

USDA

Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration

Proposal

USDA - NRCS, TEMPLE, TX

10/17/2014

A partnered coordinated leveraged approach dedicated for Migratory and Shore bird habitat restoration and enhancement on the entire Texas Coast.

Appendix A: Council Member Applicant and Proposal Information Summary Sheet

Council Member: USDA/Tom Vilsack	Point of Contact: Tomas M. Dominguez <hr/> Phone: (361)-241-0609 <hr/> Email: tomas.dominguez@tx.usda.gov
Project Identification	
Project Title: Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration Project	
State(s): Texas	County/City/Region: Entire Texas Coast involving Gulf Coast Prairie and Gulf Saline Gulf Prairie Common Resource Areas. Thirty two Counties
General Location: <i>Projects must be located within the Gulf Coast Region as defined in RESTORE Act. (attach map or photos, if applicable)</i> Project spans 621 miles along the Texas Coast at least two counties deep. See maps A. and B. attached	
Project Description	
RESTORE Goals: <i>Identify all RESTORE Act goals this project supports. Place a P for Primary Goal, and S for secondary goals.</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> P Restore and Conserve Habitat <input type="checkbox"/> S Restore Water Quality <input type="checkbox"/> S Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy	<input type="checkbox"/> S Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources <input type="checkbox"/> S Enhance Community Resilience
RESTORE Objectives: <i>Identify all RESTORE Act objectives this project supports. Place a P for Primary Objective, and S for secondary objectives.</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> P Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats <input type="checkbox"/> S Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources <input type="checkbox"/> S Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources <input type="checkbox"/> S Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines	<input type="checkbox"/> S Promote Community Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> S Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education <input type="checkbox"/> Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes
RESTORE Priorities: <i>Identify all RESTORE Act priorities that this project supports.</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Priority 1: Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Priority 2: Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Priority 3: Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Priority 4: Projects that restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries ...	
RESTORE Commitments: <i>Identify all RESTORE Comprehensive Plan commitments that this project supports.</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commitment to Science-based Decision Making <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commitment to Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commitment to Engagement, Inclusion, and Transparency <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commitment to Leverage Resources and Partnerships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commitment to Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts	
RESTORE Proposal Type and Phases: <i>Please identify which type and phase best suits this proposal.</i>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Planning <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Technical Assistance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Implementation <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Program	
Project Cost and Duration	
Project Cost Estimate: Total : \$32,994,722.00 million total project cost with leveraged funds	Project Timing Estimate: Date Anticipated to Start: January 1, 2015 Time to Completion: 5 years Anticipated Project Lifespan: 10 – 20+ yrs. In some cases when used, some easements are perpetual

Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration

Executive Summary

This USDA proposal seeks **\$15,213,200.00** million from Restore Act funds to support a highly coordinated and leveraged effort with partners to restore and enhance migratory and shore bird habitat restoration along the 621 miles of Texas Coast through habitat restoration on private lands. Requested funds will be leveraged with **\$17,781,522.00** million from agency and partner funds to provide for a **\$32,994,722.00** million total project cost over 5 years. Not included in the dollar amounts mentioned above are in-kind contributions that are going to be absorbed by the parties in this proposal. If these were figured in, the total project cost would conservatively be an additional one third to one half of partner in kind contributions (of the \$17,781,522.00) that could be added to be leveraged into the total amount. If the in kind contributions are added, then the total would be from \$38 to \$42 million which could realistically be counted as actually being spent for this effort, with only \$15,213,200 requested.

The expanse of area empties into 8 major significant bays and estuaries along the Gulf of Mexico coastline. It is anticipated that implementing an initiative on this scale will benefit Coastal Texas by providing landowner education, practice implementation, and direct on farm and ranch results and ecotourism that will have a positive impact on habitat restoration and enhancement for migratory and shore birds with added benefit to resident bird species, community resilience, improved water quality and quantity and overall ecosystem health.

The Primary Goal will be to Restore/Enhance and Conserve Habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast through a leveraged, partnership effort with private landowners, local organizations, as well as state and federal agencies. Secondary positive effects will be in water quality and economic avenues involving recreational activities. The area in question is in the midst of both the Central and Mississippi flyways bird migration pattern in the northern hemisphere. Threatened and endangered bird species such as the whooping crane and piping plovers, which in themselves have limited numbers and all winter in a very small area each year in the Texas mid coast, have flight patterns that encompass the entire Texas Coast. Habitat restoration and enhancement via voluntary conservation management stewardship plans developed with landowners, will result in increasing the amount of restored native coastal grassland and wetland habitats, improving water quality and quantity, thus positively impacting the outflows of the watershed system that drains through the coastal prairie and estuarine systems and ultimately into the Gulf of Mexico. These actions significantly enhance currently impacted ecosystem functions and habitat. Partners involved in the projects will provide additional synergism through their expanded technical assistance and cost share activities.

In addition to restoring and enhancing native coastal habitat, project benefits include improved water quality, enhanced community resilience related to better flood control, drought tolerance, decreased wildfire risk, and reduced storm damage; and a revitalized economy related to productive fisheries, ranching, natural resources-dependent tourism, and various indirect industry and related local jobs. Partner actions that will increase the amount of available, affordable, adaptable native seeds for reseeding prairie habitat that are not currently

widely available is also part of this proposal and will help increase the resiliency of the current habitat over time.

These actions will also assist in providing habitat for several federal and state listed threatened and endangered species and resident bird species that include: whooping crane, Attwater's Prairie-Chicken, Aplomado Falcon, reddish egret, rosette spoonbill, etc. as well as regionally economically important species such as bobwhite quail and wintering waterfowl.

A further global objective will be to expand alliances with other state and federal agencies as well as non-profits and cities and municipalities along the Gulf Coast to provide a more coordinated effort of communicating with the public at large as well as documenting benefits of work.

Goals desired will be to instill knowledge and commitment in landowners, via long term voluntary conservation management/stewardship plans along the coast that will lead to increased habitat restoration. These plans will maintain, preserve, and improve unique wetland/grassland functions and values on crop and grazing lands for migratory and shore birds and expand important brackish water habitats for T&E species such as the Whooping Crane and reddish egret as well as improve the quality of nursery areas for many commercially valuable fish, shrimp and shellfish species.

The proposal expected outcomes will be; 1) indirectly reduced sediment and nutrient loads through the use of proper riparian and conservation buffer practices on private lands to improve the water quality flowing into the Gulf, 2.) increased available habitat for resident and migrating waterfowl and shorebirds that will use the associated river and wetland systems, 3.) improved wildlife upland and wetland habitats, and 4.) Landowner education via resource stewardship through developing individual private landowner total operating unit conservation plans/stewardship plans that address habitat restoration on all land uses, and improved contact recreation inland and along the Texas coast.

Success of this project is very likely because of the targeted coordinated and committed effort of all partners along the Texas Coast with the primary goal to restore habitat and preserve as much community resilience as possible. Actions in accomplishing success will be to ensure longstanding stewardship on private lands by working with individual landowners and entities. Delivery of technical assistance along with financial assistance directly to the local level has been the major focal point in the conservation delivery system under Cooperating Working Agreements that USDA has with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and political subdivisions that are Soil and Water Conservation Districts for the past 78 years. This delivery system is very effective at the local level. In addition, this proposal will leverage and expand current committed funds and outreach from all partners within their program authorities. This proposal and its projects are offered under the auspices of the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourism Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States (RESTORE) Act and other applicable statutory authorities.

Proposal Narrative

Introduction and Background:

This USDA proposal seeks \$15,213,200.00 million from RESTORE Act funds to support a highly effective coordinated leveraged effort with partners to restore and enhance migratory and shore bird habitat along the 621 mile Texas Coast primarily on private lands. The requested funds will be leveraged with \$17,781,522.00 million from agency and partner funds to provide for a \$32,994,722.00 million total project cost over 5 years. Not included in the dollar amounts mentioned above are in-kind contributions that are going to be absorbed by the parties in this proposal. If these were figured in, the total project cost would be approximately an additional one third to one half of partner in kind funds (of the \$17,781,522.00) that could be added to be leveraged into the total amount. The total of the projects would total to be approximately \$38 to \$42 million which could realistically be counted as spent for this effort, at the request of only \$15,213,200 from the Restore Council Fund.

The expanse of area empties into 8 major significant bays and estuaries along the Gulf of Mexico coastline. All of the participants of this proposal support the Restoration Comprehensive plan and have habitat restoration as their primary shared goal. It is anticipated that implementing an initiative on this scale will benefit Coastal Texas by providing education, practice implementation, direct on farm and on ranch private land results and ecotourism that will have a positive impact on habitat restoration and enhancement for migratory and shore birds with added benefit to resident bird species, community resilience, improved water quality and quantity and overall ecosystem health.

The Primary Goal will be to Restore/enhance and Conserve Habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast through a leveraged, partnership effort with private landowners, local organizations, as well as state and federal agencies. It is expected that secondary positive effects will be in water quality and economic avenues involving recreational activities.

The proposal area is in the midst of the central flyway for bird migration in the northern hemisphere. The endangered whooping crane, winters in a very small area each year in the Texas mid coast, within part of the central flyway. Educating landowners in habitat restoration and enhancement via voluntary approach conservation management plans that they will follow, will ensure stewardship on the land thus will result in increased habitat and ecosystem improvement, and increased water quality and quantity; positively impacting the outflows of the watershed system that drains through the estuarine systems and ultimately drains into the Gulf of Mexico. These actions will significantly improve the natural hydrological flow across a broad area of the Texas Coast that can have large scale direct and indirect effects on water quality and quantity as well as enhancing ecosystem functions and habitat.

In addition to restoring and enhancing habitat, project benefits include improved water quality, enhanced community resilience related to better flood control, drought tolerance, decreased wildfire risk, and reduced storm damage; and a revitalized economy related to productive

fisheries, natural resources-dependent tourism, and various indirect industry and related local jobs.

Major Objectives:

- 1) Provide leveraged financial and technical assistance to benefit communities and private agricultural producers within the specified area along the Texas Coast by implementing conservation practices via individual landowner long term management plans or enrolling land in appropriate easement programs so as to positively impact inflows and reduce levels of bacteria and thereby facilitating robust tourism activity due to increased ecosystem health. The actions will assist with the conservation and enhancement of habitat for several federal and state listed threatened and endangered species and resident bird species that include: whooping crane, Attwater's Prairie-Chicken, Aplomado Falcon, piping plover, reddish egret, rosette spoonbill, etc.
- 2) Expand alliances with other state and federal agencies as well as non-profits and local governments along the Gulf Coast to provide a more coordinated effort of communicating with the public at large as well as documenting benefits of work.

Goals:

- Instill knowledge and commitment in landowners ,via long term voluntary conservation management plans, of extended stewardship along the coast that leads to increased habitat restoration
- Instill knowledge to the public in schools and municipalities as a whole
- Improve brackish water habitats for T&E species such as the Whooping Crane.
- Maintain, preserve and improve unique wetland functions and values on applicable coastal acres.
- Maintain, preserve, and improve grazing land resources for natural habitat restoration on applicable acreage along the coast.
- Maintain, preserve, and improve wetland habitat on crop and forage production land uses resources on applicable acres.

Expected Outcomes:

- Reducing sediment and nutrient loads through the use of proper riparian and conservation buffer practices to improve the water quality flowing into the Gulf by one third.
- Increase available habitat for resident and migrating waterfowl and shorebirds that use the associated river and wetland systems by 50%.
- Improved wildlife upland and wetland habitats by 50%
- Facilitated Landowner education of proper resource stewardship through developing over 400 total operating unit conservation stewardship plans (whole farm/ranch progressive plans striving for Resource Management System)
- Improved contact recreation in and along the Texas coast.

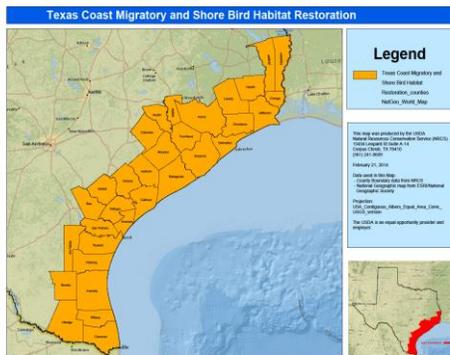
- Perpetually conserve native coastal habitat through conservation easement programs by dedicating a minimum of \$6,000,000.00 and having over 4000 acres under easement for this effort.
- The general public being more aware and valuing habitat along the coast.

Implementation Methodology

The proposal encompasses a series of projects through leveraged partnership efforts primarily on private lands that are to be used to leverage funds and maximize environmental benefits targeting habitat restoration and enhancement. Led by a NRCS representative, representatives from each partner in the proposal will be a part of a Data Sharing technical team that will meet at least once a year to review progress, share data and coordinate any further changes that may need to be addressed. Needed changes will be put in place as applicable.

The proposal leverages partnership financial and technical assistance to complete a multitude of habitat restoration and enhancement projects primarily on private lands along the Texas Gulf Coast. These projects and initiatives have all been identified as high priority candidates for their value in habitat restoration and enhancement. The targeted project area (Map A.) is based on Gulf Coast Prairie soils designated by Common Resource Areas (CRAs) conducive to good habitat restoration along the Texas Coast (Map B.)

Counties Involved Map A.



CRA Soils Map B.



The USDA-NRCS in Texas is prepared to set aside a portion of its annual Farm Bill financial and easement program fund allocations in an effort to specifically target financial assistance and easement conservation program contract funds to eligible agricultural producers and wildlife oriented property owners and managers in an effort to implement and install conservation measures and on these properties based on their conservation/stewardship plan.

The Primary Goal will be to Restore/enhance and Conserve Habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast through a leveraged, partnership effort with private landowners, local organizations, as well as state and federal agencies. Secondary positive effects will be in water quality and economic avenues involving recreational activities.

The USDA-NRCS currently delivers conservation financial and technical assistance that has been

authorized through mandatory legislation commonly referred to as the Farm Bill that is utilized directly by landowners and agricultural producers. These agricultural producers work with and receive assistance due to the conservation delivery system across the state which is made up of USDA/NRCS, TSSWCB and of locally elected representatives that serve on their respective Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) which are under state law, a political subdivision of the state. This is an existing, effective, and successful partnership that was agreed upon through signature using Mutual and Cooperative Agreements (MUAs and CWAs) signed by the Secretary of Agriculture, NRCS, the State Conservation Agency and each local SWCD. These agreements allow the USDA-NRCS to work directly with local private landowners and land managers to develop management conservation plans meant to install conservation practices on private lands. It is with this key partnership, at the local level, where the USDA-NRCS anticipates quick and effective adoption and implementation of conservation related practices that will benefit habitat restoration. The Restore Act funds will be used as a stewardship program administered by the SWCDs and TSSWCB to parallel aspects of farm bill programs and instill via conservation stewardship long term plans with private landowners.

The USDA-NRCS also has the authority and is also prepared to enter into Contribution Agreements, Cooperative Agreements, Grants, and Interagency Agreements with other partners to ensure quick, effective, and efficient installation of conservation practices on the landscape related to habitat conservation and restoration as identified below. Each of the identified projects has a sponsor with financial leverage and ready to assist in an effort to provide the most environmental benefit. They are mentioned in the Leveraging resources and Narrative budget section of this proposal.

Monitoring and Outreach for Success

All partners in the proposal will do outreach efforts by holding public meetings, workshops and training and coordinating staff as needed throughout the 5 year proposal timeline. Outreach of the effort along the coast to support, market and publicize such efforts has been committed by all partners listed as leveraged partners and the additional partners of: Audubon Society, San Antonio River Authority, San Antonio Bay Foundation, Texas Ag land Trust, Galveston Bay Foundation, Houston Audubon, and Ducks Unlimited.

In monitoring, USFWS has ongoing monitoring of the Whooping Crane that we will use as a gauge for crane populations. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will expand their statewide monitoring of bird populations to monitor migratory and shore bird populations to include two Texas Mid coast counties. They will monitor trends and correlations to habitat restoration during the span of this proposal. Current methods used by TPWD will be used in monitoring and they are: Using five minute roadside point counts with 25 mile routes, with one point every half mile, 50 points total. There will be five routes per county, recording both audio and visual observations and taking a distance to bird to allow for distance sampling. Counts are conducted from April-June between sunrise and 10 am by seasoned trained monitoring technicians. The list of Oaks and Prairies Joint Ventures (OPJV) grassland bird focus species will be: Northern Bobwhite, Dickcissel, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Painted Bunting, Lark Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Scissor-tailed flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Bewick's Wren,

Black-capped Vireo, Cassin's Sparrow, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Field Sparrow, Greater Prairie-chicken, Henslow's Sparrow, and Upland Sandpiper. The monitoring area will encompass Colorado and Austin counties. USFWS has ongoing monitoring of the Whooping Crane and piping plover.

Measures of Success

NRCS has a long and proven track record in getting conservation on the ground. The program and technical assistance delivery mechanism it has in place allows for direct quick local delivery of program benefits on private lands. There is great propensity for success in getting quick habitat restoration on land if this proposal is funded. Also as mentioned earlier, led by a NRCS representative, representatives from each partner in the proposal will be a part of a Data Sharing Plan involving a partner technical team that will meet at least once a year to review progress, share data and coordinate any further changes that may need to be addressed. Needed changes will be put in place as applicable. This coordination and cooperation further enhances success with this project.

The use of easements in habitat restoration efforts will greatly provide permanent or long term habitat restoration. Easements are key components in habitat restoration as well as water quality benefits for freshwater inflows. It is estimated that close to 5,000 acres in easements will be in place along the coast if the proposal is funded. The proposal will meet a need to restore and conserve habitat, restore water quality, replenish and protect living coastal marine resources, help revitalize the gulf economy and enhance community resilience. All these functions support the Restore Council's Comprehensive Plan.

Risks and Uncertainties of Project Activities

Success of this project is likely because of the targeted coordinated effort along the Texas Coast of all partners to ensure longstanding stewardship on the land in working with individual landowners and entities. Delivery of technical assistance along with financial assistance directly to the local level has been the major focal point in the conservation delivery system under Cooperating Working Agreements that USDA has with the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and political subdivisions that are Soil and Water Conservation Districts for the past 78 years. This delivery system is very effective at the local level. In addition, this proposal will leverage and expand current committed funds and outreach from partners within their program authorities such as National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Nature Conservancy, Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries, Katy Prairie Conservancy, Galveston Bay Foundation, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This project is offered under the auspices of the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourism Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States (RESTORE) Act and other applicable statutory authorities.

Outreach and Educational Opportunities
(See also Monitoring and Outreach for Success)

All parties to this proposal will mount an outreach and educational activity within their by-laws and authorities. All have a strong member network that can access the public and clients very easily. They have shown great success in past endeavors. Educational opportunities will present themselves in working with private landowner clients that will develop their stewardship plans with the expertise of professionals providing them guidance as to the wise use of habitat restoration in their plans. Schools, cities and municipalities and the general public will also be educated by showing successes of the urban conservation projects of this proposal and marketing their role in this effort to their respective audiences and the general public. The USDA/NRCS has a full staff of public affairs specialists that will be thoroughly entrenched in putting these efforts in the public's eye.

Leveraging of Resources and Partnership

(Please see the Extensive Budget Narrative for full descriptions of these leveraged requests)

In addition to financial and easement farm bill program funds being targeted to this geographic area's private landowners, the following are leveraged projects that will be implemented and that this proposal is seeking Restore funds to match or afford in an effort to restore and enhance the Texas Gulf Coastal counties:

The United State Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service Texas Farm Bill Allocation - \$5,000,000 in EQIP and \$6,000,000 in ACEP will be leveraged with \$5,000,000 Restore Act Funds to be administered via agreement with TSSWCB and SWCDS. As part of the Farm Bill legislation, Texas receives an annual allocation for the life of the Farm Bill to provide financial and technical assistance to private landowners to install conservation plans and conservation practices on agricultural lands. Salvador Salinas, Texas State Conservationist has the authority to prioritize screening and ranking criteria that directs priority to the counties along the Texas Gulf Coast for certain Farm Bill programs. These programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is prepared to set aside \$5,000,000 in EQIP and \$6,000,000 in ACEP to be leveraged with \$5,000,000 Restore Act Funds. The \$5,000,000 restore funds will be administered by the TSSWCB and SWCDS along the project area. SWCDS and TSSWCB will be writing stewardship management plans on habitat restoration and will be reimbursing participants with those plans based on level of stewardship

The USDA and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) signed into an agreement being: Conservation Plans to Restore Health of the Texas Gulf Coast and have committed to \$1,000,000 for this effort. They will not be asking for matching Restore Act Funds but their involvement is critical to the advancement of this proposal. Through a partnership with Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) via a contribution agreement signed with NFWF, technical assistance with a goal of writing 230 conservation plans/stewardship plans on private lands with private

landowners geared towards promoting migratory and shorebird habitat is in place. These conservation/stewardship plans will serve as the guide and basis for outreach and education with private landowners in carrying out an effective ecosystem based conservation management approach to implementing conservation concepts and practices on the landscape for the benefit of migratory and shorebirds. These conservation/stewardship plans will be the guiding technical blueprint that will ensure that each stewardship plan developed will have habitat restoration as management in each plan for each land use.

The Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP) will be leveraging the following for their respective projects: Mission River Whooping Crane Habitat Acquisition and Restoration - \$900,000 CBBEP leveraged and asking for \$1,200,000 Restore Act Funds, Nueces Bay Rookery Islands Restoration - \$100,000 CBBEP that will be leveraged with \$850,000 Restore Act Funds, Coastal Waterbird Management Program - \$100,000 CBBEP that will be leveraged with \$775,000 Restore Act Funds, Expanding Nueces Bay's New Island Rookery - \$1,800,000 that will be asked from Restore Act Funds, and Nueces Delta Marsh Acquisition and Restoration Phase 1 which consists of \$3,100,000 from CBBEP that will be leveraged with \$3,100,000 Restore Act funds.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) will be expanding the area for the Coastal Prairies Game Bird Habitat Maintenance and Restoration Project and will leverage \$328,342 of their funds with \$333,000 Restore Act Funds.

The Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture through TPWD Grassland Restoration Incentive Program will be expanding their areas of working on habitat restoration with private landowners by: \$83,180 TPWD funds that will be leveraged with \$83,200 Restore Act Funds for their Grassland Restoration Incentive Program with private landowners, and for a Bird Population Monitoring Project and with \$8,000 TPWD funds per year to be leveraged with \$8,000 Restore Act Funds per year for a total of \$40,000 leveraged funds requesting \$40,000 from Restore funds for further monitoring migratory and shore bird populations along the mid coast.

Through the TPWD Urban Conservation program, the following being leveraged and are asking for restore funds for:

The Armand Bayou Nature Center: leveraging \$40,000 TPWD contribution funds with \$200,000.00 Restore funds. Also the city of Rockport, Texas Project requests \$75,000.00 Restore Act funds. Rockport area high schools, in partnership with the city, are renovating and restoring popular birding destinations to improve ecotourism for the city and improve habitat on those areas for migratory birds. In the Lower Rio Grande Valley Ecotourism Projects offer the following:

The City of McAllen: Habitat Restoration, Ebony Grove restoration: Request leveraging \$30,000.00 Restore Act funds to leverage with \$40,000.00 City funds (1 year). This project will restore 4 acres to native Tamaulipan Thornforest through invasive species removal, native plantings of ebony, and the creation of aquatic habitat features at Quinta Mazatlán, a World Birding Center Destination. The World Birding Centers (WBC): Requesting \$180,000.00 Restore Act Funds. Habitat restoration of various sites, marketing for ecotourism The WBC consists of not just **one**, but **nine** unique locations in the Rio Grande Valley.

The Valley Nature Center: Habitat restoration and marketing for ecotourism: Requesting \$75,000.00 Restore Act funds for habitat restoration and renovation at their Center. The Valley

Nature Center in Weslaco, Texas is the oldest nature center in the Rio Grande Valley, and the only non-profit center fully dedicated to environmental education south of San Antonio and east of Eagle Pass, Texas.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) – has committed \$50,000.00 for their Texas Gulf Coast Prairie Initiative and projects as leverage funds to ask for \$475,000.00 in Restore funds. Currently, there are few commercial sources of native coastal tall-grass prairie seed available for purchase for the many restoration needs along the Texas Coast. Private landowners, federal and state land management agencies and highway departments, municipalities and the energy sector, are all responsible for managing the Gulf Coast region and addressing economic needs – forage, wildlife habitat, coastal flood control, improve water quality, and right-of way plantings. They are trying via this request to provide for a stable native seed source to be available to meet these needs.

USFWS - Migratory and Shorebird Habitat have committed to \$1,000,000 to be leveraged with \$1,000,000 Restore Act funds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program are voluntary, non-regulatory programs designed to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners and land managers to restore, enhance and conserve habitat for federal trusts species (e.g. migratory birds, threatened and endangered species).

As mentioned above, very thorough descriptions of these proposed projects are found in the Extensive Budget Narrative section.

Proposal Project/Program benefits:

(See also Introduction, implementation and methodology, leveraging resources and Budget Narrative sections of this proposal)

Even though this proposal is only in one state it covers 621 miles of coast line along the Gulf of Mexico. This is roughly a third of the Gulf. This is a 5 year large scale, foundational and scalable proposal that all falls along the Gulf Coast region and is dedicated to habitat restoration as its primary goal. Secondary benefits to water quality, economic recovery, community resilience, flood control, and prescribed burning to lessen wildfires from occurring , along with the primary goal of habitat restoration are all achieved through utilizing conservation habitat restoration practices and easements along the coast.

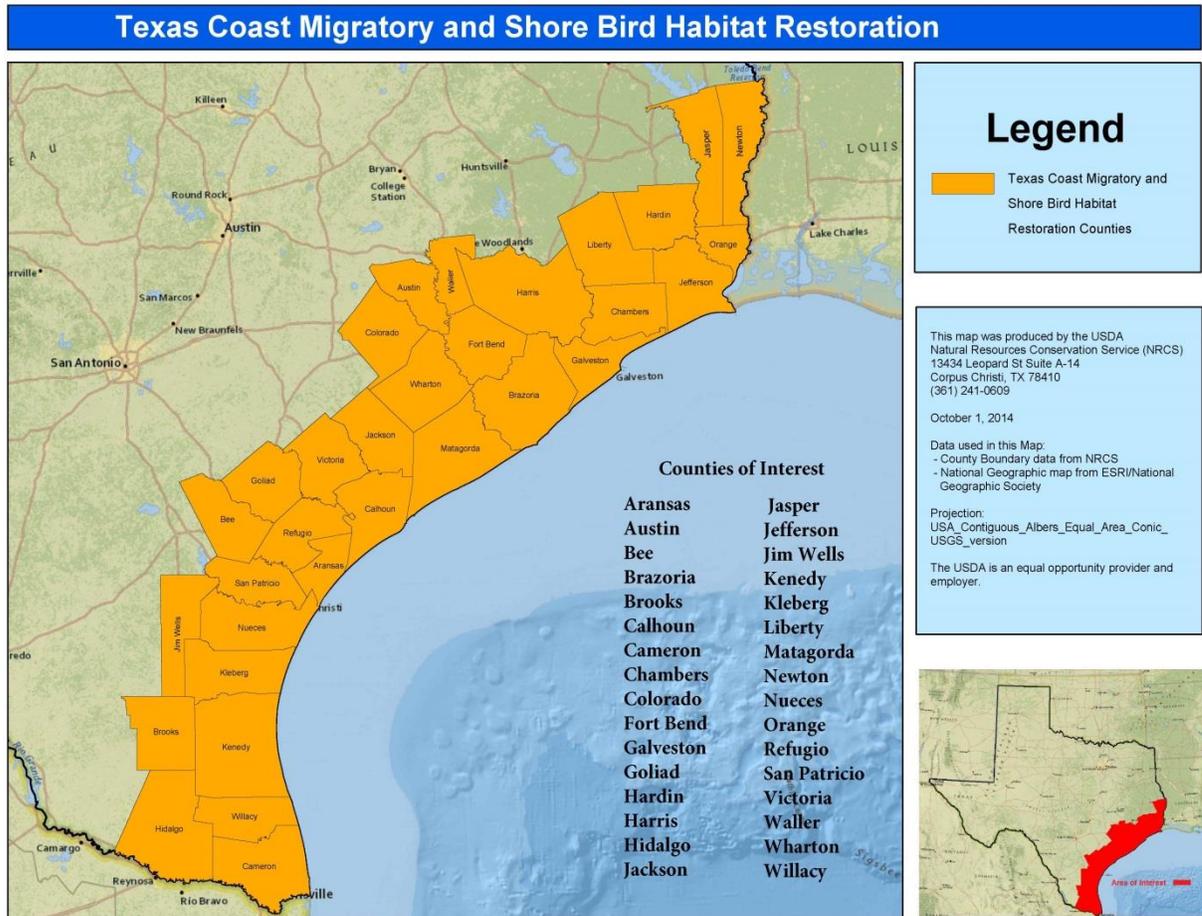
The proposal has multiple partners both at the federal and state level, but also with non-governmental organizations and non-profits that are leveraging over\$17 million dollars (not counting in kind dollars) and asking for only over \$15 million in return from Restore funds. The projects from this proposal meet environmental compliance and are ready to start immediately. The parties involved have the wherewithal and have a proven record of getting conservation on the ground locally.

Location Information

For a thorough location spectrum See maps A., B., C. and D

Location for the proposal area will be the entire Texas Coast involving 32 counties as indicated by Counties List Map C. All partner projects fall into those counties.

Counties List Map C.



Extensive High Level Budget Narrative

(Leveraged Budget in Appendix C. shows the full summary in table form of all partners' contributions and requests for Restore Act funds. These figures all deal in cash leveraged dollars. In kind contributions were not included as part of this proposal. See Executive Summary and Introduction and Background for that discussion and totals)

Requested funds will be leveraged with **\$17,781,522.00** million from agency and partner funds to provide for a **\$32,994,722.00** million total project cost over 5 years. They are as follows:

United State Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service Texas Farm Bill Allocation - \$5,000,000 in EQIP and \$6,000,000 in ACEP to be leveraged with \$5,000,000 Restore Act Funds

As part of the Farm Bill legislation, Texas receives an annual allocation for the life of the Farm Bill to provide financial and technical assistance to private landowners to install conservation plans and conservation practices on agricultural lands. Salvador Salinas, Texas State Conservationist has the authority to prioritize screening and ranking criteria that directs priority to the counties along the Texas Gulf Coast for certain Farm Bill programs. These programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is a program where the USDA-NRCS enters into agreements with agricultural land owners and managers of agricultural lands to provide direct financial assistance in return for the installation of conservation practices designed to treating identified natural resource concerns. These concerns range from soil erosion, water quality, and habitat restoration to name a few. These resource concerns are treated with the installation of conservation practices according to technical criteria established in the agency's Field Office Technical Guide.

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) has two components that are available for funding under the Farm Bill. The first is the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) provision designed to protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. Land protected by agricultural land easements provides additional public benefits, including environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat and protection of open space.

The second component of ACEP is Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) component which provides habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, improves water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for educational, scientific and limited recreational activities.

USDA and NFWF - Conservation Plans to Restore Health of the Texas Gulf Coast – Parties have committed via a contribution agreement to \$1,000,000 over a five year period and will not be asking for matching Restore Act Funds but adds great value to this effort. Through a partnership with Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) via a contribution agreement signed with NFWF, technical

assistance with a goal of writing 230 conservation plans/stewardship plans on private lands with private landowners geared towards promoting migratory and shorebird habitat is in place. These conservation/stewardship plans will serve as the guide and basis for outreach and education in carrying out an effective ecosystem based conservation management approach to implementing conservation concepts and practices on the landscape for the benefit of migratory and shorebirds. These conservation plans will be the guiding technical document that will ensure that each stewardship plan developed will have habitat restoration as management in each plan for each land use.

Through our CWA with the Texas State Soil Conservation Board (TSSWCB) and SWCDs, The \$5,000,000 leveraged funds requested from Restore Funds to match our Farm Bill request will be administered by the TSSWCB to write stewardship plans that will contain habitat restoration in each plan and reimburse stewardship payments to producers who follow those plans for the following five years. This ensures habitat restoration is practiced and instilled on private lands with those landowners.

Necessary conservation practices that will be required will be correlated back to the USDA-NRCS Field Office Technical Guide, will be (644) Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, and (645) Wildlife Upland Habitat Management. These two practices will serve as the foundation for the implementation of other conservation practices, such as (550) Range Planting, (314) Brush Management, (657) Wetland Restoration, (658) Wetland Creation, (669) Wetland Enhancement to mention a few.

Conservation stewardship plans are site specific, and are written as a plan geared directly to address the resource needs that have been identified from a resource needs assessment.

Conservation Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP) - Mission River Whooping Crane Habitat Acquisition and Restoration - \$900,000 CBBEP leveraged funds and asking for \$1,200,000 Restore Act Funds

Through a partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), CBBEP has identified approximately 2,000 acres along the Mission River that is for sale. This property has active Whooping Crane use and is a prime candidate for conservation. The USFWS has data from Whooping Cranes that are radio tagged. The telemetry data that USFWS has collected determines that the wetlands associated with this property are important feeding grounds for the wintering population of Whooping Cranes. CBBEP has been in communication with the land owner and we received permission to obtain a summary appraisal on the property. The summary appraisal indicated a range of value from \$1,000-\$1,500 per acre. The owner is interested in a selling the property and TNC has approximately \$900,000 to contribute towards the sale price from funds secured through a CIAP grant. The requested dollars will go towards the purchase and protection of this critical habitat.

CBBEP - Nueces Bay Rookery Islands Restoration - \$100,000 CBBEP leveraged funds and asking for \$850,000 Restore Act Funds

The purpose of this project is to provide emergent, stable, and inviting habitats for migrating and area birds within Nueces Bay that currently use the islands during the nesting season. According to data from the Texas Colonial Waterbird Survey, most Colonial nesting water bird

populations have declined over the past 40 years. The reasons for the decline include mammalian predators, imported red fire ants, human disturbance of nesting sites, loss of coastal wetlands, and the direct loss of nesting habitat to erosion and sea level rise. In 2001 CBBEP constructed New Island in Nueces Bay to help address the loss of nesting habitat. As part of that project, five other remnant islands were protected with geotextile tubes to prevent further erosion. The geotextile tubes were placed to allow for the addition of fill material that would increase nesting area, but, due to financial constraints, the placement of fill has not yet occurred. This project will restore three of the five islands, adding a total of approximately 1.22 acres of new nesting area by placing approximately 4,800 cubic yards of material between the islands' current shorelines and existing geotextile tubes. Due to the highly concentrated nature of colonial water bird nesting, this new acreage could provide habitat for hundreds of pairs of wading birds (such as Reddish Egret and Roseate Spoonbill) and ground-nesting birds (Black Skimmers, Gull-billed Tern) each year. Historical data reflect that significant losses to nesting water bird populations in western Nueces Bay track the simultaneous decline in available habitat. The new material will provide habitat for bare ground nesters such as a black skimmers and gull-billed terns. CBBEP received a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nation Wide Permit 27 in January 2014 to implement the project. CBBEP is currently seeking funding to initiate construction.



Rookery Island Number 1.



Rookery Nueces Bay Island

CBBEP - Coastal Waterbird Management Program - \$100,000 CBBEP leveraged funds and asking for \$775,000 Restore Act Funds

The 2010 Environmental Indicators Report prepared by CBBEP documented the declining populations of certain colonial water bird populations. Some species of colonial waterbirds have experienced a 90% reduction in breeding pairs since the 1960's. Colonial waterbird populations are indicators of the overall health of the estuary. Certain coastal bird species are also showing declining trends. Bird watching, especially viewing colonial waterbirds, is an important and growing component of ecotourism and the local economy.

Building on the efforts of the CBBEP in managing Colonial Waterbirds throughout the Coastal Bend, this project will provide funding for 5 years in order to continue the implementation of specific management actions of the CBBEP Colonial Waterbird Rookery Island Management Plan. Additionally, these efforts will extend to management activities in support of coastal bird species and management of their habitat. Management actions will include efforts to reduce

human disturbance, nesting substrate management, vegetation management to enhance rookery island habitat, and predator control where necessary. Outreach will be a crucial component in achieving project objectives.

CBBEP - Expand Nueces Bay's New Island Rookery - \$1,800,000 that will be asked from Restore Act Funds.

This project will expand an existing rookery island in Nueces Bay that is known as New Island. New Island is a 4 acre island that was constructed by CBBEP in 2000. Due to funding at the time, the island could not be constructed to the preferred size of around 7 acres. This project would add 3 more acres of nesting habitat to the existing New Island and protect the new acreage with a rock breakwater that would also be used for hard substrate for oysters and other animals as habitat.

CBBEP - Nueces Delta Marsh Acquisition and Restoration Phase 1 - \$3,100,000 CBBEP leveraged funds and asking for \$3,100,000 Restore Act funds.

This project will acquire approximately 4,700 acres of vital habitat within the Nueces River Delta and conserve diverse estuarine marsh and prairie habitat - including wetlands, freshwater marshes and lakes, mudflats, fringe riparian corridors, and adjacent uplands. Numerous aquatic species utilize the estuarine wetlands within the delta as breeding and nursery grounds. The delta also harbors endangered or threatened avian species, including the white pelican, brown pelican, peregrine falcon, Texas bald eagle, burrowing owl, reddish egret, black skimmer, least tern, snowy plover, and piping plover. CBBEP has partnered with the City of Corpus Christi to divert freshwater from the Nueces River's main channel (which bypasses most of the delta) into the upper reaches of the Nueces Delta, and to manage the timing of freshwater releases in order to restore the productivity of wetlands throughout the delta and along the delta's shoreline.

The target property within the Nueces River Delta is adjacent to already protected property, and (if acquired) will form 10,500+ acres of contiguous estuarine habitat. This large contiguous tract of protected habitat will provide unparalleled breeding, nursery, and foraging opportunities that the area's aquatic species (as well as coastal avian species) would not otherwise have. The property is under contract and can be purchased if funding is received.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) -Coastal Prairies Game Bird Habitat Maintenance and Restoration Project - \$328,342 TPWD leveraged funds and will be asking for \$333,000 Restore Act Funds.

This project is landscape scale grassland habitat maintenance and restoration with the use of prescribed fire, prescribed grazing, and herbicide application on private lands that cooperate with TPWD through The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Current TPWD funds are supporting restoration work on approximately 16,800 acres. Requested Restore Act Funds would be used to provide funding for projects which could yield up to 16,650 acres of grassland habitat restoration through the OPJV Grassland Restoration Incentive Program (see below). These funds would be spent over 3 years starting in FY 2015 and going through FY 2017.

Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture Grassland Restoration Incentive Program - \$83,180 TPWD leveraged funds and will be asking for \$83,200 Restore Act Funds.

This program provides financial incentives to private landowners for conducting grassland

habitat restoration projects on their properties. Funding is available in multiple counties throughout Texas. Colorado and Austin counties are two of the eligible counties that are located in the Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration area coverage. The projects in these counties combined total 625 acres. Funding support from Restore Act could yield up to 2,500 acres of improved migratory bird habitat in Restore Act counties

Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture (OPJV) Grassland Bird Population Monitoring Project - \$8,000 TPWD/OPJV partner contributions per year for 5 years to be leveraged with \$8,000 Restore Act Funds per year for 5 years (total \$40,000 OPJV, \$40,000 Restore funds).

This program is monitoring the resulting population changes associated with grassland habitat delivery through the Grassland Restoration Incentive Program and will add Restore Act funding on this project. Monitoring for bird population is occurring throughout more than 25 counties in Texas and Oklahoma. Colorado and Austin Counties are two of these counties that are located in the Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration area. Further funding would allow this monitoring to be expanded into other coastal counties within the Texas mid-Coast. Monitoring population for birds in the mid coast due to targeted habitat restoration efforts will be done.

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department's Urban Conservation program will also utilize an extensive network within urban areas through the Coastal Communities Grant Program to provide community grants for shovel-ready projects. Communities reside within coastal area and restore and improve migratory bird habitat while improving wildlife associated recreation/ecotourism. Projects may include but are not limited to due to their progression in advancement:

- a) (Northeast Texas Coast) **Armand Bayou Nature Center: Request leveraging \$40,000 contribution funds with \$200,000.00 Restore funds.** The Armand Bayou Nature Preserve links several thousand acres of open space together and provides recreation to thousands of urban residents. Improvements to the Armand Bayou Paddling Trail and associated habitat restoration from Armand Bayou to Horsepen Bayou will be funded. This project would be a one year project and is very visible to the public and news media around the Houston area.
- b) (Mid Texas Coast) **City of Rockport project: Request \$75,000.00 Restore Act funds (5 years).** Rockport area high schools, in partnership with the city, are renovating and restoring popular birding destinations to improve ecotourism for the city and improve habitat on those areas for migratory birds.
- c) (Lower Texas Coast) **Lower Rio Grande Valley Ecotourism Projects:** The Lower Rio Grande Valley consists of 7 major metropolitan areas with a combined population of 1.3 million people and is a premier bird watching destination that attracts 150,000 Eco tourists each year for an economic effect of \$165 million annually. Public, private, and nonprofit land managers will compete for RESTORE ACT funds to restore and improve wildlife habitat for the benefit of coastal residents and migratory birds. They will do so by:
 - i) **City of McAllen: Habitat Restoration, Ebony Grove restoration: Request leveraging \$30,000.00 Restore Act funds to leverage with \$40,000.00 City funds (1 year).** This project will restore 4 acres to native Tamaulipan Thornforest through invasive species removal, native plantings of ebony, and the creation of

aquatic habitat features at Quinta Mazatlán, a World Birding Center Destination. This project will improve habitat for migratory birds, promote ecotourism through the area's well-connected birding destinations, and benefit the city's underserved population. This project will improve and increase birding trails, improve wildlife recreational viewing opportunities for wildlife recreation, and provide for education opportunities of tens of thousands of students and adults annually.

- ii) **World Birding Centers: Requesting \$180,000.00 Restore Act Funds (5 years). Habitat restoration of various sites, marketing for ecotourism** The WBC consists of not just **one**, but **nine** unique locations in the Rio Grande Valley. Each site has its own attractions for both the first time visitor and expert birder. More than 500 bird species make this a not-to-be-missed nature destination by more than 150,000 birders and Eco tourists that visit the area each year. RESTORE ACT funds will be used to restore degraded habitat on WBC Destinations, and sustainably improve access for underserved residents and Eco tourists
- iii) **The Valley Nature Center: Habitat restoration and marketing for ecotourism. Requesting \$75,000.00 Restore Act funds (5 years)** The Valley Nature Center in Weslaco, Texas is the oldest nature center in the Rio Grande Valley, and the only non-profit center fully dedicated to environmental education south of San Antonio and east of Eagle Pass. It has been in operation as a non-profit organization dedicated to its mission since 1984. The Valley Nature Center will use funds to repair degraded habitat, educate youth on the importance of wildlife and wildlife habitat, and attract visitors to the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) - Texas Gulf Coast Prairie Initiative and projects

Currently, there are few commercial sources of native coastal tall-grass prairie seed available for purchase for the many restoration needs along the Texas Coast. Private landowners, federal and state land management agencies and highway departments, municipalities and the energy sector, are all responsible for managing the Gulf Coast region and addressing economic needs – forage, wildlife habitat, coastal flood control, improve water quality, and right-of way plantings. Much of the remaining grasslands of the Gulf Coast are dominated by exotic grasses such as bermudagrass, old world bluestems, bahiagrass and others (Smith 2010, TPWD 2012). This effect does not lend itself to very good habitat for migrating, shore birds and resident species. The primary reason for this dominance is popularity created by the combination of economic utility, availability, and price. Native species have economic utility, but availability—especially of appropriate local ecotype material – and price serve as very limiting factors. This proposed action will provide genetically rich native seed stock to landowners, agencies, industry, municipal and conservation organizations. Economic benefit to private seed producers will be a driver to increase seed in quantities necessary to meet demands, and to avail local ecotype stock at prices competitive with currently available exotic “tame” pasture species, and cultivar native species. Making large quantities of local ecotype seed stock available to the market is a landscape scale strategy to improve coastal resiliency and enhance native biodiversity.

USDA NRCS Plant Material Centers (PMC) are critical in this vision through the establishment of and expansion of current native seed increase plots to provide foundation seed. NRCS has the capacity and a history of success in processing field collections and testing accessions to maximize pure live seed (PLS) values to reach industry and ROW standards while maintain healthy genetic diversity. Foundation seed has been released to the seed grower industry for mass production and released to partner organizations. TNC is looking at this effort for similar work.

In 2013, The Nature Conservancy staff at Texas City Prairie Preserve in Galveston County began a small 3-acre seed plot to augment volunteer container plantings and increase seed stock for its restoration work and to share with cooperating partners. Additionally, the Conservancy established the Prairie Seed Council to build out local efforts to organize seed collections and identify potential collecting sites in coastal counties in the mid and upper coast. These programs expanded on our technical advisor roles by providing expertise on restoration strategies, in addition to planning and implementing prescribed fire and invasive species control on private lands. We have had a positive impact locally, but our current efforts do not approach the scale of production needed to impact native plant diversity and contribute to coastal resiliency on a regional level. Through Restore Act funds we anticipate in meeting that objective and further ensure ready affordable native seed stock for future habitat restoration. Two TNC projects have been brought forward for funding. They are:

TNC (1) - Coastal Prairie Seed Increase - \$50,000 TNC leveraging with \$375,000 from Restore Act funds

TNC currently maintains a 3-acre native grass seed increase plot in Galveston Co. that has 5 species of native grasses grown in a cultivated setting. Seeds are used for restoring TNC and shared with partner lands along Galveston Bay. Samples of collections are sent to USDA-NRCS E. "Kika" de la Garza PMC for evaluating and testing. Locally, TNC lacks staffing and equipment to sufficiently harvest, clean and store enough seed to affect at the regional mid and upper gulf scale. This project will provide funding for the expansion of the program to 10 acres and/or nearby NRCS (or partner facilities) and facilitate the production of seed materials for local use and to incentivize commercial seed producers and consumers for regional use.

Timeline and Process

- Years 1: Hire a full time seed coordinator to organize and manage the PSC and collect seed of important native plant species throughout the Galveston Bay area and Upper Texas Coast. Build seed inventory and send samples to PMC's for evaluation.
- Years 1-3: Begin building infrastructure, acquiring equipment, planning and planting seed plots on TNC and/or partnering organizations. Hire full time restoration specialist to assist with on the ground facilities management and support local partners, work with landowners.

- Years 1-5: NRCS PMC plant and evaluate these collections from various locations in the region and select populations with necessary traits for successful restoration and reclamation use.
- Years 1+: Grow progressively larger quantities of seed in established grow out plots and incorporate better quality seed for use in demonstration plots, research plots, and in lands in need of restoration.
- Year 5+: Plant materials centers begin releasing local plant accessions to commercial growers. Goal would be to harvest up to 500 lb. bulk seed for local use, and support the establishment of coastal prairie seed mix with commercial growers

TNC (2) - Prairie Seed Council - \$100,000 for unleveraged Restore Act funds.

TNC established the Prairie Seed Council (PSC) to organize native seed collections throughout the coastal counties in the mid and upper coasts. The PSC is currently working on 18 species of native plants (see attached Appendix D.) but has facilitated collections of 2 additional species, Texas coneflower and brownseed paspalum. PSC serves as regional technical committee-recommending species to collect and identifying research needs. PSC also acts to help increase the availability of native plant materials by working with seed growers, governments, and research organizations. The PSC is currently organized as a volunteer partner effort with current members from USFWS, TPWD, Katy Prairie Conservancy, Wildlife Habitat Federation, Ducks Unlimited, and The Nature Conservancy.

PSC members are assigned to lead collection efforts within a subset of 3-7 counties. We are currently focusing on 25 coastal counties- Orange, Jefferson, Hardin, Liberty, San Jacinto, Montgomery, Harris, Waller, Fort Bend, Wharton, Galveston, Brazoria, Matagorda, Washington, Austin, Fayette, Colorado, Lavaca, Jackson, Calhoun, Victoria, DeWitt, Goliad, Refugio, and Aransas. Currently there is no specific target weight of seeds but rather enough to satisfy identified needs of Plant Material Centers (PMC), growers, and researchers. It will depend on species and specific needs. Collections are done by hand and are made by volunteers led by PSC members and partially by an FTE hire.

Timeline and Process

- Years 1: Hire a full time seed coordinator to organize and manage the PSC
- Year 1 – 5+: Collect seeds of identified important native plant species throughout the Galveston Bay, upper and mid Texas Coast (Orange, Jefferson, Hardin, Liberty, San Jacinto, Montgomery, Harris, Waller, Fort Bend, Wharton, Galveston, Brazoria, Matagorda, Washington, Austin, Fayette, Colorado, Lavaca, Jackson, Calhoun, Victoria, DeWitt, Goliad, Refugio, Aransas). Build seed inventories, identify cooperating landowners, work with landowners on management plans of hay meadows and native pastures, send seed samples to PMC’s for evaluation.

USFWS - Migratory and Shorebird Habitat – commits \$1,000,000 to leverage with \$1,000,000 Restore Act funds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Coastal Program and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program are voluntary, non-regulatory programs designed to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners and land managers to restore, enhance and conserve habitat for federal trusts species (e.g. migratory birds, threatened and endangered species). Both programs have been in existence for more than 25 years and have a proven track record for delivering on the ground biologically meaningful results. Along the Texas coast these programs focus on strategically delivering projects for species with defined population goals and habitat objectives. Projects conducted by the Coastal and Partners programs rely on biological planning and conservation design work conducted by habitat focused Joint Ventures, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, endangered species recovery plans as well as other landscape scale planning organizations. This focus helps the Service deliver projects, using the best available science, in the most biological meaningful places on the landscape. In coastal Texas these programs work in partnership with numerous private landowner, NGO’s and other governmental agencies to provide habitat for focal waterfowl, shorebirds, and colonial nesting water birds, in addition to, endangered species such as Whooping Crane and Attwater’s Prairie-Chicken. Projects include prairie restoration where brush encroachment threatens habitat for focal grassland migratory birds; fresh water wetland restoration for migratory waterfowl and focal shorebirds, and saltmarsh restoration and conservation for the Whooping Crane as well as Seaside Sparrow and other saltmarsh species.

Recently the Service published its “Vision for a Health Gulf of Mexico Watershed”. This document outlines 8 strategies needed to restore lost functions of the Gulf watershed and 16 focal areas in which these strategies should be implemented. The “Migratory and Shorebird Habitat Initiative” proposal goals include elements of all 8 of these strategies and overlaps with 4 of the 16 focal areas.

In the next 5 years the Service’s Coastal and Partners Programs will expend more than \$1,000,000.00 through existing cooperative agreements within the boundaries identified as the “Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Initiative” to restore or enhance approximately 8,000 acres of uplands and wetlands for focal migratory birds. The addition of \$1,000,000.00 from RESTORE Act Funds would allow the Service to restore, enhance or conserve a similar acreage. RESTORE Act Funds would be delivered through cooperative assistance agreements with our partners.

TPWD - Oaks and Prairie Joint Venture Grassland Restoration Incentive Program	\$83,180.00	\$83,180.00		\$83,200.00
TPWD - Monitoring bird populations	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00		\$40,000.00
TPWD - Urban Wildlife Program				
TPWD - Armand Bayou Nature Center (Houston/Galveston)	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00		\$200,000.00
TPWD - City of Rockport /High Schools	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$75,000.00
TPWD - Lower Rio Grande Ecotourism Projects:				
City of McAllen – Ebony Grove	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00		\$30,000.00
World Birding Centers (9)	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$180,000.00
Valley Nature Center	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$75,000.00
TNC - Prairie Seed Increase	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00		\$375,000.00
TNC - Prairie Seed Council	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$100,000.00
USFWS - Migratory and Shorebird Habitat	\$1,000,000.00	\$1,000,000.00		\$1,000,000.00
		Partner Funds		Restore Funds
Totals		\$17,781,522.00		\$15,213,200.00
Project Total Leveraged Cost	\$32,994,722.00			

**

NFWF – *National Fish and Wildlife Federation*
CBBEP – *Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program*
TPWD – *Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*
TNC – *The Nature Conservancy*
USFWS – *United State Fish And Wildlife Service*

Environmental Compliance Checklists

Appendix B.1

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Environmental Compliance Checklist – Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Projects

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

<u>Environmental Compliance Type</u>	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*1			
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*2			
Clean Water Act – 404 – General Permit(USACOE)	X*3		X	
Clean Water Act – 404 – Letters of Permission(USACOE)		X		
Clean Water Act – 401 – WQ certification	X*2			
Clean Water Act – 402 – NPDES		X		
Rivers and Harbors Act – Section 10 (USACOE)				
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*4			
Marine Mammal Protection Act – Incidental Take Permit (106) (NMFS, USFWS)		X		
Migratory Bird Treaty Act (USFWS)	X*5			
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*6			
NHPA Section 106 – Memorandum of Agreement/Programmatic Agreement		X		
Tribal Consultation (Government to Government)		X		
Coastal Barriers Resource Act – CBRS (Consultation)		X		
State				

*1 – All restoration projects are coordinated with USFWS.

*2 – The Nueces Delta Shoreline Erosion Restoration and Protection project will most likely need a 404 Individual Permit from the USACOE and CWA 401 WQ Certification and is expected to be applied for by January 2015. Causeway Island Rookery Protection and Restoration in Nueces Bay and Expand Nueces Bay’s New Island Rookery may also need 404 Individual Permit from the USACOE and possibly CWA 401 WQ Certification.

*3 – Permit for Nueces Bay Rookery Island s Restoration. Nationwide Permit has been received.

*4 - All restoration projects In Marine Habitats are consulted with NMFS on EFH.

*5 – Projects dealing with rookery islands and nesting colonial water birds adhere to the MBTA.

*6 – Projects that contain earth moving go through the historical review to ensure no historical sites are damaged.

Appendix B.2

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Environmental Compliance Checklist – Regarding the TNC projects

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

<u>Environmental Compliance Type</u>	Yes	No	Applied For	N/A
Federal				X
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

Appendix B.3

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Environmental Compliance Checklist USDA/NRCS/TSSCB/SWCDS

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

<u>Environmental Compliance Type</u>	Yes	No	Applied For	N/A
Federal				X
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				X

As Applicable

Categorical exemptions in effect for conservation practices and plans.

Appendix B.4

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Environmental Compliance Checklist – Regarding the USFWS projects

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

<u>Environmental Compliance Type</u>	Yes	No	Applied For	N/A
Federal				X
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				
<u>As Applicable</u>				

Appendix B.5

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Environmental Compliance Checklist – Regarding TPWD projects

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

<u>Environmental Compliance Type</u>	Yes	No	Applied For	N/A
Federal				X
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				
<u>As Applicable</u>				

Data Sharing Plan:
(See also Measure of Success)

Even though private landowners with habitat restoration stewardship plans are covered under Section 1619 and Personal Identifiable Information (PII) which guards their confidentiality, the effects of practices used, the kinds and amounts of practices installed for this effort will be shared with the parties in this proposal and the general public as well. That is only one aspect of the subjects that will be covered annually at the partner data sharing meeting that is set up in this proposal. It is expected that this data sharing group will use information in a positive step to go further in habitat restoration in the future for the coast and beyond up into key adjacent watersheds that flow into the coast.

Reference list of Literature

REFERENCES

Agricultural Act of 2014, H.R. 2642; Public Law 113-79 (2014)

Bellrose, F.C. 1980. *Ducks, geese, and Swans of North America*. Harrisburg: Stackpole Books

Buler, J.J., et al. Migrant-habitat relationships during stopover along an ecological barrier: extrinsic constraints and conservation implications. *Journal of Ornithology*. 152.1 (2011) 101-112

Fitzsimmons, O.N., et al. "Implications of coastal wetland management to nonbreeding waterbirds in Texas" *Wetlands*. 32.6 (2012) 1057-1066.

Fulbright, T.E., Hewitt, D.G., 2008. *Wildlife Science: Linking Ecological Theory and Management Applications*. CRC Press. Boca Raton, Florida. 79-104 pp. print

Gabrey, S.W., et al. Effects of Structural Marsh Management and Winter Burning on Plant and Bird Communities during Summer in the Gulf Coast Chenier Plain. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*. 29.1 (2001) 218-231

Haukos, D., et al. "Characteristics of ponds used by breeding mottled ducks on the Chenier plain of the Texas Gulf Coast." *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* 1.2 (2010) 93-101.

Rappole, J.H., and G.W. Blacklock. 1994. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Texas*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press

Rigby, E.A., et al. A Matrix Population Model for Mottled Ducks (*Anas fluvigula*) of the Western Gulf Coast. *Southeastern Naturalist*. 13.5 (2014) 26-40.

Sieges, M.L., et al. "Assessment of bird response to the migratory bird habitat initiative using weather-surveillance radar" *Southeastern Naturalist*. 13.1 (2014) G36-G65.

Smith, L.M., R.L. Pederson and R.M. Kaminski (editors). 1989. Habitat management for migrating and wintering waterfowl in North America. Texas Tech University Press, Lubbock, Texas

Soil Conservation Act of 1935, Public Law no. 74-76, (1935).

Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, 16.590 (1936)

Stutzenbaker, C.D., and M.W. Weller. 1989. The Texas coast. In *Habitat Management for Migrating and Wintering Waterfowl in North America*, L.M. Smith, R.I. Pederson, and R.M. Kaminski (eds). TX: Texas Tech University Press

Texas Soil Conservation Law of 1939, 46th Leg. , R.S., ch. 3, 1939 Tex. Gen. Laws 7 (1939)

Texas Agricultural Code. Title 7, § 201, § 203.

The Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, Public Law No. 103-354, (1994)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan: Lower Mississippi/Western Gulf Coast Shorebird Planning Region*. ONLINE. 2000. Available:
<http://www.shorebirdplan.org/regional-shorebird-conservation-plans.html>

North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Plan Committee. 2004. North American Waterfowl Management Plan 2004. Strategic Guidance: Strengthening the Biological Foundation. Canadian Wildlife Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, 22pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Vision for a Health Gulf of Mexico Watershed", comprehensive plan document

Other (appendix and Letters of Support):

TNC Native Species List - Appendix D.

The Nature Conservancy

Current Collection Priority Species

Updated March 2014

White Prairie Clover (*Dalea candida*)

Roundhead Prairie Clover (*Dalea multiflora*)

Virginia Wildrye (*Elymus virginicus*)

Yellow Indiangrass (*Sorghastgrum nutans*)

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

Seacoast Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium var. littoralis*)

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

Florida Paspalum (*Paspalum floridanum*)

Eastern Gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*)

Sideoats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)

Knotroot Bristlegrass (*Setaria parviflora*)

Maximillian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximilianii*)

Red Lovegrass (*Eragrostis secundiflora*)

Swamp Sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*)

Little Barley (*Hordeum pusillum*)

Scribner's Panicum (*Dicanthelium oligosanthes*)

Silver Bluestem (*Bothriochloa laguroides* & *B. longipanicul*)



Austin County Soil and Water Conservation District #347

520 South Front St.
Bellville, Texas 77418
979-865-3139 x 170
austincountyswcd@tx.nacdnet.org

Austin County

November 5, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*
Proposal for RESTORE Act Funding

Dear Council Members,

As Chairman of the Austin County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

As local SWCD members, we play an integral role in bringing local landowners to the table to implement conservation practices on the land which can provide habitat, as well as many other benefits, to migratory and shore birds. Through our years of experience, we anticipate working quickly and efficiently with the USDA-NRCS to develop and implement conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely,

Chairman
Austin County Soil & Water Conservation District #347



Hidalgo SWCD #350

2514 S. Veterans Blvd., Suite 2 Edinburg, TX 78539
(956) 383-3002 ext. 3

November 6, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* Proposal for
RESTORE Act Funding

Dear Council Members,

As Chairman of the Hidalgo Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

Through this project, we would work directly and effectively with the USDA-NRCS to develop and implement conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners. Since the primary goal of this proposal is to restore, enhance and conserve habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast, we would ensure habitat restoration is practiced and instilled on private lands with those local landowners.

Overall, this project would greatly benefit the local landowners and community, as well as the Texas Gulf Coast as a whole. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely,

Larry Skloss
Hidalgo SWCD #350



LOMA BLANCA SWCD # 328
P.O. BOX 327
FALFURRIAS, TEXAS 78355

November 5, 2014

Restore Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Support for the Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat
Restoration Proposal for RESTORE Act funding.

Dear Council Member,

As Chairman of Loma Blanca Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

As local SWCD members, we play an intergral role in bringing local landowners to the table to implement conservation practices on the land which can provide habitat, as well as many other benefits, to migratory and shore birds. Through our years of experience, we anticipate conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely,

SWCD Chairman
Loma Blanca SWCD # 328

November __, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Council Members,

On behalf of the ___ Navasota ___ Soil and Water Conservation District, I am pleased to offer our full support for the United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Conservation Service's RESTORE Act proposal, *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*. We anticipate utilizing our years of experience with cost sharing conservation plans and our relationships with local landowners to support this project. We look forward to the opportunity to implement conservation practices on lands within our jurisdiction to restore, enhance and conserve the land along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,



_____ Soil and Water Conservation District Chairman

**SOUTH TEXAS ASSOCIATION
OF
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

1700 North Smith, Suite B
Hebbronville, TX 78361

November 6, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express the South Texas Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' support for the United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Conservation Service's RESTORE Act proposal, *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*. Our presence at the local level will provide a significant opportunity to encourage landowners to implement conservation practices within our district. We look forward to using our experience with cost-sharing conservation plans to help restore, enhance and conserve migratory and shore bird habitat along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,



Israel Salazar, Jr.
President

November 6, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Council Members,

On behalf of the Southmost Soil and Water Conservation District #319, I am pleased to offer our full support for the United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Conservation Service's RESTORE Act proposal, *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*. We anticipate utilizing our years of experience with cost sharing conservation plans and our relationships with local landowners to support this project. We look forward to the opportunity to implement conservation practices on lands within our jurisdiction to restore, enhance and conserve the land along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ovi Atkinson", written over a horizontal line.

Ovi Atkinson - Chairman

Southmost Soil and Water Conservation District #319



Willacy Soil and Water Conservation District #349

255 FM RD 3168 Suite 2 Raymondville, TX 78580
Phone (956) 689-2542 Ext. 3 ♦ Fax (956) 689-3099

Charles (Chuck) Burns, Chairman
Israel Salazar, Jr., Vice-Chairman
Thomas Zdansky, Secretary

Lawrence (Buck) Braswell, Member
Troy Shewmaker, Member

November 6, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Willacy Soil and Water Conservation District, I am pleased to offer our full support for the United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Conservation Service's RESTORE Act proposal, *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*. We anticipate utilizing our years of experience with cost sharing conservation plans and our relationships with local landowners to support this project. We look forward to the opportunity to implement conservation practices on lands within our jurisdiction to restore, enhance and conserve the land along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

Israel Salazar, Jr.
Vice-Chairman

November 7, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

I am writing to express our support the grant proposal entitled Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration submitted by USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service Texas office (NRCS).

NRCS partnering in ongoing habitat restoration and conservation with a suite of locally working NGO's, state agencies and landowners, will ensure that funding goes directly to on-the-ground projects throughout the TX Gulf Coast benefitting wildlife and local economies. This proposal promotes coastal resilience by enhancing and restoring ecosystem services through habitat restoration and protection.

The Texas Chapter of the Nature Conservancy is particularly pleased to see our work on coastal prairie restoration included as part of the proposal, as well as the work of other partners like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Coastal Bend Bay and Estuary Program.

We appreciate your consideration of this proposal and ask you to support the funding of this proposal through the RESTORE Act, demonstrating the RESTORE Council's support our commitment in Texas to restore and protect coastal habitats for a resilient Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,


John S. C. Herron

Sr. Director of Texas Conservation Programs

3015 Richmond Avenue, Suite 230
Houston, Texas 77098-3114

713.523.6135 P
713.523.6145 F

www.katyprairie.org
info@katyprairie.org



November 7, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Council Members,

The Katy Prairie Conservancy would like to express full support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the USDA-NRCS. This comprehensive and well-conceived proposal will result in a number of important on the ground conservation actions that will greatly benefit wildlife along the Texas Coast.

Simply put we need more trained conservation professionals and more conservation tools to meet the ambitious restoration and conservation targets for sustaining bird and other wildlife populations for southeast Texas and along the entire Texas coast. We will also need, more than ever, to leverage partnerships and cooperative funding to meet our goals. This USDA-NRCS proposal sets an ambitious but achievable benchmark for getting us further towards our goals.

The Katy Prairie Conservancy is particularly excited about the prospect of The Nature Conservancy of Texas receiving funds to help nurture and grow the critical habitat restoration work and objectives of the Prairie Seed Council of the Upper Texas Coast (PSC). The PSC and its conservation partners are working to bring nearly twenty species of new coastal prairie seeds to market. These seeds will make prairie conservation from Matagorda, TX to Lafayette, LA more predictable, more affordable, and more biodiverse. We are confident that this will spur private landowners, governmental agencies (including highway departments and flood control districts), and private nonprofit institutions to restore thousands of acres of rapidly diminishing coastal prairie habitat along our coasts. These restored grasslands will be critical for the continued survival of northern pintail ducks, eastern meadowlarks, northern bobwhites, and other prairie birds that declining do to habitat loss. The plant materials stemming from the work of the PSC will also meet the needs of a rapidly growing army of landscape architects and city planners who are incorporating grassland plantings in urban and suburban parks, school yards, and other greenspaces as a response to the lessening water supplies and to recapture a sense of place in a rapidly globalized society.

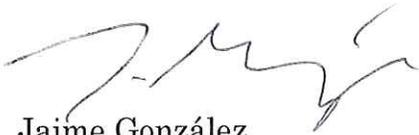
BOARD OF DIRECTORS Mary Van Kettebrook **PRESIDENT** • William T. Snypes **VICE-PRESIDENT** • C. Foster Carter **TREASURER** • Robert A. Honig **SECRETARY**
Kevin Bartol • Stephen E. Gast • J. Tynan (Ty) Kelly • Mark Klein • Christopher J. Patton • David Poteet • Wallace T. Ward

ADVISORY BOARD William J. Anderson, Jr. • Fred Collins • Jim Gregory • Terry Hershey • John Jacob • Thomas R. Kelsey • Lynn Paulsen • Adolph A. Pfeffer, Jr.
Kathryn Reiser • Kathie Shultz • Fred Smeins • Carter Smith • Roger A. Soape • Maryann Young **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** Mary Anne Piacentini

KPC is also very pleased that this proposal is multiagency in nature. USDA and NRCS should be commended for reaching out to others to design a plan from which so many agencies will benefit. This ensures that dollars allocated will not duplicate work and the reach of each action can be targeted for where conservation needs to happen now. Lastly, it is clear that this proposal, if fully funded, will impact not just prairies but many different habitat types – all of which are critical to conserving the full and amazing biodiversity of the Texas coast. Many of our animals need different habitats during different times of the year, so it is critical that we conserve the maximum variety of habitats to give them their best chance at survival.

In closing, we would like to reiterate our complete support for this cutting-edge and comprehensive conservation funding proposal and it is our great hope that the Council will find merit in the proposal as so many of us in the conservation community have already done.

Sincerely,

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

Jaime González
Conservation Education Director/Grassland Restoration Lead
Katy Prairie Conservancy

President and Co-Founder
Coastal Prairie Partnership

CALHOUN SOIL and WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT No. 345

Post Office Box 553

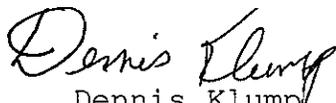
Port Lavaca, Texas 77979-0553

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to express Calhoun Soil and Water Conservation District's support for the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Conservation Service RESTORE Act proposal, Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration. Our presence at the local level will provide a significant opportunity to encourage landowners to implement conservation practices within our district. We look forward to the opportunity to implement conservation practices on lands within our jurisdiction to restore, enhance and conserve the land along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,


Dennis Klump
Chairman



Victoria Soil and Water Conservation District #346

312 South Main St., Federal Bldg., Room 308 - Victoria, TX 77901 - Phone (361) 576-1129, Ext. 3 - Fax (361) 575-9537

November 10, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
C/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Support for the Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration
Proposal for RESTORE Act Funding

Dear Council Members,

As Chairman of the Victoria Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the Texas Coast migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

Through this project, we would work directly and effectively with the USDA-NRCS to develop and implement conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners. Since the primary goal of this proposal is to restore, enhance and conserve habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast, we would ensure habitat restoration is practiced and instilled on private lands with those local landowners.

Overall, this project would greatly benefit the local landowners and community, as well as the Texas Gulf Coast as a whole. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely,

Stephen Diebel, Chairman
Victoria Soil and Water Conservation District #346



Colorado County Soil & Water Conservation District #333
2209 A Walnut Street, Columbus, Texas 78934
(979) 732-2773 x 3

November 7, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* Proposal
for RESTORE Act Funding

Dear Council Members,

As Vice-Chairman of the Colorado County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

As local SWCD members, we play an integral role in bringing local landowners to the table to implement conservation practices on the land which can provide habitat, as well as many other benefits, to migratory and shore birds. Through our years of experience, we anticipate working quickly and efficiently with the USDA-NRCS to develop and implement conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely,

Kim Gold, Vice-Chairman
Colorado County SWCD #333



Coastal Plains Soil and Water Conservation District #317

1402 Band Rd., Suite 200 - Rosenberg, TX 77471 - Phone (281) 232-6898, Ext. 3

November 6, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Council Members,

On behalf of the Coastal Plains Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am pleased to offer our full support for the United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Conservation Service's RESTORE Act proposal, *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*. We anticipate utilizing our years of experience with cost sharing conservation plans and our relationships with local landowners to support this project. We look forward to the opportunity to implement conservation practices on lands within our jurisdiction to restore, enhance and conserve the land along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

Matt Gubbels, Director
Coastal Plains Soil and Water Conservation District #317

Matagorda County Soil & Water Conservation District #316
2200 Avenue A / Bay City, TX 77414
979/245-1138 Ext. 3
matagordasoil@sbcglobal.net

November 7, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

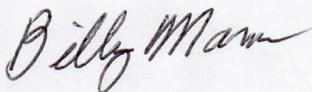
RE: Support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* Proposal
for RESTORE Act Funding

Dear Council Members,

As Chairman of the Matagorda County Soil and Water Conservation District #316, I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

As local SWCD members, we play an integral role in bringing local landowners to the table to implement conservation practices on the land which can provide habitat, as well as many other benefits, to migratory and shore birds. Through our years of experience, we anticipate working quickly and efficiently with the USDA-NRCS to develop and implement conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely, 

Matagorda County Soil and Water Conservation District #316 Chairman
Billy Mann



Goliad County Soil and Water Conservation District #352
P.O. Box 453, Goliad, TX 77963
361-645-2350

November 5, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* Proposal for RESTORE Act Funding

Dear Council Members,

As Chairman of the Goliad County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

As local SWCD members, we play an integral role in bring local landowners to the table to implement conservation practices on land which can provide habitat, as well as many other benefits, to migratory and shore birds. Through our years of experience, we anticipate working quickly and efficiently with the USDA-NRCS to develop and implement conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Dreier".

John Dreier
Goliad County Soil and Water Conservation District Chariman

November 19, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Council Members,

On behalf of the Coastal Soil and Water Conservation District, I am pleased to offer our full support for the United States Department of Agriculture- Natural Resource Conservation Service's RESTORE Act proposal, *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*. We anticipate utilizing our years of experience with cost sharing conservation plans and our relationships with local landowners to support this project. We look forward to the opportunity to implement conservation practices on lands within our jurisdiction to restore, enhance and conserve the land along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wynne Furber". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Coastal Soil and Water Conservation District Chairman

November 5, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* Proposal
for RESTORE Act Funding

Dear Council Members,

As Chairman of the Lower Neches Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), I am writing on behalf of the District and local landowners in support of the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service for RESTORE Act funding.

Through this project, we would work directly and effectively with the USDA-NRCS to develop and implement conservation/stewardship plans with local landowners. Since the primary goal of this proposal is to restore, enhance and conserve habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast, we would ensure habitat restoration is practiced and instilled on private lands with those local landowners.

Overall, this project would greatly benefit the local landowners and community, as well as the Texas Gulf Coast as a whole. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the USDA-NRCS on this potential project.

Sincerely,



SWCD Chairman

RECEIVED
NOV 12 2014
TSSWCB



Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc.

1305 N. Shoreline, Suite 205, Corpus Christi, Texas 78401-1500 • 361-885-6202 • 361-881-5168 (fax)

November 7, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Re: Texas Coast Migratory and Shorebird Habitat Restoration Proposal by USDA-NRCS

Dear Restore Council Members,

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program is pleased to provide this letter of support for this important project proposed by USDA-NRCS. CBBEP looks forward to the opportunity to be a partner in this project to restore critically important bird habitat on the Texas coast.

We have a well established working partnership with NRCS and this proposal seeks to follow on those successes with additional habitat protection and restoration projects. We are confident that the proposed activities can be successfully implemented and that short and long-term monitoring will clearly document the ecological results.

CBBEP is fully committed to working with USDA-NRCS on this project and will dedicate the resources, both technical and financial, to make sure these efforts are successful

We very much appreciate the Council's consideration of this proposal and hope that funding will be allocated for this effort.

Sincerely,

Ray Allen

Ray Allen
Executive Director



6 November 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF), I would like to express support for the *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration* proposal submitted by the USDA-NRCS. GBF has worked to preserve, protect, and enhance Galveston Bay for over 25 years and has a strong interest in addressing issues and concerns related to Galveston Bay and its associated watershed.

One of the many significant conservation issues on the Texas Coast is loss of functional habitat and permanent protection of environmentally sensitive lands. The proposed project to conserve, restore, and enhance critical migratory bird habitat will provide much needed resources for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds and promote economic sustainability in the region. This project will be a platform for educational opportunities for residents in coastal communities and will facilitate habitat stewardship throughout the Texas Gulf Coast.

The proposed project complements GBF's mission to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural resources of the Galveston Bay estuarine system and its tributaries for present users and for posterity. GBF supports the efforts of USDA-NRCS to conserve, protect, and enhance coastal natural resources for migratory and shore birds throughout the Texas coast.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Johns".

President



Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture
111 E. Travis
Suite #200
La Grange, TX 78945
November 12, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear RESTORE Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture to express our support for the **Texas Migratory Shorebird Habitat Restoration** proposal, as submitted by the USDA – NRCS Texas office. The mission of OPJV is to plan for and facilitate the habitat conservation, research and outreach needed to ensure sustainable populations of priority bird species.

The partners of OPJV, including TPWD and NRCS, have been working together to build the cooperative conservation planning, population monitoring, conservation tracking, and conservation delivery systems to support landscape scale conservation. Our partner work over the past few years has built momentum to produce and document the landscape scale increase in habitat quantity and quality that would positively impact migratory bird populations.

Through our Grassland Restoration Incentive Program we have committed \$83,180 to be spent during Texas State FY 2015 on migratory bird habitat improvements on grazing lands through partnerships with private landowners in Colorado and Austin Counties. Requested RESTORE funds would be used to fund future habitat enhancement projects in the identified RESTORE coastal counties.

We are also committed to continuing our Grassland Bird Population Monitoring Project which is currently in its third year and is projected to continue for another 5 years and beyond. We are currently spending \$8,000 per year in the two RESTORE counties where the monitoring is taking place (Austin and Colorado) and we are committed to continuing that level of support. Further funding received from this request would enable the project to expand to include more counties in the identified RESTORE act area.

We feel the cooperative project in this proposal will do an excellent job addressing our shared conservation priorities. We look forward to continuing our cooperative conservation efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James J. Giocomo".

James J. Giocomo, PhD
OPJV Coordinator

Marty H. Graham, *Chairman*
Scott Buckles, *Vice Chairman*
José Dodier, Jr., *Member*
Jerry D. Nichols, *Member*



Barry Mahler, *Member*
Larry D. Jacobs, *Member*
Joe L. Ward, *Member*
Rex Isom, *Executive Director*

TEXAS STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD

Protecting and Enhancing Natural Resources for Tomorrow

November 11, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Council Members:

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) is extremely pleased to partner with the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on the RESTORE Act proposal, *Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*.

Our role would be to facilitate contractual relationships between the many local soil and water conservation districts that are also partnering with NRCS, and to provide leadership and financial support services in passing funds through to the local level to participating landowners interested in protecting, enhancing, and preserving migratory and shore bird habitat in the region of Texas' gulf coast. We are very experienced in similar efforts to provide funding for conservation practice implementation and management incentives with NRCS and look forward to the opportunity.

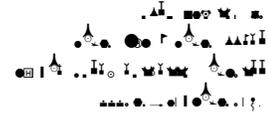
To enhance this proposal, the TSSWCB has a proposal pending with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), which would be leveraged with funding from Texas NRCS. This would provide enhanced technical assistance to compliment this effort and ensure conservation plan development needs.

Again, this is a proposal the TSSWCB is pleased to be a partner to, and look forward to assisting with a successful project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Foster". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

JOHN FOSTER
Statewide Programs Officer
TSSWCB



11/08/14

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

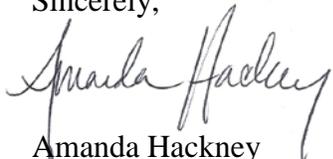
Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Audubon Texas Coastal Conservation Program, I would like to express support for the Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration proposal submitted by the USDA-NRCS. Coordinated efforts like this project are an effective means of restoring and preserving large sections of valuable wildlife habitat. We believe this project is very worthwhile and needed to contribute to our continued efforts to create a viable Gulf Coast for both human and wildlife inhabitants.

Many of our coastal bird species are facing an uphill battle to survive. Sea-level rise and climate change are causing vital island, marsh and beach habitat to disappear. Water quality issues and lack of freshwater inflows reduce prey availability for our birds that forage in Texas bay systems. Development and increasing human populations continue to endanger coastal habitats.

This proposal seeks to engage private land owners in worthwhile conservation measures and to partner them with state, federal and local agencies. We believe this approach will bring maximum dividends by including private lands that make up such a significant part of Texas. The Audubon Texas Coastal Conservation Program urges you to fund this proposal. We feel that this proposal is well thought out and has the potential to be a worthwhile contribution to our conservation community.

Sincerely,



Amanda Hackney
Coastal Program Manager, Audubon Texas
(936) 554-9033
ahackney@audubon.org



SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE

193 Business Park Drive, Suite E
Ridgeland, MS 39157-6026
(601) 956-1936 Fax (601) 956-7814
www.ducks.org

November 13, 2014

MEMORANDUM

To: RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

From: Ducks Unlimited, Southern Region
Re: Texas Coast Migratory and Shorebird Habitat Restoration

Ducks Unlimited (DU) has reviewed the proposal submitted by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to the Council entitled *Texas Coast Migratory and Shorebird Habitat Restoration* and we support the project as a means to conserve lands that will contribute to the generational viability of the Gulf Coast Region for wildlife and people. NRCS partnering in ongoing habitat restoration with a broad suite of local NGO's state agencies and landowners, will ensure that funding goes to on the ground conservation activities and benefits the local resource based economies and the local communities.

DU is directly engaged in on the ground conservation across the Gulf Coast Region and we remain committed to this area as one of the most critical waterfowl wintering areas on the continent. The goal of the proposal to secure and obligate a total of nearly 33 million dollars in direct on-the-ground conservation funding for conservation actions that demonstrably improve habitat quality and quantity, aligns well with DU's mission of a Gulf Coast that can support North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) population objectives in a sustainable fashion.

On behalf of the DU, we thank you for your consideration of this important work that this partnership supports. If you have questions about any of our comments please contact Jerry Holden Jr., Ducks Unlimited Director of Conservation Programs Southern Region, 601-956-1936, jholden@ducks.org.

Respectfully,

Jerry Holden Jr.
Director of Conservation Programs
Ducks Unlimited Southern Region SW



November 14, 2014

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Mr. Vilsack:

The City of Rockport applauds and supports the U.S. Department of Agriculture's initiative to secure RESTORE Act Funds for the purpose of restoring, enhancing and conserving Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat. The City of Rockport has a long-term commitment to preserving our natural environment and has invested city funds and property toward that duty. Your proposed project goals, objectives and priorities are directly in line with our local efforts to conserve the natural environment, expand nature tourism, and highlight the beauty of our community.

Our city is located on two migratory flyways and we leverage that location to attract visitors to our community and enhance the quality of life of our citizens. Any funds provided from the RESTORE Act initiative will increase the city's capacity to provide important stopover habitat for migratory songbirds, increase the ecological resilience of our community, and provide an economic boost to our tourism-based economy. We look forward to participating in this program with you.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Wax
Mayor

CJW:dl



P.O. Box 58828 • Houston, Texas 77258
(281) 474-2551 • Fax: (281) 474-2552 • www.abnc.org

November 13, 2014

Executive Committee

Barry G. McMahan - President
John Wilson - 1st Vice President
Chris LaChance - 2nd Vice President
Linda Retherford - Secretary
Mark Anton - Treasurer
Bill Parker - Past President
Jimmy Hill - Advisor
Doug Mathera - Advisor
Tom Kartrude - Executive Director

Board of Trustees

Mark Anton, Integrity Bank
Randy Ashby, Waldron & Schneider
Sheila Brown, UHCL - Environmental Institute of Houston
Chad Burke, Economic Alliance - Houston Port Region
Cathy Culpepper, Styrolution America
Paul Diggins
Judge Ed Emmett, Harris County (Ex Officio)
Clif Grim, DC Software Arts
Sue Hays, Seabrook Association
Jimmy Hill
Mayor Johnny Isbell, City of Pasadena (Ex Officio)
Steve Jordan, ASRC Federal
Edward Keenan, CAM Environmental Services
Christina LaChance, Urban Harvest
Robbie Lowe, REMAX 1st Source
Dan Lurvey, Dow Chemical
Doug Mathera, LyondellBasell
Barry G. McMahan, Prosperity Bank
Garry McMahan, Port of Houston Authority
Alice McWilliams, ChevronPhillips Chemical
Cliff Meinhardt, United Space Alliance
Deputy Director Ross Melinchuk, TX Parks & Wildlife (Ex Officio)
Steve Mikulencak, Texas Agrilife Extension
Commissioner Jack Morman, Harris County Precinct 2 (Ex Officio)
Rhonda Murgatroyd, Wildlife Response Services
Anne Ness, Bauer College of Business, University of Houston
Shaun Owen, Pasadena Independent School District
Mike Parker, Parker Environmental
Linda Retherford, Bastion Technologies
C A Shields, Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership
Brian Strawn, Ameriprise Financial Services
Deputy Commissioner Rene Truan, TX General Land Office (Ex Officio)
John Wilson, IBM
Tom Zimmerman
Peter Zollers, Air Products & Chemicals

Special Advisors

Dick Gregg, Jr., Gregg & Gregg P. C., - General Counsel
Gilbert Smith - Harris County Representative
Rebecca Hensley - Texas Parks & Wildlife Representative
Aaron Orlando - Texas General Land Office Representative

RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC 20250

RE: Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration Proposal

Dear Council Members:

Armand Bayou Nature Center (ABNC) is pleased to be a partner this important project to restore and conserve bird habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast. This year ABNC is celebrating its 40th anniversary as one of America's largest urban wilderness areas. Today we manage over 2500 acres of Harris County park land and one of only five Texas coastal preserves in our effort to provide habitat for over 220 migratory and resident bird species. One of the oldest and most popular paddling trails in Texas courses through Armand Bayou and its tributary Horsepen Bayou. Over 35,000 visitors reconnect with nature at ABNC annually; thousands more encounter native wildlife and ancient landscapes paddling the waterways. Students from four major urban school districts, four community colleges and two major universities regularly utilize our 'nearby nature' for field trips and environmental studies.

Over four decades ABNC has successfully restored hundreds of acres of critical shore bird habitat along the shorelines of the bayous and song bird habitat on the surrounding prairie and forest lands. But much work remains to be done in our effort to control invasive species and counteract the impacts of regional land subsidence that come with surrounding development.

Our neighboring communities place a high value on expanding the ecological services provided by ABNC that go well beyond habitat conservation and nature tourism. Further restoration work will improve community resilience with better flood control and reduced storm damage, and bring additional improvements in water and air quality within the watershed. ABNC is also recognized by regional economic development organizations, industry and educational institutions for its increasingly important contributions to the community quality of life.

We strongly encourage the RESTORE Council Members to support the Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration proposal and the funding it will provide to further our mission at ABNC.

Respectfully,

Tom Kartrude
Executive Director

Armand Bayou Nature Center is a
Non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation
(Federal Tax # 23-7403757).

All donations to ABNC are tax deductible
to the extent allowed by the law.



JAMES E. DARLING, Mayor
HILDA SALINAS, Mayor Pro-Tem and Commissioner District 3
AIDA RAMIREZ, Mayor Pro-Tem and Commissioner District 4
SCOTT C. CRANE, Commissioner District 1
TREY PEBLEY, Commissioner District 2
JOHN J. INGRAM, Commissioner District 5
VERONICA VELA WHITACRE, Commissioner District 6

ROEL RODRIGUEZ, P.E., City Manager

November 14, 2014

Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear RESTORE Council Members:

As a supporter of initiatives that enhance our community through natural conservation efforts, I strongly approve of the City of McAllen's proposal for the restoration of The Ebony Grove Wildlife Pond at Quinta Mazatlán, a World Birding Center Destination. This investment will improve and increase Songbird habitat restoration along the Texas gulf, community resilience, partnership involvement, urban habitat conservation and nature tourism.

This project will increase Songbird habitat restoration along the Texas Gulf by providing ecologically-crucial habitat to ensure the well-being of resident and migratory birds. Habitat conservation is critical for both the immediate Texas Gulf, as well as the outlying areas west into the reaches of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Many individual migratory bird species migrate over the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the inland wooded landscape of south Texas.

The initiative will increase community resilience by benefitting the City's underserved population by providing educational opportunities of tens of thousands of students and adults annually, both citizens and visitors alike.

The restoration will heighten partnership involvement through community collaborations. To ensure proper and timely implementation of this project, Quinta Mazatlán will partner with the City's Public Works Department's Urban Forester and Keep McAllen Beautiful; City of Edinburg's Urban Forester; Texas Forest Service's Urban Forester; Rio Grande Joint Venture; and the American Bird Conservancy. Additionally, McAllen consults with experts from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, The University of Texas-Pan American and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This improved urban habitat restoration will support native fauna populations to include migratory birds, amphibians, reptiles, and insects. Additionally, this enterprise will promote nature tourism through the lower Texas coast's well-connected birding destinations. This area consists of seven major metropolitan areas for an approximate

combined population of 1.3 million residents. As a premier bird watching destination, the Rio Grande Valley attracts approximately 150,000 eco-tourists each year, an economic surge of \$165 million annually, with McAllen contributing 20 percent of this amount, according to the McAllen Chamber of Commerce/Convention and Visitor's Bureau. A major Texan urban center, the City's recreational pursuits strengthen the flourishing economy that boasts \$4.5 million in hotel occupancy taxes and \$35.4 million in local sales taxes in 2014.

Please consider this as a statement of support from the City of McAllen. From the direct benefits of habitat conservation, to raising ecological awareness, and educating the public about the ecological significance of habitat conservation within the area, this project will provide vital, long-term benefits for both resident and migratory birds found throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley. I thank you for considering our community in this effort and welcome this opportunity to strengthen and improve our nature restoration efforts.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roel Rodriguez".

Roel Rodriguez, P.E.
City Manager



RESTORE Council Members
c/o Secretary Tom Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Mary Gustafson
Rio Grande Joint Venture Coordinator
4211 Rio Grande Lane
Mission, Texas 78572
November 13, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of the TPWD Proposal titled ***Texas Coast Migratory and Shorebird Habitat Restoration***. The World Birding Centers (WBCs) span the Lower Rio Grande Valley, an area well known for ecotourism. The WBC network was created in partnership with local communities, with each site sponsored by a local city in recognition of the economic impact of these sites. All the sites are urban or are in close proximity to their sponsoring community. The WBC sites have brought economic benefits to the LRGV and the local communities through ecotourism. While most visitors come in search of birds, other ecotourism including those in search of butterflies and dragonflies is increasing.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley is also well known for its importance to migratory songbirds. These songbirds migrate using one of two strategies. One route takes them across and the other around the Gulf of Mexico. For the species that travel around the Gulf of Mexico the entire world population crosses the Lower Rio Grande Valley twice a year in a relatively concentrated area. The enhancement and restoration of songbird habitat is critical for these species. Work conducted under this grant will increase the resilience of the bird community to stressors by enhancing and increasing available habitats.

Each WBC has a network of local partners that support the site, with other natural sites and local partners playing a role. A few partners span the sites, including the Rio Grande Joint Venture, Texas Master Naturalists, and the Arroyo Colorado Audubon Society.

This grant represents an opportunity to enhance and restore songbird habitats along the Texas gulf, increasing the community resilience of the wildlife as well as the economic resilience of the local urban centers. Partners have already invested heavily in these sites and will continue to work with the WBC sites in the future. The WBC sites offer the local communities an opportunity to enjoy the natural communities of the LRGV and creates an outdoor classroom network for local schools. These sites are important for nature tourism and for urban habitat conservation to the benefit of urban and migratory wildlife. I am pleased to support this grant

and will continue to work with the WBCs, TPWD, and local partners to ensure the best efforts on behalf of the wildlife.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Gustafson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Mary Gustafson



ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration

PROPOSAL NUMBER

USDA-1

LOCATION

Texas Coast - involving Gulf Coast Prairie to Gulf saline Gulf Prairie common resource area, 32 counties, spanning 621 miles

SPONSOR(S)

Department of Agriculture

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

Planning, technical assistance and implementation

REVIEWED BY:

Bethany Carl Kraft/ Ben Scaggs

DATE:

November 18, 2014

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 project seeks funds to support a coordinated effort with partners to restore and enhance migratory bird habitat along the 621 miles of the TX Coast through habitat restoration and enhancement, primarily on private lands.

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:

Proposed activities will take place along 621 miles of Texas Coast



Eligibility Determination

ELIGIBLE

Additional Information

[Empty box for additional information]

Proposal Submission Requirements

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

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A. Summary sheet | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | F. Environmental compliance checklist | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| B. Executive summary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | G. Data/Information sharing plan | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| C. Proposal narrative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | H. Reference list | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| D. Location information | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | I. Other | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| E. High level budget narrative | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |

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

[Empty box for listing missing items]

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

YES NO

Notes: