



## INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS AND RAISES FUNDS



A formal Interlocal Agreement in Tampa Bay, Florida, has helped ensure sustained funding to the region's estuary program since 2000, and generates at least \$415,000 in cash each year as a match toward EPA funding.

Established in 1990, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) has worked diligently to involve local governments and Tampa Bay area citizens in its activities and in 1998 adopted a formal Interlocal Agreement that committed 15 partners to achieving the goals of the program's bay restoration plan. Partners included city, county, and state governments, a water management district, a regional planning council, a port authority, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

### THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM IN ACTION

### Tampa Bay Estuary Program



Goals of the bay restoration plan focus on restoring and sustaining a healthier bay that will support recreational and commercial uses. Goals are related to improving water and sediment quality, restoring seagrass beds and coastal habitats, and reducing bacterial contamination. Partners also committed to improving fish and wildlife regulation and enforcement, managing dredging and dredged material, and increasing public education and involvement.

ment can serve as a model for similar efforts by other community-based programs:

- Having a champion kept the process moving. The water management district's representative on the TBEP Policy Board, an experienced contract attorney, conceived the idea of the agreement, drafted it, and worked to build consensus among stakeholders and overcome obstacles in the process.

- Long-term stakeholder relationships supported consensus. The Tampa Bay community has

TBEP's success in reaching consensus on the Interlocal Agree-

been working together on bay management and protection for 25 years, ever since the first Bay Area Scientific Information Symposium (BASIS) in 1982. Several milestones followed BASIS that built a tradition of regional cooperation among bay area scientists and resource managers and fostered consensus on the Interlocal Agreement.

- Incentives encouraged participation. For example, participation in the Estuary Program may have been spurred, in part, by a desire to ensure that the program followed a non-regulatory approach to resource management. Regulators agreed to extend reasonable flexibility in permitting projects of TBEP partners that helped achieve the goals of the bay restoration plan.

Further, a track record of affordable, successful demonstrative projects showed that the agree-

ment would be a good investment for the partners. It was estimated that the added cost each year to TBEP's partners for implementing the restoration plan was insignificant compared to their overall budgets.

Visit **[www.tbep.org](http://www.tbep.org)** to learn more about this and other TBEP efforts.

*EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP) is a unique and successful coastal watershed-based program established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act Amendments. The NEP involves the public and collaborates with partners to protect, restore, and maintain the water quality and ecological integrity of 28 estuaries of national significance located in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico.*

*For more information about the NEP go to [www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries](http://www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries).*