RESTORE Act Bucket 2 Round 1 November 2014
Council Member Proposal – State of Texas
Matagorda Bay System Priority Landscape Conservation Project

Council Member Applicant and Proposal Information Summary Sheet

Council Member: Commissioner Toby Baker Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Governor Perry's Appointee to the RESTORE Council	Point of Contact: Ted Hollingsworth Phone: 512-389-4520 Email: ted.hollingsworth@tpwd.texas.gov

Project Identification

Project Title: Matagorda Bay System Priority Landscape Conservation	Project
State(s): Texas	County/City/Region: Matagorda, Calhoun, Jackson, Refugio, Aransas Counties

General Location: *Projects must be located within the Gulf Coast Region as defined in RESTORE Act. (attach map or photos, if applicable)*
Within 15 miles of San Antonio, Espiritu Santo, Matagorda or East Matagorda Bays and associated estuaries

Project Description

RESTORE Goals: *Identify all RESTORE Act goals this project supports. Place a **P** for Primary Goal, and **S** for secondary goals.*

P Restore and Conserve Habitat
___Restore Water Quality
___Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy
S Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources
___Enhance Community Resilience

RESTORE Objectives: *Identify all RESTORE Act objectives this project supports. Place a **P** for Primary Objective, and **S** for secondary objectives.*

P Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats
S Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources
S Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources
S Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines
___Promote Community Resilience
S Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education
___Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes

RESTORE Priorities: *Identify all RESTORE Act priorities that this project supports.*

√ Priority 1: Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution
√ Priority 2: Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring
___Priority 3: Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration ….
√ Priority 4: Projects that restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries …

RESTORE Commitments: *Identify all RESTORE Comprehensive Plan commitments that this project supports.*

√ Commitment to Science-based Decision Making
√ Commitment to Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration
√ Commitment to Engagement, Inclusion, and Transparency
√ Commitment to Leverage Resources and Partnerships
√ Commitment to Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts

RESTORE Proposal Type and Phases: *Please identify which type and phase best suits this proposal.*

√ Project ___Planning ___Technical Assistance √ Implementation ___Program

Project Cost and Duration

Project Cost Estimate: **Total** :	**$** 44,922,705	**Project Timing Estimate**: Date Anticipated to Start: 06/01/2015 Time to Completion: 12 months Anticipated Project Lifespan: >200 years

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Matagorda Bay System on the central Texas Coast includes four major interconnected bays and their associated tidal sub-bays and tributaries. From southwest to northeast these include: San Antonio, Espiritu Santo, Matagorda and East Matagorda Bays. This bay system covers 627 square miles of open water, averaging approximately six feet deep (Armstrong, 1987) and is separated and protected from the open Gulf of Mexico by 83 miles of barrier peninsulas and islands that include Matagorda Island and West and East Matagorda Peninsulas. In addition to the inherent diversity and productivity of this system, which ranges from fresh water to hyper-saline, gulf beaches to quiet coves and sloughs and emergent fringe marshes to maritime forests and coastal prairies, the Matagorda Bay System project area offers unique opportunities to protect coastal habitats on a landscape scale because of its relative lack of human fragmentation and development. Unlike the Galveston Bay System to the northeast which is home to the cities of Galveston and Houston, or the Corpus Christi Bay System to the southwest which is home to the City of Corpus Christi, the largest community on the Matagorda Bay System by far is Port Lavaca, with a population of 12,248 in the 2010 census.

As of November, 2014, Texas state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, working with private sector coastal partners, have identified three tracts of land for fee simple acquisition totaling 17,000 acres at a cost of $36.6 million as strategic conservation priorities. A fourth tract targeted for acquisition of a conservation easement is 10,000 acres valued at $8 million. The fee simple acquisitions are available from willing sellers at appraised value and include some 28 miles of frontage on the Matagorda Bay System and the Gulf of Mexico. They protect habitat for endangered whooping cranes, piping plovers and sea turtles, as well as a variety of coastal habitats including beaches, dunes, coastal prairie, pothole wetlands and coastal live oak forests. In addition, conservation of these tracts will protect extensive adjacent seagrass and shellfish beds. They also protect water quality by conserving local estuarine watersheds, filtering runoff and groundwater recharge and preserving local freshwater inflows.

The acquisition and conservation management of these lands would contribute significantly to several goals and objectives articulated by the RESTORE Council as found in the Comprehensive Plan. The **primary goal** of the project is to **Restore and Conserve Habitat,** but will also directly contribute to the protection of water quality and replenishment and living coastal and marine resources. The project's **primary objective** is to **Restore, Enhance and Protect Habitats**. In addition, protection of water resources, protection and restoration of living coastal and marine resources, and restoration and enhancement of natural processes and shorelines will also be accomplished. This project is ideally suited to address these goals and objectives because of the rare opportunity to conserve entire tidal systems and their associated transitional and upland

habitats on a scale that is necessary to address complete life-cycles of species, to support entire plant/animals communities, and to sustain natural processes such as fire. Each acquisition will add to and/or complement existing conservation projects such as the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area and the Powderhorn Ranch.

Because of Texas' experience in land conservation, working through its fish and wildlife agency, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private sector partners, Texas can respond quickly and efficiently to an award of funds for land conservation. Good working relationships have been established with the owners of the highest-priority tracts, so Texas anticipates being able to get these tracts under contract, and to have due diligence well under way or completed by the times funds are made available. Such stakeholder relationships increase the probability that the most important tracts will still be available at that time. Furthermore, a number of large ecologically-significant tracts of shoreline, sloughs, ponds, marshes, coastal prairies, and forests remain, meaning there will be additional opportunities to achieve more landscape-scale land conservation within the project area in the future.

Success will be measured not only in the number of acres conserved, but in the diversity and productivity of the habitats represented, proximity and connectivity to adjacent or nearby conservation lands, and topography that will accommodate anticipated sea-level rise over the coming century. The involvement of TPWD also brings the prospect of managed public access and recreation, interpretation and education associated with some or all of these acquisitions (TPWD, 2013).

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Proposal Introduction and Background

Ninety-five percent of Texas is privately owned (IRNR, 2014). This means that a holistic and comprehensive conservation strategy must include influencing land uses and management practices on private lands and the acquisition of trust lands for permanent restoration and long-term management of historic ecosystem values. The former is being accomplished through acquisition of term and permanent easements and programs that provide financial incentives to maintain grasslands and wetlands, restore wetlands, and manage lands for listed and candidate species. The latter is being accomplished through the establishment and expansion of a National Seashore, National Wildlife Refuges, State Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, and other tracts held in perpetuity for conservation by local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Much of the Texas coast is still undeveloped, but the

economy is thriving and the population is growing rapidly. Communities and commerce are springing up and expanding. Land values and fragmentation are on the increase (ibid.). Opportunities to conserve landscape-scale lands for permanent conservation of the remarkable diversity and productivity of Texas beaches and estuaries are being lost. There is a need to acquire lands for permanent conservation while we still have opportunities, identified as a major action in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force's Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy (GCERTF, 2011). Only in this way can the health of Gulf and the Gulf Coast habitats and water quality be assured for future generations.

The Matagorda Bay System on the central Texas Coast includes four major interconnected bays and their associated tidal sub-bays and tributaries. From southwest to northeast these include: San Antonio, Espiritu Santo, Matagorda and East Matagorda Bays. This bay system covers 627 square miles of open water averaging approximately six feet deep (Armstrong, 1987), separated and protected from the open Gulf of Mexico by 83 miles of barrier peninsulas and islands that include Matagorda Island and West and East Matagorda Peninsulas. In addition to the inherent diversity and productivity of this system, which ranges from fresh water to hyper-saline East Matagorda Bay, Gulf beaches to quiet coves and sloughs, and emergent fringe marshes to maritime forests and coastal prairies, this focal area offers unique opportunities to protect coastal habitats on a landscape scale because of its relative lack of human fragmentation and development. Unlike the Galveston Bay System to the northeast, which is home to the cities of Galveston and Houston, or the Corpus Christi Bay System to the southwest, which is home to the City of Corpus Christi, the largest community on the Matagorda Bay System is the community of Port Lavaca, with a population of 12,248 in the 2010 census. The *Comprehensive Plan* Goal of restoring and conserving habitat, and the *Comprehensive Plan* Objective of restoring, enhancing and protecting habitats are to be significantly addressed by the acquisition, management, and where appropriate, restoration of miles of shoreline and thousands of acres of the most productive wetland, transitional and upland habitat within this system.

Strategic acquisitions within this system will yield tremendous habitat and water quality benefits into the foreseeable future. The targeted acquisitions will protect many miles of tidal shoreline and littoral zone, which in turn protects adjacent oyster and seagrass beds from the detrimental effects that inevitably follow shoreline development. This development often includes construction of canal subdivisions, access channels, bulkheads, breakwaters, piers and boat launches, all of which can have direct and indirect impacts on habitat and water quality, including turbidity, nutrient loading, prop scarring and fuel spills. Acquisition and conservation helps offset systemic wetland losses across the Gulf of Mexico, which between 1998 and 2004 were 25 times higher than anywhere in the U.S. (Stedman and Dahl, 2008)

In addition, the targeted acquisitions include healthy mosaics of lagoons, coves, washover channels, emergent marshes, tidal and algal flats, and salt meadows, dramatically increasing their value and productivity as nurseries for a host of invertebrates and vertebrates, including many species critical to the food chain and many species that are recreationally and commercially important in Texas and across the Gulf, such as white shrimp, flounder, spotted sea trout and red drum (Kneib, 1997). Protecting remaining shorelines and adjacent wetland complexes with this degree of intact wetland and transitional habitat is critical for maintaining some of the historic diversity, productivity and ecosystem services of the estuaries and the water quality on which they depend to function properly (Barbier et al, 2011). And it is particularly important that tracts of sufficient scale and topography are protected to support target habitats in the face of sea level rise. Targeting high-value cost-effective opportunities to effect this conservation now is going to be critical if we hope to maintain and even restore some of the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico.

Implementation technology

The federal and state fish and wildlife agencies within Texas, working closely with conservation partners along the coast, and for more than 40 years, have monitored shellfish, finfish, bird and turtle populations along the 367 miles of Texas Gulf shoreline and within the seven major bay systems. This partnership has also monitored changing demographics, land uses, freshwater inflows, chemistry, nutrient loading and sediment regimes, in an effect to understand short and long-term changes to the Gulf and its estuaries. This extensive body of information has informed conservation and restoration efforts in Texas for decades. Land conservation initiatives that are the most critical for restoring health to the Gulf, that achieve the greatest net long-term conservation of diversity and productivity, and that are most at risk have been identified as the highest priorities for Texas. As of November, 2014, those initiatives are centered on the Salt Bayou/Chenier Plain Complex and the Galveston Bay watershed on the Upper Coast, the Matagorda Bay Complex on the Mid-Coast, and the Bahia Grande-Laguna Atascosa corridor on the Lower Coast. The Matagorda Bay System Priority Landscape Conservation Project will achieve tremendous and cost-effective long-term conservation of diversity and productivity for Texas and the Gulf.

Within the Matagorda Bay System, Texas' coastal partnership has identified three tracts of land for fee simple acquisition totaling 17,000 acres valued at $37 million and a fourth tract of land for acquisition of a conservation easement covering 10,000 acres valued at $8 million, as strategic conservation priorities. The fee simple acquisitions are available from willing sellers at appraised value and include some 28 miles of frontage on the Matagorda Bay System and the

Gulf of Mexico. These tracts protect habitat for endangered whooping cranes, piping plovers and sea turtles, as well as the full spectrum of coastal habitats including beaches, dunes, coastal prairies, pothole wetlands and coastal live oak forests. In addition, conservation of these tracts protects extensive adjacent seagrass and shellfish beds. And protection of these lands and habitats on this scale will have a significant effect on estuarine water quality, because of their geology and soils which filter and hydrate local ground water systems that in turn seep into tidal marshes and bays.

Fee simple acquisition of these lands and ownership by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is preferred over acquisition of conservation easement where feasible. Coastal habitats typically require active management to maintain them in relatively historic condition. Introduction of fire, restoration of hydrology where it has been altered by previous land use, and control of exotic and invasive species is often required, and a state or federal owner is more likely to invest the needed time and money to maintain this level of management. In addition, a public owner is generally in a better position to offer an appropriate level of public access to these special places for recreation and education.

Monitoring and adaptive management of the project or program

Although specific management practices cannot be defined until a specific tract(s) is under contract for acquisition, a significant level of natural and cultural resource survey and inventory will take place on each tract acquired. Survey of natural resources will be both qualitative and quantitative and will help define needed restoration and management activities. Management activities will be monitored and will be adaptive. For example, on the recently acquired Powderhorn Ranch, which is within the project area, intensive vegetation inventories, including the establishment of vegetation monitoring plots, are underway. Areas overgrown with "running" live oak and determined to be in need of control, will be subject to a variety of treatments, including combinations of chemical control and fire. Suppression of the undesirable vegetation will be monitored, as will re-establishment of grasses and forbs, and use by resident and migratory game and song birds. The results of pre- and post-treatment monitoring will then inform future treatment regimens and schedules.

Measures of success for the proposed project or programs

The measure of success for this project is acres of high-quality habitat and miles of shoreline protected from future degradation, and the net contribution of these lands to the health, diversity and productivity of the Texas Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. With the acquisition of either fee simple ownership or conservation easements on high quality conservation lands,

protection of significant coastal habitats, direct water quality benefits, and social benefits such as recreation and prevention of development in zones subject to storm surges and coastal flooding will be realized. Although the simplest measure is number of acres, a regular regimen of surveys, both onshore and nearshore, will inform the true net conservation value of the project. Over time, the value of these protected lands to migratory songbirds, migratory waterfowl, shore and wading birds, oyster, shrimp and fin fisheries, and a number of other species will be evident and quantifiable.

Risks and uncertainties of the proposed activities

Risks of the proposed activities are considered minimal. Owners of the highest priority conservation tracts, of 7,000, 6,200 and 3,800 acres, are known to be willing sellers at appraised value. There is a risk that in the booming economy of south and southeast Texas, land values could escalate out-of-proportion to the value or availability of funding, and that the cost of the project could exceed current estimates. If for any reason any of the target tracts should become unavailable, there are other large-scale high-value private lands available within the project area.

Over the long term, such as decades or even centuries, relative sea level rise is expected to affect all coastal habitats (IPCC, 2013). That's why it is so important to acquire lands of sufficient scale, slope and topography to accommodate sea level rise. The Matagorda Bay Complex project area is ideal in this respect. The high point on the recently-acquired Powderhorn Ranch, for example, is 16 feet above mean sea level (MSL). The high point on Galveston Island, 100 miles to the northeast, is 6 feet MSL. Even with 10 feet (3 meters) of sea level rise, the Powderhorn Ranch is expected to support the full range of coastal habitat supported by Galveston Island today, including tidal marshes and flats, prairie and oak forest.

Outreach and education opportunities

The proposal is focused on acquisition of high-value high-priority landscape-scale conservation lands, and because specific tracts involved are dependent on funding and timing, no funds are specifically requested for the establishment or programming of outreach and education opportunities. Nonetheless, ownership of any of these tracts by TPWD or USFWS will create or add to an existing wildlife refuge(s), wildlife management area(s) or state park(s), which means there will be opportunities for public access, recreation, outreach, interpretation and education.

Part of the recently-acquired 17,351-acre Powderhorn Ranch is to be developed as a new state park, with a visitor and interpretive center devoted to helping visitors understand and appreciate the value and importance of coastal habitats. Other opportunities for public education associated with acquisition of land in the project area using RESTORE funding are being discussed, including creation or expansion of paddling trails, signage, an exhibit at "Sea Center Texas", a large coastal fish hatchery and education center, and creation of one or more state scientific areas or coastal preserves. Any of these activities will increase public awareness and opportunities for education.

Leveraging of resources and partnerships

The coastal conservation partnership in Texas is truly committed to accomplishing meaningful, large-scale, long-term conservation, as is demonstrated by the number of partners, and by the commitment of private funds that have been brought to bear in this project area alone. The project area and the specific acquisition targets within the area have been developed through consensus among USFWS, TPWD, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Trust for Public Land, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF), the Knobloch Family Trust and local entities. For the Powderhorn Ranch acquisition, TPWF committed $15 million to leverage National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) funds from the Gulf Benefit Fund. For the present proposal, the Knobloch Family Trust has committed leverage funding. Their letter, attached to this proposal, states in part "*Furthermore, the Knobloch Family Foundation is prepared to provide financial support in these focal areas to leverage awards made to Texas by the RESTORE Council for land conservation in Texas. The resources of the Foundation are such that we anticipate awarding several million dollars to ensure that our partners are positioned, with your assistance, to acquire the best and most strategic coastal lands for conservation*."

Proposal project / program benefits

Endangered species - Acquisitions of this scale within this project area will also yield tangible benefits for listed species, water quality, replenishment and protection of living coastal and marine resources, community resilience and the coastal economy. The most iconic of the federally-listed endangered species to directly benefit is the whooping crane. This endangered bird has rebounded from only 14 individuals in the wild to more than 300, but the large birds establish large territories, and have been expanding beyond their traditional winter grounds at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge into more of their historic range (Stehn and Prieto, 2006). Permanently protected habitat for the cranes is critical to their continued recovery. (ibid.) Currently the birds are seen foraging throughout the project area, and are spending more and more time on tracts identified in this proposal as priority tracts.

Water quality - It is well know that prairies, especially intact prairie pothole systems, absorb, filter and slowly release rainwater, contributing significantly to the water quality on groundwater and surface water system and adjacent marshes and estuaries where well-filtered groundwater seeps into wetlands, bayous and bays. In the process, plants and microbes remove nutrients and many contaminants. In addition, protecting lands adjacent to estuaries reduces nutrient runoff and turbidity, further protecting water quality.

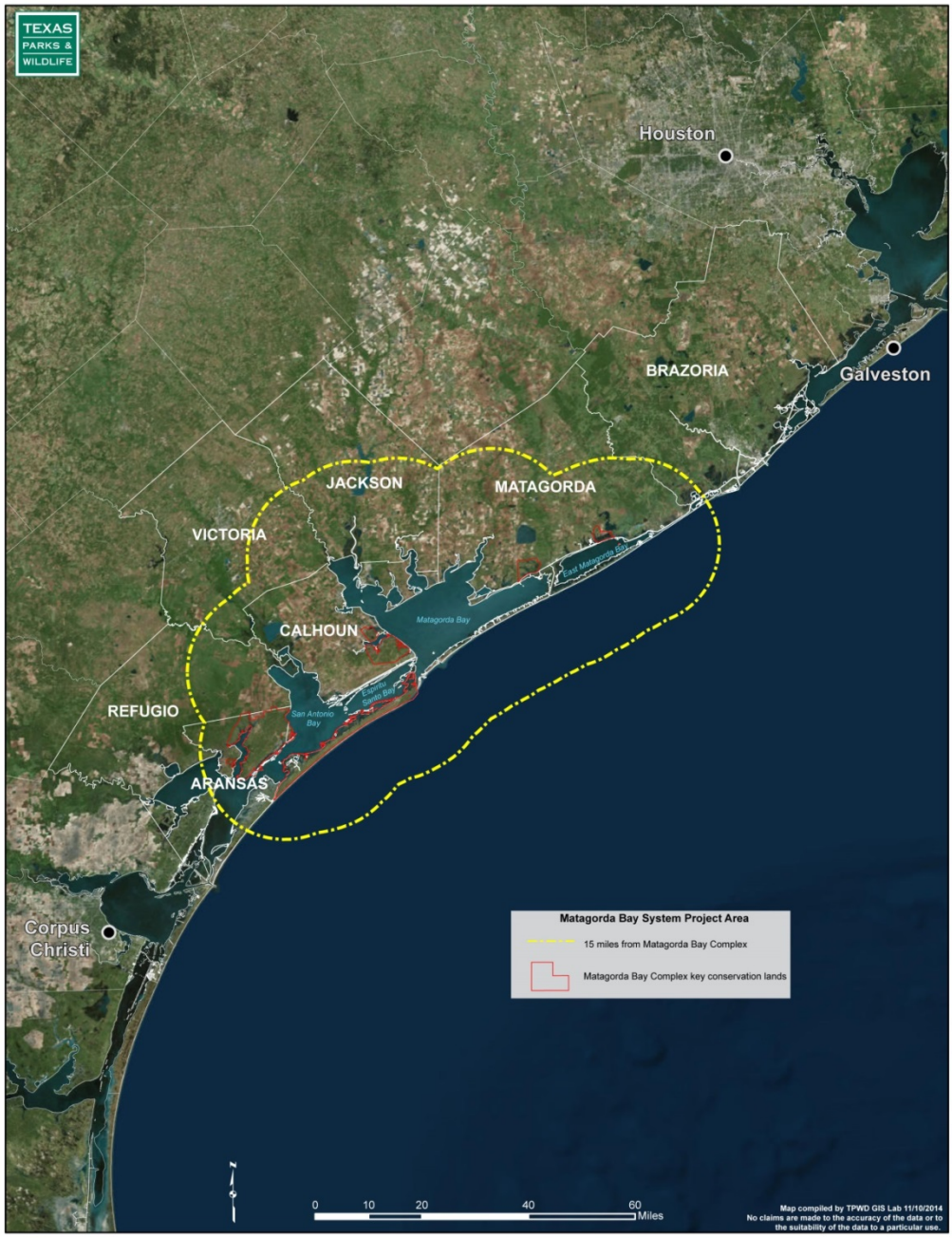
Living marine resources - The tidal pools and channels, with associated fringing marshes and extensive edges, are vital for replenishment and protection of living marine resources. These ecologically sensitive areas are the nursery grounds for shrimp, crabs, and most of the commercially and recreationally important sport fish in the Gulf, including southern flounder, spotted sea trout and red drum (Kneib, 1997). Other species such as mollusks, worms, crustaceans and small fishes (such as sheepshead minnows and killifishes) that live and thrive in these tidal habitats, are critical food sources for larger fish, birds and other predators. Without these nurseries, which are some of the most productive habitats on earth, maintenance of a healthy and sustainable Gulf ecosystem would be impossible.

Community resiliency - Protection of these lands also enhances community resiliency by preventing development on lands most vulnerable to storm surges and coastal flooding, and by mitigating the effects of storm surge and coastal erosion on lands farther inland where development does occur. In this part of Texas, public conservation lands are recreation and eco-tourism destinations. Bird and nature watchers, kayakers and canoeists, spend millions of dollars and generate thousands of jobs along the central Texas Coast. Although expenditures and economic impacts from ecotourism are notoriously difficult to characterize (Mathis and Matisoff, 2004), statewide and regional data make it clear that ecotourism and non-consumptive outdoor recreation are tremendous economic engines for the Texas Coast (ibid., IOF, 2006). The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge alone attracts more than 61,500 visitors annually.

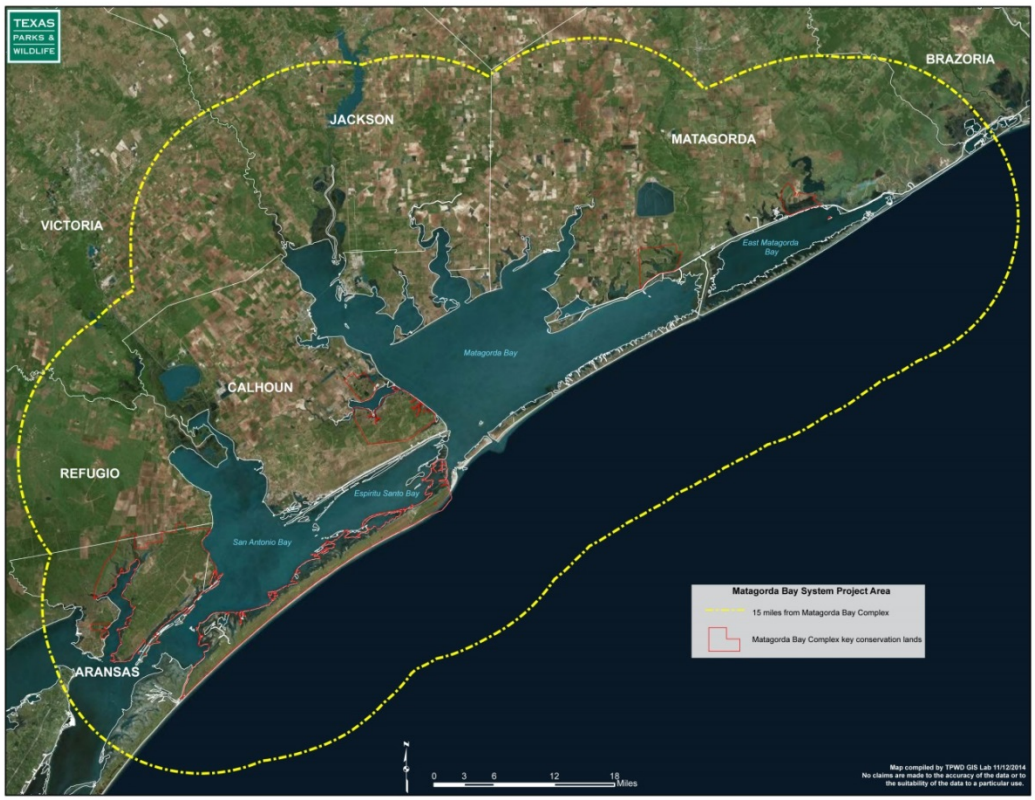
LOCATION INFORMATION

All tracts of land targeted for acquisition of fee interest or conservation easement are located within the Matagorda Bay Complex project area. This project area includes San Antonio, Espiritu Santo, Matagorda and East Matagorda Bays. This complex of bays covers 627 square miles of open water averaging approximately six feet deep, separated and protected from the open Gulf of Mexico by 83 miles of barrier peninsulas and islands that include Matagorda Island and West and East Matagorda Peninsulas. All lands within 15 miles of the open tidal waters of

this bay complex are considered to be within the project area. The entire project area is well with the Gulf Coast Region as defined in the RESTORE Act. The two maps attached show the project area within the larger context of the Texas Gulf Coast and its major coastal cities, and a close up of the Matagorda Bay System.



The Matagorda Bay System Project Area on the Central Texas Coast



Close-Up Map of the Matagorda Bay Complex Project Area

HIGH-LEVEL BUDGET NARRATIVE

Item	Cost Rate	Sub-Total	TOTALS
Acquisition			$ 44,602,500
6,950 Acres	@ $ 950/acre	$ 6,602,500	$ 6,602,500
3,800 Acres	@ $ 3,000/acre	$ 11,400,000	$ 11,400,000
6,200 Acres	@ $ 3,000/acre	$ 18,600,000	$ 18,600,000
10,000-Acre Cons. Easement	@ $ 800/acre	$ 8,000,000	$ 8,000,000
Ancillary Acquisition Costs			$ 320,205
Appraisals	$ 9,000 X 4	$ 36,000	$ 36,000
Surveys	$ 25,000 X 3	$ 75,000	$ 75,000
Phase One Assessment	$ 18,000 X 4	$ 72,000	$ 72,000
Mineral Run and Assessment	$ 8,000 X 4	$ 32,000	$ 32,000
Closing Costs	$ 4,000 X 4	$ 16,000	$ 16,000
Ancillary Transaction Costs	.2% x 44,602,500	$ 89,205	$ 89,205
TOTAL Project Cost is:			**$ 44,922,705**

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Environmental Compliance Checklist

Please check all federal and state environmental compliance and permit requirements as appropriate to the proposed project/program

Environmental Compliance Type	**Yes**	**No**	**Applied For**	**N/A**
Federal				
National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA)				X
Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)				X
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act				X
Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)				X
NEPA – Categorical Exclusion		X		
NEPA – Environmental Assessment				X
NEPA – Environmental Impact Statement				X
Clean Water Act – 404 – Individual Permit (USACOE)				X
Clean Water Act – 404 – General Permit(USACOE)				X
Clean Water Act – 404 – Letters of Permission(USACOE)				X
Clean Water Act – 401 – WQ certification				X
Clean Water Act – 402 – NPDES				X
Rivers and Harbors Act – Section 10 (USACOE)				X
Endangered Species Act – Section 7 – Informal and Formal Consultation (NMFS, USFWS)				X
Endangered Species Act – Section 7 - Biological Assessment (BOEM,USACOE)				X
Endangered Species Act – Section 7 – Biological Opinion (NMFS, USFWS)				X
Endangered Species Act – Section 7 – Permit for Take (NMFS, USFWS)				X
Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) – Consultation (NMFS)				X
Marine Mammal Protection Act – Incidental Take Permit (106) (NMFS, USFWS)				X
Migratory Bird Treaty Act (USFWS)				X
Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act – Consultation and Planning (USFWS)				X
Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act – Section 103 permit (NMFS)				X
BOEM Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act – Section 8 OCS Lands Sand permit				X
NHPA Section 106 – Consultation and Planning ACHP, SHPO(s), and/or THPO(s)		X		
NHPA Section 106 – Memorandum of Agreement/Programmatic Agreement				X
Tribal Consultation (Government to Government)				X
Coastal Barriers Resource Act – CBRS (Consultation)				X
State				
As Applicable per State				X

DATA/INFORMATION SHARING PLAN

Data generated as a direct result of this project will include periodic qualitative and quantitative survey and inventory data for plants, plant communities, and animals. All data will be collected by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) biologists or technicians, or under the auspices of TPWD in accordance with currently accepted data collection protocols, many of which have been developed by TPWD. All survey and inventory data collected is public domain and is available to the general public.

Survey and inventory data will be collected on land and adjacent tidal waters. Aquatic survey will include seagrass beds, oyster reefs, shrimp and game/non-game finfish (Martinez-Andrade, F. and M. Fisher. 2012). Finfish surveys include bag seine and gill net surveys. Decades of historical survey data from the TPWD Coastal Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program from each of these bays and sub-bays, will be supplemented by regular surveys following acquisition and conservation of adjacent land tracts. This “before and after” survey information can be compared to before and after survey data at locations where adjacent lands have been developed, helping to quantify the biological advantages of land conservation for aquatic systems. Although absolute conclusions may be elusive, areas where miles of shoreline have been conserved are expected to show demonstrable benefits to adjacent aquatic systems.

On land, plant species inventories will be supplemented by the establishment and long-term monitoring of vegetation transects that will generate species coverages and community compositions and track these over time. This will be particularly important where active management programs, such as fire, herbicide treatment, or periodic grazing are employed to effect vegetation management. The results will inform adaptive management and will allow comparison to other coastal tracts where different management strategies or schedules are being employed. Other surveys will include birds, reptiles and amphibians, and mammals. Wildlife Management Areas and State Parks also frequently become study sites for ecological research for other agencies, universities and students. All of the data collected and information learned and published as a result of these surveys, studies and research projects, becomes public domain and is readily available to help inform future site management, conservation planning, and governmental/regulatory policy.

REFERENCE LIST OF LITERATURE CITED IN THE PROPOSAL

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OTHER

Commitment of leverage funding from the Knobloch Family Foundation

Knobloch Family Foundation

November 10, 2014

Mr. Ben Scaggs
Deputy Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Re: Support for Texas' RESTORE Act land conservation proposals

Dear Mr. Scaggs:

The Knobloch Family Foundation of Houston is committed to encouraging and supporting the restoration and health of the Gulf Coast. In recent years we have worked closely with private, state, and federal conservation partners to accomplish strategic conservation goals in Texas and elsewhere. The Foundation has assisted financially with the acquisition of the Cade Ranch for addition to the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Texas, provided funding for the establishment of a Gulf-wide conservation project database, and established a $500,000 grant program through the Galveston Bay Foundation that helps non-profit organizations cover closing costs for strategic acquisitions of land and conservation easements. This past summer, the Foundation contributed $2 million toward the acquisition of the iconic 17,351-acre Powderhorn Ranch on Matagorda Bay in Calhoun County.

Our coastal partners have identified priority conservation focal areas in the Galveston Bay watershed, the Matagorda Bay Complex and in the Bahia Grande – Laguna Atascosa corridor in Cameron County. Each of these focal areas includes productive ecosystems with high biological values that contribute significantly to the overall health of the Texas Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. Some of these areas are at immediate risk of loss and others represent closing windows of opportunity for landscape-scale conservation. All currently have willing sellers. You will see these priorities reflected in the proposals submitted to you by the State of Texas. We encourage your consideration of these proposals.

Furthermore, the Knobloch Family Foundation is prepared to provide financial support in these focal areas to leverage awards made to Texas by the RESTORE Council for land conservation in Texas. The resources of the Foundation are such that we anticipate awarding several million dollars to ensure that our partners are positioned, with your assistance, to acquire the best and most strategic coastal lands for conservation. Please consider this letter a commitment to provide appropriate match funding that will make your awards to Texas for land conservation go further. Please feel free to contact our Executive Director Ernest Cook with any questions you may have. Ernest is at 617-697-7758.

Sincerely,

Carl W. Knobloch, Jr.

ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Matagorda Bay System Priority Landscape Conservation

PROPOSAL NUMBER

TX- 2

LOCATION

Within 15 miles of the San Antonio, Espiritu Santo, Matagorda or East Matagorda Bays and associated estuaries, Texas

SPONSOR(S)

Texas

TYPE OF FUNDING REQUESTED (Planning, Technical Assistance, Implementation)

Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

Bethany Carl Kraft/ Ben Scaggs

DATE:

11-18-14

1. Does the project aim to restore and/or protect natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitat, beaches, coastal wetlands and economy of the Gulf Coast Region?

◉ YES ○ NO

Notes:

This proposal seeks to acquire land and easements to promote conservation.

2. Is the proposal a project?

◉ YES ○ NO

If yes, is the proposed activity a discrete project or group of projects where the full scope of the restoration or protection activity has been defined?

◉ YES ○ NO

Notes:

3. Is the proposal a program?

◯ YES ◉ NO

If yes, does the proposed activity establish a program where the program manager will solicit, evaluate, select, and carry out discrete projects that best meet the program's restoration objectives and evaluation criteria?

◯ YES ◯ NO

Notes:

4. Is the project within the Gulf Coast Region of the respective Gulf States?

◉ YES ◯ NO

If no, do project benefits accrue in the Gulf Coast Region?

◯ YES ◯ NO

Notes:

Eligibility Determination

ELIGIBLE

Additional Information

Proposal Submission Requirements

1. Is the project submission overall layout complete? ***Check if included and formatted correctly.***

A. Summary sheet	☑	F. Environmental compliance checklist	☑
B. Executive summary	☑	G. Data/Information sharing plan	☑
C. Proposal narrative	☑	H. Reference list	☑
D. Location information	☑	I. Other	☑
E. High level budget narrative	☑		

If any items are NOT included - please list and provide details

2. Are all proposal components presented within the specified page limits (if applicable)?

◉ YES ○ NO

Notes: