

# Protecting Florida's Atlantic Coast Salt Marshes

Florida State Implementation Roadmap  
Executive Summary





# Why Salt Marsh Matters

Salt marshes along Florida's Atlantic coast are among the **most productive and valuable ecosystems** in the state. They support fisheries and wildlife, protect coastal communities, improve water quality, and store carbon.



Salt marshes generate

**\$1 Billion annually** from recreational fishing

In Duval County alone, marshes reduce flood damages by

**\$96–\$276 million per year**

Salt marshes saved Florida over **\$407 million**

in storm damages in 2024



## **A System at Risk**

Despite their value, salt marshes are increasingly under pressure:

- Sea level rise is accelerating marsh loss
- Coastal development and infrastructure are limiting marsh migration
- Changes to natural water flow are degrading marsh health

Recent projections estimate that **sea level in Florida could rise 10-17 inches by 2040 and 21-54 inches by 2070**. Without action, Florida's Atlantic coast **may lose up to 70% of existing marsh by 2040, and nearly 100% of existing marsh by 2070**.



# A Coordinated Path Forward

## **There is still time to act.**

Florida's Atlantic coast contains approximately 97,000 acres of salt marsh, along with extensive marsh migration corridors that provide an opportunity to sustain these ecosystems into the future.

The **South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI)** is a collaborative partnership working to protect and sustain nearly one million acres of salt marsh across the South Atlantic region.



Led by the Florida State Implementation Team (FSIT), this **Florida State Implementation Roadmap** provides a science-based, partner-driven strategy to protect and restore salt marshes across Florida's Atlantic Coast. It builds upon ongoing efforts across the region and provides a framework to scale and expand these solutions. The Roadmap centers on two primary strategies that are supported by four crosscutting actions:



### **Protect and restore**

the health and functions of existing salt marshes



### **Conserve**

marsh migration corridors and remove or retrofit barriers to ensure salt marshes can shift as sea levels rise

# Priority Strategic Actions

*These high priority actions reflect a coordinated, partner-driven framework to protect existing marshes, enable future migration, and strengthen coastal resilience across Florida's Atlantic coast.*

## Strategy 1: Protect & Restore Existing Marshes

Advance and expand implementation of living shorelines across the region

Promote and strengthen the use of low impact development (LID) practices

Advance and implement modern stormwater management practices

Develop and share a regional best practices library for marsh restoration, water management, and migration planning

Improve access to critical data to support better decision-making

## Strategy 2: Conserve Marsh Migration Corridors

Advance permanent protection of marsh migration corridors

Develop incentives and payment for ecosystem services programs for private lands

Integrate marsh migration corridors into infrastructure and land use planning

Identify and prioritize barrier removal and retrofitting projects to restore hydrologic connectivity

# Priority Crosscutting Actions

*Actions that build the partnerships, funding, and support needed to advance salt marsh conservation at scale.*

## Policy and Funding

Identify and engage key legislative champions at state and local levels

Improve coordination and cross-learning among permitting agencies

Secure long-term, consistent funding sources for conservation and restoration

Establish partnerships and agreements to accelerate project implementation

Align salt marsh protection with military resilience priorities

## Communications, Education, Community and Culture

Partner with underrepresented coastal communities and Indigenous groups

Develop training and outreach materials to expand local capacity

Build a network of community partners and engagement opportunities

Conduct onsite engagement with policy makers to increase awareness and support

Create clear, accessible communication materials for decision makers



# Measuring Success

Measuring progress is essential to understanding the impact of this Roadmap. The FSIT will track progress through partner reporting, project tracking, and ongoing coordination with agencies and organizations across the region, with results reported through future SASMI Impact Reports. The following are some of the metrics to be used for tracking success over the next five years:



**15,000**

acres of marsh and marsh migration corridors protected



**8,000**

linear feet of living shoreline constructed or enhanced



**75**

salt marsh protection or restoration projects initiated



**\$5 million**

funding committed or invested in SASMI projects



**60**

engagement events offered to partners and the community

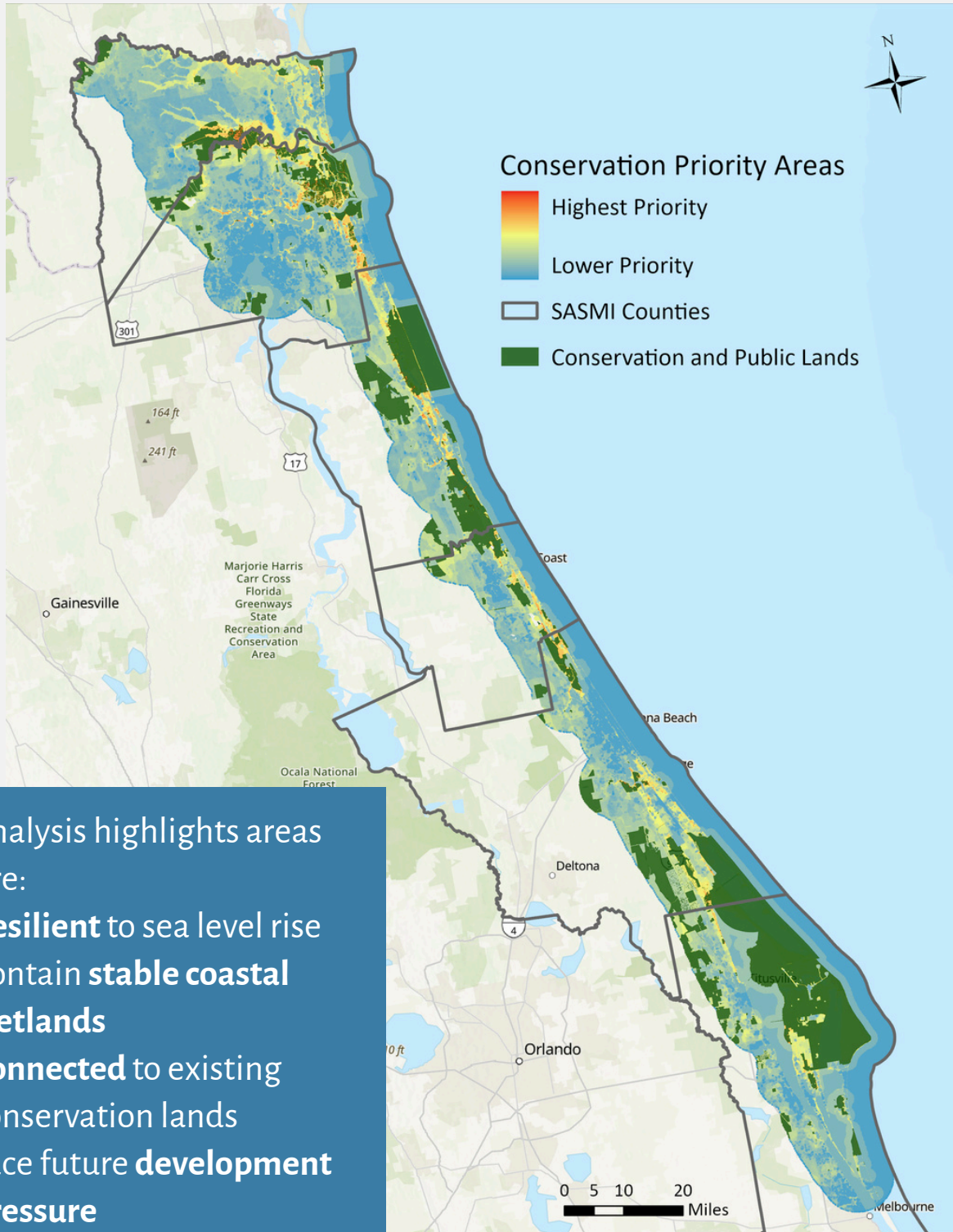
## **An Adaptive Framework**

This Roadmap is designed to evolve over time. Through an adaptive management approach, partners will track progress annually, evaluate outcomes, refine priorities and actions, and incorporate new science and opportunities. This ensures that conservation efforts remain effective and responsive to changing conditions.



# Conservation Priority Areas

This GIS-based analysis identifies the highest priority areas for salt marsh protection and marsh migration corridor conservation, helping **guide where actions and investments can have the greatest impact.**



This analysis highlights areas that are:

- **Resilient** to sea level rise
- Contain **stable coastal wetlands**
- **Connected** to existing conservation lands
- Face future **development pressure**

# Looking Ahead

Salt marshes are essential to Florida's coast, but their future depends on the actions taken today.

The tools, partnerships, and knowledge are already in place. What is needed now is **continued collaboration, strategic investment, and coordinated action.**

By working together, Florida has a unique opportunity to:

- Protect coastal communities
- Sustain critical ecosystems
- Strengthen the coastal economy

**The future of Florida's salt marshes is not yet determined, but it will be shaped by the actions we take today.**



**View the full SASMI Florida State Implementation Plan StoryMap:**



*Submit questions or comments on the Florida State Implementation Roadmap to Heather Nagy, FSIT Lead, at [hnagy@nflt.org](mailto:hnagy@nflt.org)*