to where they're fully functional capable nurses," she said. "It's amazing."

With classes twice a week, and the rest with clinicals, Hunter is excited at the possibilities to be presented at the new simulation center, and credits what's coming to campus to Brzuska's vision, which now has eight medium to high-fidelity patient simulators, which electronically mimic real-life situations.

Wewahitchka grads awarded scholarships (/stories/wewahitchka-grads-awarded-scholarships,3800)

The following scholarships awarded members of the Class of 2021 were announced at the Wewahitchka High School commencement last week. The scholarships are listed in alphabetical order, by ...



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Governor meets with meth task force

(/stories/governor-meets-with-meth-task-force,3799)

TALLAHASSEE -- Governor Ron DeSantis last week met the Capitol with sheriffs from 15 rural counties to discuss the methamphetamine epidemic which continues to plague the state's rural ...

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Jared Archibald, with the Gulf County 4-H Big River Riders, takes part in the Area North Horse Show [Stephanie Lynne Photography]

9 2

OBITUARIES

Clarence J. Nelson (/stories/clarence-j-nelson,1928)

Clarence J. Nelson, also known as "Mr. Joe Nelson" to most people, went to be with his heavenly father on September 1, 2020. Joe was born on August 10, 1934 in Weare, New Hampshire. He ...



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"The body is amazing, I just like to talk about it," she said. "I feel like nursing becomes who you are.

"I like the process. You don't just take a disease, and say this is the medication for it, here's the tests. We teach compassion and empathy and every stage to know," Hunter said, as she prepared to teach a class on hospice care and the dying process to her nursing students.

The intention of the expanded campus is to boost the enrollment of students in the practical nursing, and the APN to ADN (associate degree in nursing) programs, as well as the certified nursing assistant (CNA) program, which was suspended during the pandemic but is set to resume.

Creation of the Nursing Simulation Center (NSC) at Gulf-Franklin is so as to be able to perform clinical training on site. "Historically, the barrier to expanding the nursing programs ... has been a shortage of clinical sites," reads the Triumph application.

The center will allow the practical nursing program to offer two start dates a year, rather than one, and double the enrollment potential from 36 to 72 each year. The center will permit CNA skills training to be offered twice weekly, decreasing the time to complete the program from 15 to eight weeks. The shortened CNA program could then be offered at least three times per year, increasing enrollment from the usual maximum of 12 students to 36.

The nursing bridge program, now offered on weekends, now has a maximum of 18 students enrolled each semester. With the center it could accept 22 students each semester, increasing enrollment from 84 to 152 students per year.

"Over the five-year scope of this request, the total increase in nursing students would be 340 students," reads the application. Based on a placement rate of 90 percent, over the five-year scope of the project, 306 new nurses would be employed in the local communities served by the GFC.

"The availability of 306 new nurses in the area would have a significant impact on the nursing shortage in the local areas and a significant fiscal impact on local economies," reads the application. "The center would also be available to health providers, such as Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital on the Gulf, Weems Memorial Hospital, Cross Shores Care Center, and other health care centers used to train new hires and test skill competency levels."

Hunter says nurses in the area have several options once they have completed their training.

"There's a wide array of possibilities Gulf and Franklin counties, and beyond," she said, ticking off such areas as doctors offices, skilled nursing facilities, dialysis centers, home health, and hospice.

Unmanned aerial system building planned

The Nov. 19 groundbreaking was a celebration of the immense contribution that Gulf-Franklin makes on behalf of an educated workforce in the two counties.

After an introduction from Dr. John Holdnak, president of Gulf Coast State College, the socially distanced, largely masked audience heard words of excitement, encouragement and gratitude from State Rep. Jason Shoaf, Jim McKnight, who chairs the Gulf State

A banner for Orange Hill Express, Inc. featuring a Facebook logo and the text "So much more than your average feed store!". It lists services: "Here to meet all of your farming, gardening and outdoor needs!", "Farm & Garden One-stop Shop", "Unique Gifts and Outdoor Decor", "RV Propane Fill-ups", and "Chipley, FL". A "CLICK HERE" button is at the bottom right.

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JOB FAIR 2021

When: Friday, April 30, 2021

Where: Port St. Joe High School Gymnasium

Time: 10:00 am EST - 12:30 pm EST

Who: Open to students in grades 9 - 12

Open to all Gulf County prospective employers

Open to all adults (from 1:00 - 2:00 pm EST only) looking for employment opportunities



Apr 16, 2021

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College board of directors, and Al McCambry, director of the Gulf-Franklin Campus.

The three men then joined with staffers, private sector backers, and members of the board of directors to turn dirt in two symbolic gestures, first for the nursing expansion and then on behalf of the Unmanned Aerial Systems Pilot Boot Camp for Exiting Military, a \$4 million project being funded by about \$2.3 million from Triumph, and another \$1.7 million in matching funds.

That boot camp is a nine-week program designed to assist exiting military personnel in surrounding counties to become certified and qualified as remote pilots of unmanned aerial systems including visual line of sight and beyond visual line of sight in aircraft greater than 20 pounds.

Students can earn eight certifications in such areas as Remote Piloting; Small UAS Safety, Visual Line of Sight Systems Operations; Advanced Unmanned Safety and System Operations and Professional Remote Operator. The boot camp is designed to assist exiting military personnel to participate in a fast-paced instructional program that will lead to jobs as remote unmanned aerial systems pilots.

The hybrid format combining online, face-to-face and hands-on training, provided at Gulf-Franklin and the Panama City campus. The boot camp is designed to provide students with a career pathway which enables a student to exit at specified points in the training with the skills and certifications needed to become employed in specific occupations.

Students wishing to pursue the Unmanned Systems Technology Operations associate of science degree from Gulf Coast will be given credit for boot camp certifications. Boot camp students are forecast to have a 90 percent placement rate within one year of completing the program. Companies such as Amazon, Google, Textron, Boeing and Verizon are forecast to hire about 100,000 remote pilots by 2025 with salaries starting at \$55,000 and increasing to \$130,000 with additional experience. The national average salary for experienced remote pilots is \$83,662.

*This article originally appeared on The Star: Breaking fresh ground
(<https://www.starfl.com/story/news/2020/11/25/breaking-fresh-ground/6405804002/>)*

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LOCAL

1 year later: Port Panama City sees gains with east terminal

Nathan Cobb The News Herald

Published 6:03 a.m. ET May 14, 2021

PANAMA CITY — Since Port Panama City's east terminal opened a year ago, almost 200,000 tons of cargo has passed through the facility.

About 100 people gathered at a dedication ceremony Wednesday for the east terminal and east channel, which is located next to the WestRock Paper Mill in Millville and cost about \$60 million to develop, said Wayne Stubbs, the port's executive director.

Port Panama City: picks new executive director; current director Wayne Stubbs to retire in May

Panama City: Retiring Port Panama City director looks back on \$110 million in advancements over career

According to information provided by the port, the Panama City Port Authority's vision for the east terminal is for it to mainly handle forest products, while the west terminal will focus on cargo containers and its in-port manufacturing partners.

"This gives the port the opportunity to keep growing, (and) it gives us a whole new niche of cargo activity," Stubbs said Wednesday. "It really opens the door for this port to be a much more relevant and important port in the Gulf Coast."

As of Wednesday, almost 30 cargo ships already have used the new terminal. That includes one that was docked there during the ceremony.

It was then the east terminal and east channel were dedicated to "the safety and well-being of the men and women who work at these facilities and to the success of the companies which ship their products" through them, a program from the event read.

The ceremony also was a chance for Stubbs to publicly thank key agencies that contributed to the newest terminal's development. They included Triumph Gulf Coast, which donated \$10 million for the project, and the Florida Department of Transportation, which doled out \$27 million.

Among those who spoke during the ceremony was Congressman Neal Dunn, who said the port's expansion is something he has "been passionate about ... for a long time."

Dunn, who added that he never felt like he had a "home" until he moved to Bay County 30 years ago, said he believes the port will be a crucial part of every economy within 100 miles for years to come.

He also said that while there were a lot of people who played a part in the east terminal's development, no one deserved more credit than Stubbs.

"We spend a lot of time in Washington talking about infrastructure, (and) this is what infrastructure looks like," Dunn said. "This is a gift that's going to keep giving for decades and decades to the entire region, not just the city."

BUSINESS

Santa Rosa breaks ground on new facility at Santa Rosa Industrial Park

Special to the Press Gazette/USA TODAY NETWORK

Published 1:55 p.m. ET May 19, 2021

MILTON — Santa Rosa County officials broke ground this week on a new facility that will be built on eight acres in the Santa Rosa Industrial Park. This facility will serve as home to Gulf Cable/WTEC.

Gulf Cable/WTEC currently employs over 300 individuals in the Santa Rosa Industrial Park.

This additional property on Armstrong Road will be used to construct a 160,000-square-foot manufacturing facility that will house and facilitate the growth of the company's operations currently located at 5689 Industrial Blvd.

Headquartered in Milton, Gulf Cable is the expert of cable manufacturing, producing cables that serve diverse markets including renewable (solar and wind), irrigations, electric utility (distribution and transmission), oil and gas (refineries and production), and petrochemical.

“Gulf Cable is exactly the kind of company we want to be located in the industrial park,” said Commissioner Bob Cole, District 2. “The company is expanding and hiring more people as they continue to grow. They are the perfect industry for Santa Rosa County.”

According to Shannon Ogletree, executive director, and Erica Grancagnolo, associate director of Santa Rosa County Economic Development Office (EDO), “Employment at this facility will increase by more than 20 additional people, paying a salary of at least \$41,000. This is 115 percent of the 2020 Santa Rosa County average wage.

“We anticipate that capital investment at the site will be approximately \$3 million. That’s a big win for Santa Rosa County.”

Kevin Bate, executive vice president, WTEC Energy Innovation, said, "Gulf Cable has been in Santa Rosa County for a number of years now, and thanks to the business climate here and the support we receive from the economic development office we are continuing to grow."

Santa Rosa County Commission Chairman Dave Piech, District 4, said he was very proud of the work done by the Santa Rosa EDO.

"When it comes to economic development, we can all be very confident that we have the best team on the job," Piech said. "This is the second major ground breaking we've attended in less than a year and I expect there are more to come. I can't wait to see what the future holds for economic growth in our great county."

BUSINESS

Leonardo Helicopters will set up rent-free at Milton airport hangar as new facility is built

Annie Blanks Pensacola News Journal

Published 6:00 a.m. CT May 26, 2021 | Updated 6:00 a.m. CT May 26, 2021

Leonardo Helicopters hasn't started construction on its multi-million dollar aviation maintenance facility in Santa Rosa County, but the Philadelphia-based company is setting up a temporary home rent-free at a new \$2 million hangar at East Milton's Peter Prince Airport.

Commissioners on Tuesday morning agreed to allow Leonardo to move into the Helo-Hangar, which was just built at the airport and was funded with the economic development franchise fee. The 24-month lease at the hangar will help Leonardo establish its official presence in Santa Rosa County while it begins construction on its 100,000-square-foot support center at Whiting Aviation Park.

The county is not charging Leonardo rent at the hangar, contingent upon the company's \$25 million capital investment at the industrial park it's slated to anchor.

Support center: Leonardo plans support center for Whiting Aviation Park after winning Navy helicopter bid

Airbus challenge thwarted: Airbus challenge to Navy award denied; Leonardo moves forward on Whiting Aviation Park project

"The hangar at Peter Prince is initially for Leonardo while they construct their permanent facility," said Erica Grancagnolo, assistant economic development director for Santa Rosa County. "Once their permanent facility is complete, they'll move out of Peter Prince hangar and we'll use that to market to future aviation companies."

The Helo-Hangar is equipped with an expensive foam fire suppression system, wide entry and exit points for aircraft to move in and out and other features that make it attractive to aviation companies. Leonardo is the first of what Santa Rosa County hopes will be many aviation companies that call Whiting Aviation Park home.

"(The new hangar) is large enough so that when we go meet with other aviation companies, we can offer them this asset," said Economic Development Director Shannon Ogletree. "It's based on hot demand."

The county broke ground at Whiting Aviation Park in August 2020, and just recently finished a \$9.8 million infrastructure project that laid the groundwork for Leonardo and other future buildings to be constructed at the currently empty park.

Leonardo said it hopes to be fully built out and integrated in Santa Rosa County by the end of 2024, with its headquarters at the park opening in the first quarter of 2023.

The company was awarded a \$176 million military contract to supply new training helicopters for the U.S. Navy, and its support center at Whiting Aviation Park will provide technical support for those helicopters.

The facility is expected to employ up to 50 people.

Infrastructure groundwork: Santa Rosa County selects contractor for \$10 million Whiting Aviation Park infrastructure project

April deadline missed: Leonardo Helicopters to deliver first new helicopter to Whiting Field by April

Leonardo was originally expected to deliver the first of its new TH-73A helicopters, which are replacing the old fleet of TH-57 Sea Rangers, this April, but NAS Whiting Field spokeswoman Julie Ziegenhorn told the News Journal on Tuesday that the new model had not yet arrived on base.

"The Navy anticipates acceptance of the first TH-73A late June," Ziegenhorn said in an email. "Following the first delivery, AugustaWestland Philadelphia Corporation (Leonardo) will deliver 32 units within the first year, for a total of 130 over the contract period."

What makes the Leonardo deal, and Whiting Aviation Park itself, unique is the \$8.2 million aircraft taxiway that is slated to connect the civilian industrial park to the military base at NAS Whiting Field. The county is requesting funding from the Triumph Gulf Coast board for that project, which is a first-of-its-kind agreement between the U.S. Navy and a civilian company.

"It fulfills the limited access agreement that we have with the Navy, which allows civilian tenants of our aviation park access to the runway and control tower on the military base," Grancagnolo said. "This is a really transformational and incredible project where the Navy is actually giving us an easement, and allowing us to construct this taxiway on our property through the fence onto the military's property."

Leonardo is expected to move into the hangar at Peter Prince in June.

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Aviation maintenance program in Santa Rosa ready for takeoff as job demand spikes

Madison Arnold Pensacola News Journal

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Story Highlights

- Across the state, the aircraft mechanics and service technicians field grows about 1.5% per year and has almost 1,500 job openings per year.
 - The average entry-level employee starts at \$17.80 per hour, while the mean income for the field is \$30.31 per hour.
 - The project could be completed by the fall of 2023 if the location and funding fall into place.
-

To keep up with the area's workforce demands, the Santa Rosa County School District is examining ways to expand its technical college, including creating an aviation maintenance program.

Locklin Technical College, which has 19 career training programs as well as adult basic education and houses the district's virtual school, has run out of space at its current facility on Berryhill Road. That's why local advocates and a group of stakeholders are working to find a solution that would allow the school and its programs to grow.

"The main goal of the project is workforce development. Everybody wants to see job creation. We want to see our students leaving the district, not just with high school diplomas but also some sort of credential that would take them to ... post-secondary education or straight into the workforce," said Workforce Education Director Charlin Knight.

Locklin's potential aviation maintenance program would be created to accommodate growth in the field, particularly with Leonardo Helicopters bringing a new support facility to the Whiting Aviation Park in Milton. That facility promises to bring up to 50 jobs to the community with more growth expected.

Typically, Locklin can hold about 24 students in its day programs at a time, but Knight said the school is looking into offering an evening aviation maintenance program as well.

COVID recovery: George Stone's aviation maintenance program braces for post-pandemic comeback

Mask changes: Santa Rosa County School District drops mask mandate immediately

Dual enrollment: Pensacola State College to open charter high school for military families, at-risk kids

High demand, good pay

George Stone Technical College in the Escambia County School District has an existing successful aviation maintenance program that was created six years ago to help fill the need for those professionals, particularly at the growing ST Engineering at the Pensacola International Airport.

"It's getting a lot of attention now because aviation is such a popular field and we're seeing companies like ST Aerospace and Leonardo here in our area and we just want to make sure that we're doing our part to provide that workforce for them," Knight said.

Across the state, the aircraft mechanics and service technicians field grows about 1.5% per year and has almost 1,500 job openings per year, according to the 2020-2021 Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's Regional Demand Occupations List.

The pay is lucrative, too, with the average entry level employee starting at \$17.80 per hour while the mean income for the field is \$30.31 per hour, according to the report.

New home for Locklin Technical College?

Local advocates with the Stewart Street Project, a grassroots group working to improve Stewart Street in Milton, first proposed that the school district move Locklin to a 62,000-

square-foot vacant facility on that street.

"It started as a grassroots thing," said Kyle Holley, an advocate and liaison between the stakeholders in the project. "We just had this idea and all we did was go talk to people and then we found out there was a need. So the need is workforce because they don't have space."

The vacant Stewart Street building previously served as West Florida Community Care Center, a state-owned 90-bed residential mental health facility run by the Lakeview Center. Lakeview began discharging patients during the past year and eventually left the property empty.

The possibility of Locklin moving into the building is still in the exploratory phase. The city of Milton paid \$10,000 for a building assessment to see what it might cost to get the building up to standards. Milton Economic Development Director Ed Spears said the partners are still in the early evaluation process.

"That's a 62,000-plus-square-foot building that's sitting empty right on what many would consider one of our main thoroughfares. It can't sit there like that. We need to reinvigorate and get more activity going on there," Spears said. "From the economic development standpoint, (we're) absolutely supportive 100% on that, getting that building back to life and doing something unique for the community."

Superintendent Karen Barber said the Stewart Street building brings the advantage of public transportation with it located in Milton proper. Currently, students at the district's adult school and Locklin can struggle getting to the current facility in the unincorporated part of the county.

Figuring out funding

The school district is working with Holley's group, as well as other partners such as CareerSource EscaRosa, the city of Milton and economic development officials, Knight said. The city also is proposing another high-demand program — water and wastewater treatment training — for the new Locklin facility.

Many of the stakeholders plan to contribute money to the project if all goes according to plan but they're also applying for a Triumph Gulf Coast grant to help with the cost of

renovating any future space.

The project could be completed by the fall of 2023 if the location and funding fall into place.

"This is just a great example of a multi-agency effort that's just going to have an enormously positive impact on economic development, on workforce development and the overall community," Barber said.

Holley's group brought its idea to the school district after realizing the technical college needs to grow. He also understood that aviation maintenance was a rising field in the community.

"We know that the workforce campus is full, that's a cold hard fact. And we know that we're growing and we know that housing costs a fortune. So people need to go to workforce training to earn more money because they're not going to be able to live here," Holley said. "We would want them to learn better skills and earn better wages and be happy."

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NEWS

NWFSC to celebrate opening Walton Works Training Center of Excellence in DeFuniak Springs

Savannah Evanoff Northwest Florida Daily News

Published 2:39 p.m. ET Feb. 17, 2021 | Updated 4:22 p.m. ET Feb. 17, 2021

DeFUNIAK SPRINGS — Northwest Florida State College has taken a more hands-on approach to its Chautauqua Center.

The college remodeled two buildings on the DeFuniak Springs campus and transformed them into the Walton Works Training Center of Excellence, which hosts 10 new workforce-ready programs. Among them are law enforcement, fire academy, emergency medical technician, paramedic, cybersecurity, drone technology, electrical welding, construction and HVAC.

More: PHOTOS: Bobcat, raccoon at Northwest Florida State College

Michael Erny, the dean of career education, said the programming began in January.

“We think this will be a game changer for that area, bringing these programs and bringing this life and activity to the campus that wasn’t serving the work force directly for so long,” Erny said. “Now we’re able to provide that. We’re really in position to make a difference with the local work force.”

NWF State President Devin Stephenson, the college's board of trustees and other college and community leaders will celebrate with a grand opening ceremony at 5:30 p.m. Thursday.

Much thought was put in to what the Chautauqua Center would be.

The college consulted with Triumph Gulf Coast, Walton County commissioners, the Walton County Sheriff's Office and CareerSource Okaloosa Walton County.

Financing the center was made possible by the commitment of \$1.5 million of Walton County RESTORE Act funds approved by county commissioners and endorsed by the county's administrative team.

More: Northwest Florida State College finds recipe for success with Seagrass restaurant

The project also received \$2.7 million from the Triumph Gulf Coast board. The money was recovered for economic damages to the Florida Panhandle from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

"We did a broad-based partnership of 'What are the big needs? What are we hearing? What kind of skills are needed?'" Erny said. "Obviously, everything in the public safety area was a very important skill for the Sheriff's Office."

The Sheriff's Office also partnered with the college by providing access to its firing range and driving range in DeFuniak Springs for students in the law enforcement, fire and EMT programs to develop skills.

NWF State also looked at community needs for welding, construction and other skilled trades.

"We listened to a lot of people, listened to the community and tried to identify what needs we could serve well with training," Erny said.

Remodeling the two buildings was "a fair amount of work," Erny said.

The college added a 3,500-square-foot lab space for construction and HVAC activities in one building and constructed an approximately 6,500-square-foot welding building — not only for welding but also for an accredited test facility for the American Welding Society.

"We'll be able to use the space flexibly for HVAC training, millwright, a little bit of anything, depending on what the local needs are," Erny said.

The college also built a 900-square-foot building for drone training. It's a taller building than most to prepare participants for drone licensure, Erny said.

"But also, we can give them some training to help do building inspections," Erny said. "We can not just fly and operate a drone, but be able to use a drone specifically for inspection uses, whatever that might be, whether its property surveys, line surveys or 'Avoid getting the ladder out; let's send the drone up.' We're super excited."

The welding program and accredited test facility is a major thing, Erny said.

"It brings something to the area," Erny said. "The accredited test facility is so we can have certified welders coming out of the program, but also we can do certifications for the local area if their company needs that."

The only program not yet running is the fire training because of weather delays. Erny expects it to start in late summer.

He said many of the programs, such as construction and HVAC, are not offered at any of the other campuses.

"It adds new programming for the college, but also expands up into an area we were not doing, the career education programs and course offerings, in that area until now," Erny said.

So far, it has received a positive response from the students, he noted.

"A lot of them, it's really saved them drive time since they're not having to come all the way down to the Niceville campus," Erny said. "The instructors are excited because they have very nice places to work out of, equipment. Things are set up to operate and work very well, so they're excited to be in that space. Some of the new spaces and really just to start off what would be a new endeavor for the college, it's kind of exciting being there at the beginning."

The first part of the book is a general introduction to the subject of the book. It is written in a very simple and easy to understand style. It is written in a very simple and easy to understand style.

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NEWS

Panama City Beach to use unmanned water-rescue vehicles this summer

Nathan Cobb The News Herald

Published 10:39 a.m. ET Feb. 25, 2021 | Updated 11:03 a.m. ET Feb. 25, 2021

PANAMA CITY BEACH — Local officials plan to use new unmanned water-rescue vehicles to improve safety along the Gulf of Mexico.

With tourist season approaching, Gulf Coast State College held a joint training exercise on Wednesday with members of Panama City Beach Fire Rescue and its beach safety division to teach first responders how to operate unmanned water rescue vehicles.

Called EMILY — short for Emergency Integrated Lifesaving Lanyard — the crafts are equipped with sonar technology, can skim across the water at about 35 mph and are about the size of a small canoe.

"These devices are not to be seen as a replacement for a lifeguard because they're not," said Wil Spivey, beach safety director for the Beach. "They are an additional tool that we have available now to use as part of our program."

More: Panama City Beach seeing dip in spring vacation rental reservations as COVID-19 lingers

Spivey, who added that the equipment used in Wednesday's exercise belongs to the college, added that PCB has an agreement with the school to use its EMILY devices in its beach safety program as needed.

A GCSC press release added that the school purchased the crafts through an emergency response grant from Triumph Gulf Coast.

More: Panama City Beach 'SeeLife' statue decorations unveiled

Spivey also said PCB purchased two EMILY devices of its own from South Gulf Fire Rescue. While he wasn't sure how much they cost, he said they arrived Wednesday and were being refurbished in time for the 2021 lifeguard season that begins April 1. They will be stationed on each end of the beach, and crews will request additional crafts from the college depending on the number of beachgoers.

For Spivey, one of the biggest benefits of incorporating EMILY devices is that they will allow crews to quickly transport flotation devices to struggling swimmers before they can be reached by a lifeguard.

The crafts also can be used by people who aren't specifically trained in water rescue, providing more people to help cover the coast.

To create a safer environment for beachgoers, members of the fire department and beach safety division also are enrolled in drone training classes at the college. Spivey hoped to soon use aerial drones on the beach as well.

"Anything that can help us do our jobs (with) as much ground as we have to cover with as little resources as we have (is something) I'm excited about," he said.

Han Tang Technology/UAV Corp Completes Initial Test of the DATT SA-70 Airship

Port St. Joe-Wewahitchka, Florida--(Newsfile Corp. - November 10, 2020) - Han Tang Technology/UAV Corp (OTC Pink: HTTI) through its subsidiary Skyborne Technology, Inc. ("Skyborne") has successfully conducted an inflation test of the new DATT SA-70 semi-rigid Airship with drone package during the week of November 1-5, 2020.

"The DATT SA-70 Airship will have both manned and unmanned capabilities with a package of two (2) drones on-board the ship. The tether-airship is approximately seven stories high with a payload capability of up to 1000 lbs. and can be configured as a hybrid-electric aerial platform with recharging stations for the two drone packages," stated Michael Lawson, CEO of UAV Corp/Skyborne. Please visit www.uavcorp.net (<https://www.newsfilecorp.com/redirect/bZVKhrzv1>) to view the inflation video.



(https://orders.newsfilecorp.com/files/6982/67867_f9f873d92466c829_001full.jpg)

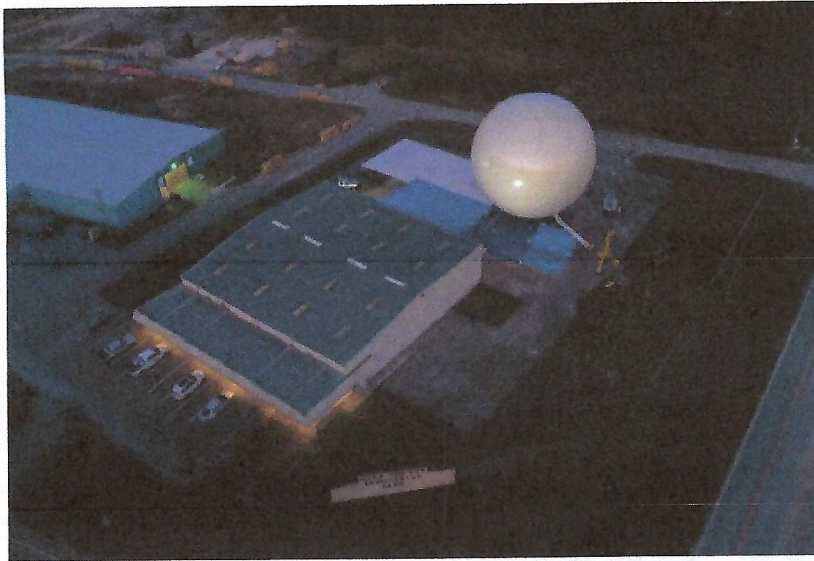
Figure 1

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"The DATT Tether-Airship will become an integral part of our region's Emergency Management in a Post-Disaster Setting thanks in large part to the vision of the Triumph Gulf Coast board, and the incredible generosity and support of Mike Lawson and the folks with Skyborne Technology," said President John Holdnak, in speaking about the recent grant award Gulf Coast State College received.



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Figure 2

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"The inflated airship is hugely impressive," commented Jim McKnight the Director of the Gulf County Economic Development Coalition. "It is a big first step in the implementation of the Disaster Response System in our region of the State. The project partnership between Skyborne and Gulf Coast State College has ignited the burgeoning aerospace cluster in Gulf County, which includes drone certifications programs at the high schools and the Unmanned Aerial System Boot Camp at the Gulf Franklin Center."

Skyborne has been given the go ahead, from Gulf County government officials, to proceed with the building of its new hangar for manned and unmanned operations, to be located at the Costin Airport in Port St. Joe, Florida. The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration awarded a \$615,000 grant to Gulf County in support of this project, to subsidize the cost for the build of a new road, three phase power, water and sewer related to the new airport hangar. This federal funding will help stimulate additional economic growth and job creation in the county.

U.S. Department of Commerce Assistant Secretary Dana Gartzke recently said that before Gulf County can really thrive with new business opportunities, there are some critical hurricane repairs that must be done. One primary focus is to support and expand a "high tech" manufacturing hub at the Costin Airport site, which Skyborne Technology is now using to develop new drones and other unmanned vehicle systems technologies. The goal of this partnership is to bring new jobs to the area, with this project alone expected to bring in about 71 related new jobs. "Our grant allows Gulf County to make those infrastructure improvements necessary for progress, and it allows Skyborne Technology to begin developing their new hangar for the manned and unmanned airships that are being developed here locally," Gartzke said.

Congressman Dr. Neal Dunn said, "Port St. Joe is a perfect place for a drone program due to all the open-air space over adjacent land and water. The DATT technology being developed by Skyborne will be able to serve a variety of emergency response, security, and defense needs nationally, and that effort will begin right here in Port St. Joe." Congressman Dunn added that this type of activity and economic development is evidence of the county's resilience in post Hurricane Michael environment.

Other grants and contracts are under negotiations, according to Skyborne's Lawson, to partner with the area colleges and businesses in developing the emergency response systems and the training programs necessary to deploy the tether-airship (DATT) system, incorporating the company's SENTINEL turn-key, seamless communication network.

"The ongoing cooperation and assistance from Gulf County, Gulf Coast State College, and Triumph Gulf Coast has taken an idea and turned it into a reality. The opportunity for both our company shareholders and the economic contributions to Gulf county has been created by partners that share a common vision with common goals," commented Billy Robinson Chairman of UAV Corp.

About Han Tang Technology/UAV CORP, Inc.:

Han Tang Technology/UAV Corp (HTTI) is a Research and Development holding company with a focus on Communication Aerospace and Environmental Solutions. Researchers at HTTI are actively engaged in solving transformative problems for the government and commercial clients. We are working on a wide range of topics including but not limited to advanced communication, Airship and Drone Technology and low altitude analysis of carbon dioxide (CO2) conversion, new energy processes, biomass conversion, energy efficiency crop and mining management.

About R Squared Technologies, Inc.:

R Squared Technologies, Inc., ("R2"), a technology company that has developed the **SENTINEL**, a man portable communication network between wired and Wi-Fi enabled devices within a secure network. It can be used for both defense and emergency management applications. The **SENTINEL** provides an immediate command and control network and provides a communication solution in response to a variety of adverse circumstances, including severe weather, natural disasters, power outages or even a hostile attack.

About Skyborne Technology, Inc.:

Skyborne Technology Inc., has significant investments in research & development of Intellectual Property and proprietary designs in areas covering semi-rigid and rigid airship design, reverse-ballonet technology, mooring and hybrid propulsion that have competitive advantages for both its Spherical and Cylinder Class tether/airship designs. Skyborne Technology has a manufacturing facility in Wewahitchka, Florida and owns the airport in Port St. Joe, Florida for manned and unmanned operations.

CAUTIONARY STATEMENT REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING INFORMATION:

This news release includes certain "forward-looking statements" under applicable US securities legislation. Forward-looking statements are necessarily based upon a number of estimates and assumptions that, while considered reasonable, are subject to known and unknown risks, uncertainties, and other factors which may cause the actual results and future events to differ materially from those expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements. Such factors include, but are not limited to: general business, economic, competitive, political and social uncertainties; delay or failure to receive board, shareholder or regulatory approvals, where applicable and the state of the capital markets. There can be no assurance that such statements will prove to be accurate, as actual results and future events could differ materially from those anticipated in such statements. Accordingly, readers should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements. The Company disclaims any intention or obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, except as required by law.

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