

# APALACHICOLA BAY SYSTEM INITIATIVE COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD'S STRATEGIES PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE RESULTS FOR INCLUSION IN THE APALACHICOLA BAY SYSTEM ECOSYSTEM-BASED ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION PLAN FRAMEWORK

PRIORITIZATION RANKING EXERCISE CONDUCTED  
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PRIORITIZATION RANKING EXERCISE DESIGNED AND CONDUCTED BY JEFF BLAIR



# STRATEGIES PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE OVERVIEW

The CAB was led through a prioritization exercise of the strategies by Goal area each in turn. Members were asked to consider the seven criteria in Table 1 (below) to assist them in evaluating the priority of each strategy. Then when asked, to rank each strategy in turn with a number from 10 - 1 using the scale in Table 2 (below), and based on whether from their stakeholder perspective the strategy was considered from a highest (10) to a lowest (1) level of a priority. In addition, members were asked to rank each strategy independently and on its own relative merit, and not in comparison with the other strategies.

It was explained that the results would be considered preliminary and as relative priorities and not as absolute priorities. The priorities may be revised and changed as agreed to by the CAB. The Project Team will likely also propose changes to the priorities based on the ABSI project’s goals and a logical sequencing for implementation from a science, technological, and potential funding perspective. In addition, all strategies within each Priority Level (Table 3) are of equal priority and will be implemented based on a logical sequencing. The priorities will be further evaluated in Phase IV of the project commencing in early 2022.

The following tables reflect the Criteria (Table 1), Ranking Scale (Table 2), and the three Priority Levels (Table 3) resulting from the ranking exercise results.

TABLE 1 — CRITERIA TO CONSIDER FOR PRIORITIZING STRATEGIES	
EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES ARE URGENT TO IMPLEMENT, HAVE SUPPORT, AND ARE SMART	
CRITERIA	EXPLANATION
U	<b>URGENT</b> Is it essential to address the issue to achieve the goals and objectives? Will things move in the wrong direction if the issue is not addressed?
S	<b>SUPPORT</b> There is commitment and support from key stakeholders and regulators for implementation of the <i>Strategy</i> .
S	<b>SPECIFIC</b> It is detailed enough so that anyone reviewing the <i>Strategy</i> will know what is intended to be accomplished.
M	<b>MEASURABLE</b> The end result can be identified in terms of quantity, quality, acceptable standards, etc. You know you have a measurable <i>Strategy</i> when it states in objective terms the end result or product.
A	<b>ATTAINABLE</b> The <i>Strategy</i> is likely to be implemented, and there are resources available, or likely to become available for implementing the <i>Strategy</i> .
R	<b>RELEVANT</b> The <i>Strategy</i> is relevant, and if implemented it is likely to be successful in achieving the relevant goals and objectives of the ABSI.
T	<b>TIME-FRAMED</b> There are milestones with a specific date attached for completion.

TABLE 2 — PRIORITIZATION RANKING SCALE USED FOR STRATEGIES			
SCALE RANGE 10 – 1 (10 HIGHEST RATING TO 1 LOWEST RATING)			
RATING	EXPLANATION	RATING	EXPLANATION
10	Highest Level of Priority—Urgent/Critical	5	Medium Level of Priority
9	Very High Level of Priority	4	Medium Low Level of Priority
8	High Level of Priority	3	Low Level of Priority
7	Medium High Level of Priority	2	Very Low Level of Priority
6	Moderately High Level of Priority	1	Lowest Possible Priority—Don’t Pursue

TABLE 3 — PRIORITY 1, 2, AND 3 STRATEGIES RESULTING FROM RANKING RESULTS	
THE PRIORITY OF EACH STRATEGY IS DETERMINED BY THE AVERAGE RANKING SCORE FOR THE STRATEGY	
RANK RANGE	EXPLANATION
10 – 8 Ranking	Strategies that achieve an average ranking of from 10 - 8 will be classified as: <b>Priority 1 Strategies = Important To Do Now</b>
7 – 5 Ranking	Strategies that achieve an average ranking of from 7 - 5 will be classified as: <b>Priority 2 Strategies = Important But Less Time Sensitive</b>
4 – 1 Ranking	Strategies that achieve an average ranking of from 4 - 1 will be classified as: <b>Priority 3 Strategies = As Time and Resources Allow</b>

<b>PRIORITY OF STRATEGIES BY GOAL AREA</b>	
<b>ALL STRATEGIES WITHIN EACH PRIORITY LEVEL (1 – 3) ARE OF EQUAL PRIORITY AND WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BASED ON A LOGICAL SEQUENCING</b>	
<b>Priority 1 Strategies (10, 9, 8) = Important To Do Now</b>	
<b>GOAL A</b>	<b>GOAL B</b>
1.) Restore and create reef structures suitable for sustained oyster settlement that enhance ecosystem services in designated restoration areas. (#1 – 9.6) <i>(#1 overall rank for Goal A – 9.6 mean/average)</i>	10.) Evaluate a suite of management approaches that in combination achieve the goal of maintaining a sustainable wild oyster fishery as measured in relation to relevant performance metrics for determining success. (#1 – 9.3) <i>(#1 overall rank for Goal B – 9.3 mean/average)</i>
2.) Use experimental evidence and habitat suitability analyses to determine the most suitable substrate (e.g., limestone, granite, spat-on-shell, artificial structures) for restoring, enhancing, and/or developing new reef structures that will increase productivity in the Apalachicola Bay oyster ecosystem. (#2 - 8.7)	1.) Recommend specific criteria and/or conditions, with related performance measures for the reopening of Apalachicola Bay to limited wild oyster harvesting. (#2 – 9.0)
4.) Determine area (acres or km <sup>2</sup> ) of oyster reefs that currently support live oysters as well as the area needed to ensure sufficient spat production that will support sustainability of oyster reefs and sustainability of a wild oyster fishery throughout the ABS. (#3 - 8.6)	2.) Conduct an oyster stock assessment for the ABS with periodic updates. (#3 – 8.8)
3.) Develop criteria for restoring specific reefs or reef systems damaged by environmental conditions or natural disasters. (#4 – 8.2)	5.) Manage the commercial oyster industry and recreational oyster fishing to provide for sustainable spat production and the recovery of oyster populations. (#4 – 8.75)
5.) Identify monitoring needs for assessing the health of oyster populations (including disease), and detecting changes in environmental conditions and habitat quality (for oysters and other reef-associated species) over time. (#4 – 8.2)	12.) Work with FWC Law Enforcement to develop enforcement strategies and appropriate penalties sufficient to deter harvest or sale of undersized oysters as well as violations that harm wild or leased oyster reefs and other natural resources, and that will support restoration efforts in the ABS. (#5 – 8.6)
	3.) Evaluate the development of a policy that would require setting sustainable harvest goals and placing limitations on or a complete closure to harvesting based on the results of data (e.g., stock assessment) collected and evaluated under a comprehensive monitoring program designed to sustainably manage the resource. (#6 – 8.5)
	6.) Restore and create reef structures suitable in size, location, and substrate type for healthy and

	sustainable oyster settlement and production, and harvesting. (#7 – 8.3)
<b>Priority 2 Strategies (7, 6, 5) = Important But Less Time Sensitive</b>	
<b>GOAL A</b>	<b>GOAL B</b>
6.) Develop ecosystem models that forecast future environmental conditions and oyster population status. (#6 – 7.2)	7.) Recommend policies and actions that retain and recycle shell for habitat replenishment in the ABS. (#8 – 7.7)
7.) Assess existing ecosystem services metrics used for other oyster studies, and develop a list of ABSI specific metrics to assess change over time. (#7 – 6.7)	4.) Use decision-support tools to develop a system of potential closed areas that are well defined in terms of size, location, and longevity and include rotational and seasonal harvest areas, as well as long-term closed areas in strategic locations to provide habitat for year-round protection for brood stock and enhanced spawning opportunities. (#9 – 7.6)
	9.) Use ecological quantitative modeling and other decision support tools to evaluate strategies and actions, and define performance criteria for an oyster population that can sustain a pre-determined level of wild oyster harvest, with a stipulated number of harvesters (limited entry), and protocols to ensure sustainability. (#10 – 7.5)
	11.) Work with FDACS to ensure that oyster aquaculture practices and locations in the Bay are compatible with the goals and strategies for restoration and management of the ecosystem and are compatible with a wild fisheries and the important cultural role of a working waterfront and seafood industry. (#11 – 6.8)
	8.) Investigate oyster shell and oyster relay programs to move both cultch and live oysters to more favorable habitat (relay programs are recommended to only be used for restoration experiments). (#12 – 5.9)
<b>Priority 3 Strategies (4, 3, 2, 1) = As Time and Resources Allow</b>	
<b>GOAL A</b>	<b>GOAL B</b>
8.) Seagrass and other SAV, and wetland and riparian habitat should be restored concurrently on appropriate substrate/bottom to work synergistically with oyster habitat restoration to enhance restoration of the ABS. (#8 – 4.73)	

<b>PRIORITY OF STRATEGIES BY GOAL AREA</b>	
<b>ALL STRATEGIES WITHIN EACH PRIORITY LEVEL (1 – 3) ARE OF EQUAL PRIORITY AND WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BASED ON A LOGICAL SEQUENCING</b>	
<b>Priority 1 Strategies (10, 9, 8) = Important To Do Now</b>	
<b>GOAL C</b>	<b>GOAL D</b>
1.) The ABSI Team and the CAB will continue to have an open and transparent process for the development of the Plan with many opportunities for stakeholder engagement and input in a variety of forums (e.g., workshops, online, public/government meetings) for generating awareness and support while incorporating any changes the CAB deems appropriate and necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives. (#1 – 9.1) <i>(#1 overall rank for Goal C – 9.1 mean/average)</i>	1.) Develop a Community Advisory Board (CAB) for the ABSI that provides critical information and perspective to the ABSI leadership and whose members recognize the importance of their role as ambassadors for the initiative*. (#1 – 8.9) <i>* Status: Initiated.</i> <i>(#1 overall rank for Goal D – 8.9 mean/average)</i>
3.) A successor group to the CAB will be developed and in place by the time the Plan is completed*. (#1 – 9.1) <i>* Status: under development</i>	
2.) During 2021, the ABSI Team will form a sub-committee within the CAB to evaluate the efficacy of forming a CAB successor group. The intent of a successor group would be to ensure continuity between the CAB members and the agencies responsible for oyster management. (#3 – 8.8)	
4.) Create a comprehensive funding approach for the Apalachicola Bay System Ecosystem-Based Adaptive Management and Restoration Plan implementation including a comprehensive analysis for future grant funding for strategies, including support for sustainable monitoring deriving from the Plan. (#4 – 8.5)	
<b>Priority 2 Strategies (7, 6, 5) = Important But Less Time Sensitive</b>	
<b>GOAL C</b>	<b>GOAL D</b>
	2.) Build, with the help of the CAB, community support and stewardship by educating stakeholders on the importance of maintaining healthy oyster reefs and by engaging them in the Bay restoration through a variety of hands-on programs. (#2 – 7.)
	3.) Support and participate in providing educational opportunities for students at all levels (primary & secondary school through college) to understand the value of their coastal ecosystems, importance of stewardship and the role oysters play in ecosystem health and fisheries. (#3 – 6.7)

<b>Priority 3 Strategies (4, 3, 2, 1) = As Time and Resources Allow</b>	
<b>GOAL C</b>	<b>GOAL D</b>

**PRIORITY OF STRATEGIES BY GOAL AREA  
STRATEGIES OUTSIDE OF ABSI SCOPE**

**Priority 1 Strategies (10, 9, 8) = Important To Do Now**

<b>GOAL E STRATEGIES TO BE REFERRED</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TO BE REFERRED</b>
9.) Engage commercial fishermen in the restoration of the bay and encourage future participation in restoration such as monitoring, shell recycling, shelling, and relaying. (#1 – 8.5) <i>(#1 overall rank for Goal E – 8.5 mean/ average)</i>	
2.) Recommend monitoring and enforcement programs continue with appropriate metrics to measure output from and impact of harvest on oyster reefs. (#2 – 8.3)	

**Priority 2 Strategies (7, 6, 5) = Important But Less Time Sensitive**

<b>GOAL E STRATEGIES TO BE REFERRED</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TO BE REFERRED</b>
8.) Coordinate with the local business community and governing bodies (i.e., city and county commissions) to ensure that growth management plans, land use and development regulations meet strong standards that are compatible with and minimize the environmental impact of industry and business activities within the ABS and are conducive to a healthy ecosystem. (#3 – 7.2)	5.) Work with State legislators and state agencies to develop funding strategies, and incentives for involving local watermen, seafood dealers, restaurants, aquaculture operations, and private citizens in oyster reef restoration efforts that will increase the viability of oyster resources. (#1 – 7.7) <i>(#1 overall rank for Referred Strategies – 7.7 mean/ average)</i>
10.) Coordinate with and encourage recreational businesses and activities that recognize the importance of and support a sustainable commercial oyster fishery and the importance of the seafood industry to the Region’s cultural heritage. (#4 – 6.9)	4.) Provide training and financial support for new workforce entrants (particularly young entrants) interested in being employed in existing industries as well as and developing industries in new fisheries, aquaculture, and restoration science. (#2 – 6.4)
1.) Work with existing partners (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, Apalachee Regional Planning Council, and city and county staff) to monitor and report on the economic benefits of a restored ABS, including key economic indicators relevant to the commercial oyster fishery and associated industries in the region. This can be displayed as a dashboard that includes key economic indicators over time based on restoration efforts in the Apalachicola Bay System (ABS). (#5 – 6.8)	1.) Develop surveys or other tools that can be used to measure and track changes in stakeholder and public understanding of the issues important to the health and restoration of the Bay. (#3 – 6.3)



3.) Support planning tied to economic indicators that consider future conditions (climate, SLR, reduced river flow) and their effects on the ABS. (#6 – 6.6)	3.) Build Gulf-wide mechanism for communities interested in the restoration and revitalization of fisheries to exchange best practices and lessons learned. (#4 – 6.0)
7.) Review land development regulations to provide flexibility while supporting and enhancing efforts to maintain and revitalize working waterfronts in Apalachicola and Eastpoint to ensure preservation of Franklin County’s cultural heritage and a viable seafood industry. (#7 - 6.5)	2.) Engage the general public (students, residents and tourists) in learning about the history and the ecological and economic importance of the Apalachicola Bay region, including the natural resources, and lumber, cotton shipping, and fishing industries. (#5 - 5.3)
4.) Work with oystermen and other community stakeholders to promote post-recovery Apalachicola oysters. (#8 – 6.2)	
5.) Develop complementary industries in wild oyster harvest and oyster aquaculture that provide new economic opportunities by building a network of experts that can help Franklin County citizens build successful programs through business training, identifying sources of funding for equipment, and developing products that will enhance and diversify local industries. (#9 – 6.0)	
<b>Priority 3 Strategies (4, 3, 2, 1) = As Time and Resources Allow</b>	
<b>GOAL E STRATEGIES TO BE REFERRED</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TO BE REFERRED</b>
6.) Develop new markets for selling oysters to areas within and outside of Florida in part by investing in location (Apalachicola Bay) branding. (#10 – 4.5)	