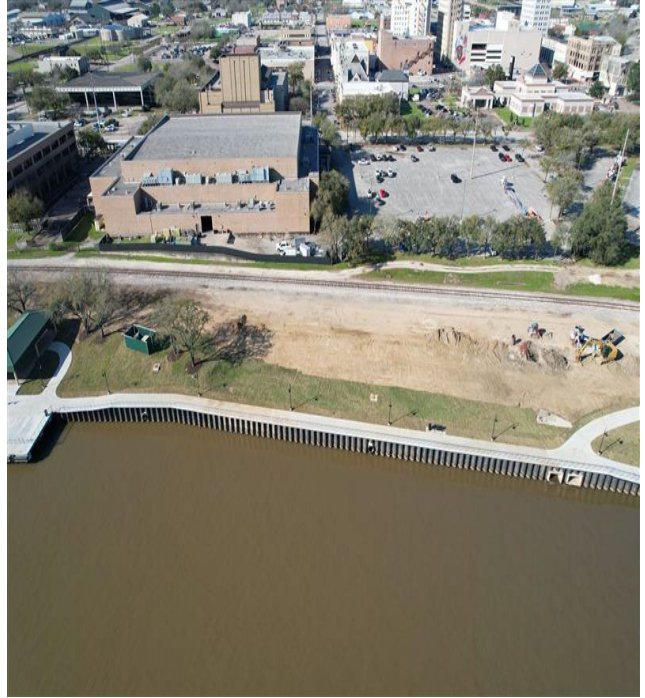


TEXAS STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN Amendment #3-2026



Submitted by:
Steven Schar
Deputy Executive Director
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)



Brooke T. Paup, *Chairwoman*
Catarina R. Gonzales, *Commissioner*
Tonya R. Miller, *Commissioner*
Kelly Keel, *Executive Director*



TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

June 30, 2026

Ms. Mary Walker
RESTORE Council Executive Director
500 Poydras Street, Suite #1117
New Orleans, LA 70113

Subject: Texas State Expenditure Plan Amendment #3-2026

Dear Ms. Walker,

As Texas Governor Greg Abbott's designee responsible for implementation of the RESTORE Act in Texas, Amendment #3-2026 to Texas' initial State Expenditure Plan (SEP), approved in 2019 is submitted.

The requirement to submit the Texas SEP and my authority to submit it on behalf of the Governor of Texas is authorized under the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE) § 2. 33 U.S.C. 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)(B)(iii)(V).

I certify that the Texas SEP has been prepared in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Spill Impact Component: State Expenditure Plan Guidelines, along with the Updated (2022) Comprehensive Plan.

Our point of contact for the Texas SEP is:

Melissa Porter
RESTORE Program Manager
Chief Budget and Efficiency Office
melissa.porter@tceq.texas.gov
(512)239-0627

I want to express my thanks for the assistance your staff has provided in preparing this document. We appreciate your consideration and are available to respond to any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Schar".

Steven Schar
Deputy Executive Director

**TEXAS STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN
Amendment #3-2026**

**Submitted Pursuant to the
Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act
33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)**

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Introduction of the Spill Impact Component (Bucket 3)

The RESTORE Act dedicates 80% of any civil and administrative penalties paid under the Clean Water Act by responsible parties in connection with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund for ecosystem restoration, economic recovery, and tourism promotion in the Gulf Coast Region.

The eligible activities for the Spill Impact Component cover both ecological and economic activities. The RESTORE Act defines eligible activities for which the Spill Impact Component funds may be used. The eligible activities, projects and programs as defined in 31 C.F.R. § 34.203 are:

- a) Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystem, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region
- b) Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources
- c) Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring
- d) Workforce development and job creation
- e) Improvements to or on state parks located in coastal areas affected by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
- f) Infrastructure projects benefiting the economy or ecological resources, including port infrastructure
- g) Coastal flood protection and related infrastructure
- h) Promotion of Tourism in the Gulf Coast Region, including promotion of recreational fishing
- i) Promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast Region.
- j) Planning Assistance and
- k) Administrative costs

Under Amendment #3-2026, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is proposing to add two new Programs to the Spill Impact Component - Texas State Expenditure Plan (SEP) entitled Texas Land Acquisition for Coastal Conservation (TLACC) Program and Texas SEP Planning Program.

TCEQ is proposing to fund the TLACC Program at \$20,539,358. This amount is comprised of moving \$9,055,030 of unallocated funding from the Nature-Based Tourism (NBT) Program, \$2,602,635 of unallocated funds from Shoreline and Beach Restoration (SBR) Program and adding \$8,881,693 from the Spill Impact Component funding allocated to Texas. The Texas SEP Planning Program is also proposed to be funded from the Spill Impact Component funding allocated to Texas at \$782,596.

Designated State Entity

The Texas Office of the Governor is the entity designated under the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act to develop the required Texas SEP. Steven Schar, Deputy Executive Director of TCEQ, was appointed by the Governor as his designee to the RESTORE Council and to implement the RESTORE Act in Texas.

Total Amount of the Texas State Expenditure Plan (SEP) Funding

\$121.5 Million or 7.58% of 30% RESTORE Spill Impact Component allocation, pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1800, under the Spill Impact Component Allocation of the RESTORE Act.

This Total Texas SEP Allocation

\$41,174,289

Time Period for this Texas SEP

March 1, 2019 - November 30, 2030

I. State Certification of RESTORE Act Compliance

I hereby certify that the Texas SEP Amendment #3-2026 takes into consideration the current Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Council in September 2022 and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Council's 2022 Comprehensive Plan. All program components and activities included in the Texas SEP, amendment #3-2026, are eligible activities as defined by the RESTORE Act and contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast.

The primary emphasis of the initial 2019 Texas SEP and the approved amendment #2-2024 Texas SEP was to address the effects of Hurricane Harvey, focusing on hurricane recovery, ecological and economic, as well as resiliency-related programs eligible under the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act. Under Amendment #3-2026, **TCEQ is proposing to add two new programs to the Spill Impact Component - Texas SEP entitled TLACC and Texas SEP Planning.** Funding for these two programs will come from the Spill Impact Component funding allocated to Texas and include \$8,881,693 for TLACC Program and \$782,596 for Texas SEP Planning. As part of a separate award amendment, TCEQ is moving unallocated funds from the Nature-Based Tourism (NBT) Program (\$9,055,030) and from the Shoreline Beach Restoration (SBR) Program (\$2,602,635) to the TLACC Program for a total of \$20,539,358 for the new TLACC Program.

The TLACC program will acquire large-scale coastal zone properties through fee simple or conservation easement acquisitions that will promote long-term management and preservation of vital high-quality habitat along the Texas coast. Conservation of lands serve as a natural buffer and protection from relative sea level variations, hurricanes, and flooding events.

The Texas SEP Planning Program will allow TCEQ to define clear goals and objectives, establish funding priorities, develop application and selection criteria, and engage interested stakeholders in the process.

Each project selected under the TLACC program will meet the eligibility requirements for the Texas SEP and align with the primary and secondary Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives.

I also hereby certify that any issues crossing Gulf State boundaries have been evaluated to ensure that a comprehensive collaborative ecological and economic recovery is furthered by the State Expenditure Plan; that all projects, programs and activities will be based on the Best Available Science (BAS) as defined in the RESTORE Act, as part of the project grant process; that the Texas SEP has incorporated the public participation process and considered all input received from the public comment process; that the Texas SEP meets the requirement of the SEP Guidelines, and that the projects to be selected for the programmatic areas meet the 25% infrastructure limitation.

Signature of Authorized Senior Official



Steven Schar, Deputy Executive Director
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

6/30/2026

Date

II. Public Participation Statement

In accordance with 31 CFR § 34.503(g), the draft Texas SEP Amendment #3-2026 was posted for a 45-day public comment period on the Texas RESTORE website on May 8, 2026. TCEQ posted an addendum to the SEP Amendment on June 17, 2026, which include minor budget changes. The 45-day period ended on June 22, 2026. No comments were received, therefore no changes to this amendment are needed.

All programs and projects funded under the Texas SEP continue to be based on consultation with the Office of the Governor's designee.

Texas SEP Approvals:

- Initial Texas SEP was approved in 2019
- Amendment #1 was amended and approved in 2020
- Amendment #2 was amended and approved in 2024
- Amendment #3 this amendment, approval is pending

This amendment proposes transferring funds from Spill Impact Component-Nature-Based Tourism Program to a new Spill Impact Component-Texas Land Coastal for Conservation Program. The amendment will increase the amount of existing Spill Impact Component awards from \$31,510,000 to \$41,174,289.

II. Financial Integrity

Steven Schar, Deputy Executive Director of TCEQ, is committed to maintaining the highest level of fiscal accountability and transparency to assure the public and Congress that funds have been managed appropriately to further the purposes of the RESTORE Act. TCEQ has systems, policies, and processes in place for each aspect of fiscal management.

TCEQ submitted the required 2025 Operational Self-Assessment (OSA to the U.S. Treasury Department in June 2025.). The OSA includes all financial management information required as part of the RESTORE Spill Impact Component, section 3 of the SEP application and was prepared in accordance with the U.S. Treasury's RESTORE Act guidance requiring that all eligible entities under the Direct Component and the Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program complete an OSA prior to receiving funding and once a year thereafter. The OSA focuses on internal operational control areas and will be used, in part, to assist in determining an appropriate compliance monitoring protocol. The OSA requires responses and documentation to show how the agency manages finances, subrecipient management and monitoring, audits, operational and general administrative management and property management.

Internal controls including written policies, procedures, processes, systems and reporting, exist within TCEQ and meet the Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government (**GAO-25-107721**) issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office ("Green Book"), the RESTORE Council's Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, and 2 CFR Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirement, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Examples of compliance are detailed below.

Control Environment and Activities

Internal financial controls included in the TCEQ Operating Policies and Procedures detail compliance procedures and employee roles for Procurement and Contracts, Employee Ethics, Guides for Administrative Procedures and General Procedures.

TCEQ staff are encouraged to take TCEQ Grants Management training towards a certification to assist in understanding all of the agency grant-related processes. TCEQ uses the statewide electronic financial system called the Centralized Accounting and Payroll/Personnel System (CAPPS) where all financial information is entered and housed on invoicing and payments including a check and audit review for every invoice and supporting documentation submitted for payment. TCEQ also uses an electronic grants management system for routing proposals, applications, amendments, submitting applications, documenting work plans and approving budgets for submission to RESTORE Council staff.

TCEQ incorporates the RESTORE Standard Terms and Conditions into all subrecipient contracts to ensure compliance with 2 CFR 200 and adds additional requirements as necessary or because of the risk assessment determinations conducted on each project subrecipient. In addition, Conflict of Interest documentation is included as necessary in subrecipient grant contracts to require the reporting of any actual, apparent, or potential conflicts of interest to assure the agency that there is not a conflict of interest and provide details on what would constitute a conflict.

To prevent conflicts of interest as required by the SEP Guidelines and the Treasury regulations, the TCEQ adheres to the process established in its "RESTORE Grants Texas Conflict of Interest Document - Policy to Safeguard Against Conflicts of Interest" document. The agency's policy document is incorporated herein by reference. A copy of that document is available from TCEQ upon request. The following is included in the document: "All persons involved in the preparation of RESTORE materials for the State, or in the review and selection of RESTORE awardees, or in the management of grants and contracts funded by or related to RESTORE, must act in the public interest. All such people should endeavor to pursue a course of conduct that does not raise suspicion among the public. Therefore, they shall avoid acts that are improper or give the appearance of impropriety."

In addition to the above referenced document, TCEQ is governed by the following related Texas State Statutes: Texas Government Code, Chapter 553 [Public Disclosure]; Chapter 572 [Personal Financial Disclosure, Standards of Conduct, and Conflict of Interest] including sections 572.021 and 572.051; Chapter 2155 [Purchasing: General Rules and Procedures]; and Chapter 2261 [State Contracting Standards and Oversight], including section 2261.252.

Risk Assessment

Risk Assessments are conducted on subrecipients for each project. These assessments identify, analyze, and determine monitoring levels needed to achieve the state's goals and objectives for RESTORE Act projects. Identified risks and likelihoods of occurrence are considered. Identification of workforce compliance, review of financial reports, grant performance history, State of Texas standing with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, 2 CFR Part 200 requirements, and training certifications are evaluated. Single or program-specific audits are required annually per 2 CFR 200.501, and financial status reports are required per the subgrant contract with TCEQ. Reports are reviewed by agency staff to determine relevance of findings, if any, are incorporated to ensure compliance. Reports of grant compliance are submitted to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts office for inclusion into a state database for reference to others.

The TCEQ established process includes determining probable risks associated with any potential subrecipient receiving a grant award under the RESTORE program. TCEQ's process related to monitoring and managing subrecipients is consistent with the requirements in 2 CFR Part 200.

Prior to submitting a federal application or project work plan, TCEQ RESTORE program staff complete a Risk Assessment form to determine any risks associated with a potential subrecipient. This completed form is submitted to TCEQ's Procurement and Contracts section of the Financial Administration Division at the Office of Administrative Services.

TCEQ RESTORE program staff also complete an Initial Risk Determination form for each potential subrecipient to determine if the potential subrecipient is low risk. Based on the completion of this form, and the gathering of information from the subrecipient's grant history and the review of financial statements and financial audit, if TCEQ RESTORE program staff determine that the potential subrecipient is low risk, the risk assessment is concluded.

However, if TCEQ RESTORE program staff determine that the potential subrecipient is not low risk, the following actions can be taken in consultation with a TCEQ Procurement and Contracts section member and agency Contract Attorneys:

- An award may not be given.
- No further action may be taken.
- TCEQ may request more information; or
- TCEQ may determine that specific items will need to be addressed in the contract between TCEQ and the subrecipient. Some of the items could include additional monitoring and reporting requirements, increased frequency of meetings between the subrecipient and the RESTORE program staff, and an increase in the number of site visits.

All information compiled from the Risk Assessment process is maintained in the appropriate RESTORE program files.

Communication and Information

The TCEQ's RESTORE Program's internal drive and CAPPs will allow for adequate processes and procedures to ensure that the agency has relevant, valid, and auditable information as well as appropriate levels of communication. In addition, Procedure Manuals have been developed and are a living document for the TCEQ RESTORE Program to ensure clear direction and procedures from the beginning to the end of a program and/or project.

Monitoring

Monitoring is part of the TCEQ RESTORE Procedure Manuals and is included in the subrecipient contracts. TCEQ Monitoring for RESTORE includes monthly or quarterly progress reports, monthly financial reports with or without invoices, monthly communication with subrecipients, and monthly communication within the TCEQ RESTORE Program staff to provide updates and discuss potential issues as they may arise. Financial and performance reports are also provided on an annual basis to the RESTORE Council. Any deviation or issues, both positive and negative, are reported to the RESTORE Council staff as they occur.

IV. Overall Consistency with Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan

The Texas SEP is consistent with the eligibility requirements in the RESTORE Act. Texas SEP Amendment #3-2026 added Goal 1 and Objective 1. Texas SEP Amendment #2-2024 did not change the Goals and Objectives as stated in Texas SEP Amendment #1-2020. Texas SEP Amendment #1-2020 added Goals 2,3,4, and 5 and Objectives 2,4,5, and 6. The RESTORE Act outlines programs and projects eligible to receive Spill Impact Component grant funds. With this Texas SEP amendment, Texas will increase the developed program areas from four to six including:

A. Nature-Based Tourism

- B. Removal of Debris and/or Associated Sediment from Creeks Bayous and Other Waterways
- C. Water Quality and Quantity
- D. Shoreline and Beach Restoration
- E. Texas SEP Planning (proposed)
- F. Texas Land Acquisition for Coastal Conservation (proposed)

The program areas comply with the eligibility requirements in the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(1)(B) and the Council's Comprehensive Plan, revised in September 2022. These program areas are consistent with the following goals and objectives:

Goals

- Goal 1: Restore and Conserve Habitat
- Goal 2: Restore Water Quality
- Goal 3: Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources
- Goal 4: Enhance Community Resilience
- Goal 5: Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy

Objectives

- Objective 1: Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitat
- Objective 2: Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources
- Objective 4: Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shoreline
- Objective 5: Promote Community Resilience
- Objective 6: Promote Natural Stewardship and Environmental Education

The six program areas meet the eligibility requirements for the SEP by demonstrating primary and secondary purposes for activities that may be selected for the program areas and detailing how the program meets the relevant goals and objectives for each. Activities for each program were selected based on compliance with the eligibility criteria, goals, and objectives identified in this Texas SEP.

V. Proposed Projects, Programs and Activities

The table below reflects the previous and current amendment changes. Texas SEP Amendment #3-2026 includes the following:

1. Moving funds from the Nature-Based Tourism Program
($\$22,830,000 - \$9,055,030 = \$13,774,970$).
2. Moving funds from the Shoreline and Beach Restoration Program
($\$8,680,000 - \$2,602,635 = \$6,077,365$).
3. Adding the Shoreline and Beach Restoration Program funds and Nature-Based Tourism funds and newly requested funds to TLACC Program
($\$2,602,635$ (SBR) + $\$9,055,030$ (NBT) + $\$8,881,693$ (Requested) = $\$20,539,358$)
4. Adding newly requested funds to Texas SEP Planning Program ($\$782,596$)
5. The amendment will increase the total Texas SEP amount to $\$41,174,289$
($\$31,510,000$ (Orig. Amount) + $\$9,664,289$ (Requested) = $\$41,174,289$)

	Program Title	Amend. #3 Estimated Cost	Amend. #2 Estimated Cost	Amend. #1 Estimated Cost	Infra- structure (yes/no)	Start Date	End Date	Primary Eligible Activity No. 1-11	Informed by Best Available Science (yes/no)
A	Nature-Based Tourism (See note below)	\$13,774,970	\$22,830,000	\$7,830,000	No	09/01/18	12/31/27	10	Yes
B	Removal of Debris and/or Assoc. Sediment from Creeks Bayous & Other Waterways	\$0	\$0	\$0	No	09/01/18	02/28/24	2	Yes
C	Water Quality and Quantity	\$0	\$0	\$0	No	09/01/18	02/28/24	1	Yes
D	Shoreline and Beach Restoration	\$6,077,365	\$8,680,000	\$23,680,000	No	09/01/18	12/31/27	1	Yes
E	Texas SEP Planning	\$782,596			No	06/01/26	08/31/30	8	Yes
F	Texas Land Acquisition for Coastal Conservation	\$20,539,358			No	06/01/26	09/30/27	1	Yes
	ESTIMATED TOTAL FUNDING CONTRIBUTION S FOR PROGRAMS	\$41,174,289	\$31,510,000	\$31,510,000					

NOTE: The IB Magee Project is part of the NBT Program; however, it is under a separate award. The amounts in the table above include amounts for IB Magee - Amendment #1 = \$250,000 Amendment #2 and #3 = \$1,050,000

Appendices

Program Details:

(only includes programs impacted by this amendment)

- **Program A: Nature-Based Tourism**
- **Program D: Shoreline and Beach Restoration**
- **Program E: Texas SEP Planning**
- **Program F: Texas Land Acquisition for Coastal Conservation (TLACC)**

Program A: Nature-Based Tourism

Description/Summary

This proposed program will support the promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast region. Working with Governor Abbott's Commission to Rebuild Texas (CRT), the program will identify projects that will provide nature-based tourism and restoration benefits to the local community while providing environmental and ecosystem education and recreation that will encourage action toward a healthier coast.

Activities within this program will focus on providing nature-based tourism educational exhibits, repairing public facilities and conducting debris clean-up to rebuild nature-based tourism. Projects selected under this program may include the restoration of piers, docks, bird viewing towers, eco-tourism, as well as the development of public marinas, boat ramps and park amenities. These projects will benefit both the environment and economy by protecting natural resources in the affected areas, resulting in a positive impact to nature-based tourism.

Need

Hurricane recovery has become a priority as a response to the devastating impacts of Hurricane Harvey which hit the Texas coast on August 25, 2017. As nature-based tourism is one of the largest economic drivers for Texas coastal communities, the rebuilding of tourism is imperative to improving the economy while benefiting the environment. Parks have been severely, and in many cases, completely demolished. Access for recreational fishing has been limited due to destruction of piers, public access points, boat ramps and floating and fixed docks. Where historically birders travel every year to visit the habitat and viewing places have been destroyed. Critical habitat land, birding towers, kiosks, boat ramps, nature trails, pavilions and recreational amenities that usually support the economy of coastal towns are no longer thriving and the need for a robust tourist economy is essential to these coastal communities.

Purpose/Objective

The purpose and objective of this program is to identify and address nature-based tourism needs in the areas where hurricane impacts have negatively affected this once thriving industry. There is a significant need to repair or replace nature-based tourism areas to restore and revitalize the economy and to protect natural resources along the coast.

Location

The selected programs and projects will be conducted in counties that are eligible to receive RESTORE funds and are included in the Hurricane Harvey federal Disaster Declaration for Texas. The counties eligible to receive funds for this program include Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Jackson, Jefferson, Matagorda, Nueces, Orange, Refugio, San Patricio and Victoria.

Additional Information/Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible:

- State Agencies
- Political Subdivisions: City, County, or Navigation Districts
- Public Institutions of Higher Education

Focus

The Nature-Based Tourism programmatic area, and the projects that will be implemented under this program, will focus on the overall economy of the Texas coast. This program will provide funds for projects that will promote tourism, thereby benefiting the overall economy. This program and the implemented projects will address environmental and ecological considerations.

Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

The primary eligible activity for the proposed activities is Promotion of Tourism in the Gulf Coast region, including recreational fishing. Texas will work with Governor Abbott's CRT to identify projects that address this eligible activity. This program and all projects identified for implementation will address nature-based tourism needs and comply with the eligibility requirements in the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act 33 U.S.C., section 1321(t)(3)(B) and the Council's Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This program aligns with the Comprehensive Plan's Goal #5 to Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy. The program supports Objective #6 to Promote Natural Stewardship and Environmental Education.

Major Milestones

- A. Based on approved State Expenditure Plan (SEP), develop and submit federal application to the RESTORE Council for programmatic area.
- B. Receive grant award from the Council.
- C. Working with CRT, identify projects to be funded through the programmatic area grant award.
- D. Select projects in consultation with the Office of the Governor's designee.
- E. Develop and submit work plans for identified projects within programmatic area grant.
- F. Receive project approval from RESTORE Council.
- G. Develop grant contracts with project recipients that include activities such as reporting and monitoring requirements, as well as deliverables and timelines.
- H. TCEQ management and oversight of all projects work plans, including compliance with all federal and state grant requirements and evaluation of the programmatic area to measure and convey the success and outcomes at a programmatic level in helping to restore and protect the Gulf Coast region.
- I. Project-related information will be posted on the Texas RESTORE web site.

Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

Additional anticipated success criteria and outcomes will be based on the specifics appropriate to each implemented project and general success criteria and outcomes include:

Outcome: Enhanced public access to natural resources for recreational use.

Anticipated Project Success Criteria: The number of recreational access areas restored or developed

Outcome: Increase in visitors to the local community

Anticipated Project Success Criteria: Increase in hotel/motel occupancy

Outcome: Increase in environmental awareness in the community

Anticipated Project Success Criteria: Number of people reached through environmental activities or publications

Monitoring and Evaluation

All implemented projects will be monitored by the success criteria described in this appendix for their effectiveness in improving the economy through the rehabilitation, repair and/or replacement of nature-based tourism areas. Future work plans for individual projects will include the mechanisms subrecipients will employ to monitor individual project outcomes.

Best Available Science

Outstanding fishing, birding, and waterfowl hunting opportunities, as well as family outings to the beach, make the coast the second most popular tourist destination in Texas, keeping the economy strong and creating jobs for both coastal residents and inland workers. Tourists visiting the Texas coast in 2014 spent \$19.7 billion traveling in this region, over \$10.4 million at hotels and motels alone. The Texas coast hosts hundreds of miles of nature tourism opportunities. Through conservation management and nature tourism, coastal communities gain economically while protecting their valued coastal resources. An excellent example of nature tourism or avitourism is the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, the largest nature trail in the nation, with over 300 birding sites available along the Texas Coast.¹

In a 2013 study, more than 3,000 fish species have been identified on the Texas coastline. Tourists spend more than \$7.5 billion annually for beaches, bird watching, and fishing². Wildlife tourism generates over \$19 billion in annual spending in the Gulf coast. Recreational fishing counts for the largest share with wildlife watching and hunting following respectively. Texas alone generates over \$5 billion in wildlife tourism.³

Associated best available science will be used to develop each of the project workplans and will be implemented throughout the life of individual projects.

Budget and Funding

Estimated cost of the program activities and amount to be requested from the Spill Impact Component:

Estimated Funds: \$13,774,970

The amount of funds allocated to each project will be detailed in the work plan and submitted to the RESTORE Council for approval.

Of the available funds, approximately 10% will be for planning activities and 90% for implementation.

Leveraged Resources

Leverage resources will be dependent on the individual projects; however, TCEQ will take advantage of all opportunities to leverage the RESTORE grant funds. Any leveraged funds available for a project will be identified in that project's work plan.

¹ Texas General Land Office. (2016) Texas-Coast-GLO-shoring-up-our-future.pdf

² Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. (2013) Texas Freight Advisory Committee.

³ Stokes, Shawn, Marcy Lowe. (2013) Wildlife Tourism and the Gulf Coast Economy

Funds Used as Non-Federal Match

Funds used as a non-federal match will be dependent on the individual implemented projects and will be included in that project's work plan. In all opportunities, TCEQ will look to leverage restoration funding available through other federal funds, as well as grant funds available because of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

Program D: Shoreline and Beach Restoration Program

Description/Summary

The primary eligible activity this program supports is restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region. Projects within this program will focus on erosion, habitat restoration and economic vitality.

This program links to the Restore and Conserve Habitat goal included in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Comprehensive Plan ("Plan"). Projects would restore and conserve habitats and support healthy ecosystems through activities such as the restoration of dunes, beaches, marine habitats, living shorelines, shoreline stabilization, breakwaters and the enhancement of wetlands.

The Plan's goal to Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy will also be addressed. Projects will support tourism and economic interests and could include activities such as the restoration and conservation of marine habitats for recreational fishing or seafood industry purposes, restoration and enhancement of beaches and dunes, shoreline stabilization for erosion protection, revetment repairs, marsh protection and restoration, beach renourishment, habitat restoration and the protection and enhancement of wetlands to enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

Need

Hurricane recovery has become a priority due to the devastating impacts of Hurricane Harvey, which hit the Texas coast on August 25, 2017. The average erosion rate along the Texas coast is 4.1 feet per year and this loss was exacerbated by the recent hurricane. Additionally, dunes and other natural barriers that protect both structures (e.g., homes and industry) and sensitive ecological areas from seawater inundation were also damaged or destroyed in the hurricane.

Purpose/Objective

The purpose and objective of this program is to identify and address areas where beach and shoreline restoration can help support healthy ecosystems as well as economic interests.

Location

The selected programs and projects will be conducted in counties that are eligible to receive RESTORE funds and are included in the Hurricane Harvey federal Disaster Declaration for Texas. The counties eligible to receive funds for this program include Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Jackson, Jefferson, Matagorda, Nueces, Orange, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria.

Additional Information/Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible:

- State Agencies
- Political Subdivisions: City, County, or Navigation Districts
- Public Institutions of Higher Education

Focus

The Shoreline and Beach Restoration programmatic area, and the associated projects implemented under this program, contributes to both the ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast. Texas has hundreds of miles of coastline on the Gulf with significant population and industry. Restoration of beaches and shoreline can increase the health of 17 those ecosystems, promote tourism, and provide important barriers to protect established development.

Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

The primary eligible activity for this proposed program under the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act is restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.

TCEQ will work with Governor Abbott's Commission to Rebuild Texas (CRT), to identify projects that address these eligible activities. This program and all projects identified for implementation will address needs associated with shoreline and beach restoration and comply with the eligibility requirements in the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act 33 U.S.C., Section 1321(t)(3)(B) and the Council's Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This program aligns with the following goals of the Comprehensive Plan: Goal 3: Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources Goal 4: Enhance Community Resilience Additionally, the program supports the following objectives of the Comprehensive Plan: Objective 4: Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines Objective 5: Promote Community Resilience.

Major Milestones

- A. Based on approved State Expenditure Plan (SEP), develop, and submit federal application to the RESTORE Council for programmatic area.
- B. Receive grant award from the Council.
- C. Working with CRT, identify projects to be funded through the programmatic area grant award.
- D. Select projects in consultation with the Office of the Governor (OOG).
- E. Develop and submit work plans for identified projects within programmatic area grant.
- F. Receive project approval from RESTORE Council.
- G. Develop grant contracts with project recipients that include activities such as reporting and monitoring requirements, as well as deliverables and timelines.
- H. TCEQ management and oversight of all projects work plans, including compliance with all federal and state grant requirements and evaluation of the programmatic area to measure and convey the success and outcomes at a programmatic level in helping to restore and protect the Gulf Coast region.
- I. Project-related information will be posted on the Texas RESTORE web site.

Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

Additional anticipated success criteria and outcomes will be based on the specifics appropriate to each implemented project, but general success criteria and outcomes include:

Outcome: Project scope is completed in timely manner.

Anticipated Project Success Criteria: All project milestones are met by required dates including final conclusion of the project.

Outcome: Project scope is completed within budget.

Anticipated Project Success Criteria: The overall expended dollar amount for the project is at or below the budgeted amount while sub-category expenditures are no more than 15% over budgeted amount for that item.

An example of a possible outcome and associated success criteria depending on the particular project is:

Outcome: Shoreline and beaches are restored through habitat restoration and protection.

Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metric:

- Acres of habitat restored or protected
- Miles of living shoreline installed
- Miles of coastal habitat shoreline restored

Project specific success criteria will be developed as projects under this program are identified.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All implemented projects will be monitored by the success criteria described in this appendix for their effectiveness as well as any specific project appropriate success criteria to ensure results are clearly understood and evaluated. Future work plans for individual projects will include the mechanisms subrecipients will employ to monitor individual project outcomes.

Best Available Science

The average erosion rate for the 367 miles of Texas coast is 4.1 feet per year and sixty-four percent of the Texas coast is eroding at an average rate of about 6 feet per year, with some locations losing more than 30 feet per year.⁴ FEMA estimates that every dollar spent on erosion control and mitigation to preserve wetlands and other natural ecosystems, will provide a return on average of four dollars in cost-savings for the future.⁵ Critical shoreline erosion, habitat loss and environmental degradation problems are also occurring along the GIWW and other navigation channels along the Texas coast.⁶ In addition to the regular environmental and man-made pressures on existing coastal ecosystems and natural structures that protect the coast (e.g., dunes), Hurricane Harvey caused additional and often extensive damage to these same ecosystems and natural structures. In addition to other successful approaches to mitigate such damage, the use and effectiveness of green infrastructure methods to reduce coastal impacts has been well documented.⁷

Associated best available science will be used to develop each of the project work plans and will be implemented throughout the life of individual projects.

Budget and Funding

Estimated cost of the program activities and amount to be requested from the Oil Spill Impact Component:

⁴ The General Land Office. "Coastal Erosion." <https://www.glo.texas.gov/coastal/protecting-coast>

⁵ The General Land Office. "Coastal Erosion." <https://www.glo.texas.gov/coastal/protecting-coast>

⁶ The General Land Office. "Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan." <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c2020a004e8044fa9c22b4000e792e6f>

⁷ NOAA – Office of Coastal Management. "Green Infrastructure Effectiveness Database." <https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/gi-database.html>

Estimated Funds: **\$6,077,365**

The amount of funds to be allocated for each project will be detailed in the budget in the work plan for that project and submitted to the RESTORE Council for approval. Of the amount of available funds, approximately 10% will be for planning activities and 90% for implementation.

Leveraged Resources

Leverage resources will be dependent on the individual projects; however, TCEQ will take advantage of any and all opportunities to leverage the RESTORE grant funds. Any leveraged funds available for a project will be identified in that project's work plan.

Funds Used as Non-Federal Match

Funds used as a non-federal match will be dependent on the individual implemented projects and will be included in that project's work plan. In all opportunities, TCEQ will look to leverage restoration funding available through other federal funds, as well as grant funds available as a result of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

Program E: Texas SEP Planning

Description/Summary

This proposed program will provide planning assistance to support the TCEQ RESTORE Program's coordinated restoration planning effort to maximize the effectiveness of coordination of restoration in the Gulf Coast Region and the development of new and/or amended State Expenditure Plan(s).

The RESTORE Council's Initial Comprehensive Plan outlines commitments to coordination and leveraging. The State of Texas has also established leveraging and coordination as a core principle to maximize the effectiveness of restoration being implemented in the Texas coastal landscape. Across the restoration landscape there are coordination needs to enhance leveraging, integration, and compatibility in the development of new and/or amended TX SEPs. Coordination activities may include, but are not limited to, the grant management of SEP programs and projects, participation in RESTORE Council activities directly related to this activity, collaboration of funding efforts to ensure compatibility and coordination of projects being considered to be placed on the TX SEP, stakeholder engagement, project identification, evaluation, the identification of the appropriate funding source to implement a project, development of contracts and workplans, and planning activities within Texas and adjacent states.

Project selection is based on environmental data and expert stakeholder input for areas that will provide valuable long-term environmental benefits for the Texas coast and are approved by the Office of the Governor's designee.

Need

Multiple restoration plans and strategies have called for the need to coordinate and leverage funding sources to maximize ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast.

Purpose/Objective

The purpose of this program is to support comprehensive restoration planning to inform the development of new and/or amended SEPs. The program will support comprehensive restoration coordination, leveraging, and planning for the development of new and/or amended SEPs.

Location

The selected programs and projects will be conducted within any of the 18 Texas coastal zone counties within the Gulf Coast region boundary.

Additional Information/Eligible Applicants

The proposed program will be administered by TCEQ RESTORE Program.

Focus

This program focuses on planning to allow the State of Texas to continue coordinating and leveraging in subsequent TX SEP development. This program also has activities that include

program oversight and management as well as the development, coordination, and execution of the grant award between TCEQ RESTORE Program and the RESTORE Council.

Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

This program is located in the Gulf Coast Region as defined by 31 C.F.R. § 34.2. This project qualifies as an eligible activity for Oil Spill Impact Component funding through 31 C.F.R. § 34.201(j) – planning assistance and 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(1)(B)(i)(VIII) of the RESTORE Act. The primary purpose of the project is planning

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This program aligns with the following Initial Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats
- Restore Water Quality – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region’s fresh, estuarine, and marine waters
- Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources
- Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes; and
- Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

This program supports the following Initial Comprehensive Plan objectives:

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

Major Milestones

Milestone – State Expenditures Plan(s). TCEQ RESTORE will write new and/or amended State Expenditure Plan(s).

Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

The anticipated outcomes of the comprehensive coordination and planning effort will be:

- Identified opportunities for coordination and leveraging with other Deepwater Horizon funding sources
- Coordination and leverage opportunities are vetted to ensure sustainability and success; and
- Approved TX SEP(s) with a list of coordinated and leveraged projects and programs.

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes	Short-term outcome	Long-term outcome
Coordination and Planning for writing future TX SEP(s)	Number of TX SEPs written, submitted, and approved	New and/or amended TX SEP(s) for public comment	Approved TX SEP(s) with a list of coordinated and leveraged projects and programs

Monitoring and Evaluation

Coordination and leveraging will be integrated into the project development process. Semi-annual progress reports will highlight coordination activities and their respective bearing on future project development.

Best Available Science

Best Available Science will be considered and employed as appropriate and/or applicable throughout collaboration, coordination and planning activities covered by this program.

Budget and Funding

Estimated cost of the program activities and amount to be requested from the Spill Impact Component:

Estimated Funds: \$782,596 (100% Planning)

Partnerships/Collaborations

- RESTORE Council
- U.S. Department of the Treasury
- Interagency Technical Assistance

Leveraged Resources

None currently anticipated.

Funds Used as Non-Federal Match

None currently anticipated.

Other

None currently anticipated.

Program F: Texas Land Acquisition for Coastal Conservation (TLACC)

Description/Summary

The primary eligible activity is the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region. This program also aligns with the RESTORE Council's Comprehensive Plan goals to restore and conserve habitat and enhance community resilience.

The land acquisition projects funded in Council-Selected Restoration Component FPL1 and FPL3b have been extremely successful in protecting vital habitat along the Texas coast. This program aims to continue those efforts by acquiring large coastal zone properties or conservation easement to promote long-term habitat management and preserve high-quality habitat along the Texas coast. This program will also protect water quality in Texas' rivers, bays, and marshes, promote community resilience by providing natural buffers, decrease the need for hard-engineered projects, and provide additional ecosystem and community services.

Project selection is based on environmental data and expert stakeholder input for areas that will provide valuable long-term environmental benefits for the Texas coast and are approved by the Office of the Governor's designee. Texas Coastal Zone locations will be selected for quality of habitat, habitat vulnerability, critical location, and potential for acquisition.

While land acquisitions and the purchase of conservation easements may take place under this program within any of the 18 Texas coastal zone counties, based on earlier public meetings and public comments, it is TCEQ's intent to seek acquisitions primarily within 11 counties to include Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Jefferson, Matagorda, Goliad and Refugio Counties.

Ownership of the acquired land may be held by a government or a non-governmental organization depending on the greatest advantage for acquisition, leveraging, and conservation.

The actual cost of individual acquisitions will vary based on property location, size, and other factors. Potential partners for this program include but are not limited to The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), Coastal Prairie Conservancy (CPC), The Conservation Fund (TCF), Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF), Coastal Bend Bays Estuary Program (CBBEP), as well as other federal, state, local governments and other organizations.

Need

Conservation of urban green corridors, riparian, prairie and other upland, wooded wetlands, and chenier wetlands will benefit the state of Texas by conserving habitat for a variety of animals including migrating songbirds, grassland birds, waterfowl, and wading birds that reside or migrate through the Central Flyway. The critically endangered Attwater's Prairie Chicken, Whooping Crane, and Aplomado Falcon are endemic species that are dependent on this landscape ecotype. Threats including residential or commercial development and industrial projects are jeopardizing the sustainability of this high-quality wildlife habitat.

Industry and population growth along the Texas coast continue to place pressures on remaining open spaces and directly impact ecosystems and vital habitat through channelization, subsidence, saltwater intrusion, and erosion of critical estuarine shore environments. These impacts increase the level of storm surge vulnerability of economically

important industries. Conservation of tracts in these areas would ensure long-term ecological benefits, as well as indirectly protect industries and coastal communities by increasing their resiliency (⁸*Rezaie et al., 2020*). A wide array of ecosystem services would be preserved as recognized by Texas coastal stakeholders in an earlier study (⁹*Hutchison et al., 2015*). The cost to acquire properties for habitat conservation is significantly less than what the cost would be to attempt to restore or replace the functions of the environments once they are degraded or lost completely (¹⁰*Calnan, 1995*).

The 2023 Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan (TCRMP) (¹¹*TX GLO, 2023*) ranks land acquisition projects highly for addressing a variety of environmental issues of concern including (1) altered degraded or lost habitat, (2) existing and future coastal storm damage, (3) coastal flood damage, (4) impact on water quality and quantity, and (5) impact on coastal resources. The low-lying, gently sloping, subsiding, and hurricane-prone Texas coastal plain continues to attract more people and economic activity, which is converting natural environments to build environments and taking the space for natural buffers and future environmental transitions. From 1996 To 2021, NOAA C-CAP satellite data shows an increase in the amount of developed land in the Texas coastal zone of approximately 283,000 acres (443 square miles) (¹²*NOAA C-CAP Atlas*). The strategic acquisition of land in the coastal zone of Texas will provide long-term conservation of environments, which imparts ecosystem services with market and non-market value (¹³*Barbier et al., 2011*). Furthermore, secondary benefits may be realized in better water quality and protection of adjacent areas. Some land acquisitions may also serve to provide areas where the transition of coastal environments can occur as there are relative sea level variations, thus offsetting the loss of intertidal environments (¹⁴*TX GLO, 2023*).

Purpose/Objective

This program will restore, protect and conserve vital habitat by acquiring large, high-quality coastal zone properties in Texas. Locations will be selected based on greatest value to the coastal environment now and in the future considering the pressures of development. Targeted habitats will include urban green corridors, riparian, prairie and other upland, wooded wetlands, or bay and chenier wetlands. These acquisitions will provide habitat for migrating songbirds, grassland birds, waterfowl, and wading birds and a variety of animals. In addition, these acquisitions provide natural buffers to flooding and erosion, decreasing the need for habitat-destroying hard engineering projects while providing valuable ecosystem services.

Location

The selected programs and projects will be conducted within any of the 18 Texas coastal zone counties within the Gulf Coast region boundary but primarily within Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Jefferson, Matagorda, Refugio and Goliad Counties.

Additional Information/Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible:

- State Agencies

⁸ Rezaie, 2020 [Valuing natural habitats for enhancing coastal resilience: Wetlands reduce property damage from storm surge and sea level rise](#)

⁹ Hutchison et al, 2015 [Stakeholder Perceptions of Coastal Habitat](#)

¹⁰ Calnan, 1995 [Coastal Wetlands Acquisition Plan for Texas - Project Report](#)

¹¹ TX GLO, 2023 [Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan 2023](#)

¹² NOAA C-CAP Atlas [NOAA's C-CAP Atlas](#)

¹³ Barbier et al., 2011 [The Value of Estuarine and Coastal Ecosystem Services](#)

¹⁴ TX GLO, 2023 [Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan 2023](#)

- Federal Agencies
- Political Subdivisions (City, Town, County, etc.)
- Non-profit organizations

Focus

This program focuses on “preventative projects” that aim to prevent habitat and ecosystem losses. This program will conserve and protect high-quality habitat and provide natural buffers to flooding and erosion, decreasing the need for habitat-destroying hard engineering projects while providing valuable ecosystem services.

Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

The primary eligible activity for this proposed program under the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act is restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.

RESTORE Act Priority Criteria includes:

- I. Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.
- II. Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.
- III. Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.

TCEQ will work with the Office of the Governor’s designee to identify projects that address these eligible activities. This program and all projects identified for implementation will address needs associated with the TLACC program and comply with the eligibility requirements in the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)(B) and the Council’s Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This program will align primarily with Goal 1 and Objective 1 of the Comprehensive Plan through conservation, restoration and acquisition of large parcels of land with vital high-quality coastal habitat. In addition, this program will support a secondary goal and objective through the conservation efforts to protect, possibly restore and re-establish critical ecosystems that will enhance community resilience through non-structural, natural buffers against storms and flooding (especially hurricanes).

Primary Goal and Objective:

Goal 1: Restore and Conserve Habitat

Objective 1: Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitat

Secondary Goal and Objective:

Goal 4: Enhance Community Resilience

Objective 5: Promote Community Resilience

Major Milestones

- A. Receive program award from the Council.
- B. Select projects in consultation with the Office of the Governor's designee.
- C. Develop and submit work plans for identified project(s) to Council.
- D. Receive project approval from RESTORE Council.
- E. Federal Register Announcement posted for 30 days (Non-profit organizations only)
- F. Develop and execute subgrant contracts with project sub-recipient(s).
- G. Collection, review and submission to Council of all pre-acquisition documents.
- H. Successful acquisition of the land or conservation easement (Escrow/Closing).
- I. Collection, review and submission to Council of all post-acquisition documents.
- J. Collection, review and submission to Council of the Conservation/Stewardship Management Plan.

Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

Additional anticipated success criteria and outcomes will be based on the specifics appropriate to each implemented project, but general success criteria and outcomes include:

Outcome: Land or Conservation Easement Acquired.

Anticipated Project Success Criteria: All due diligence was submitted and the closing on the property or easement was successful, and the title transferred to management entity (if applicable).

Metrics:

Metric Title: HC001: Conservation easements - Acres protected under easement

Target: 0

Baseline: 0

Current: 0

Narrative: This program will purchase large conservation easements along the Texas coast to preserve the natural environment. Long-term success can be measured by ensuring the acquisition of the most valuable land while also considering the quantity of acres protected under long-term conservation easement. Monitoring will be completed by the subrecipient and should follow their Management Plan during the post-acquisition submissions.

Metric Title: HC003: Land acquisition - Acres acquired in fee

Target: 0

Baseline: 0

Current: 0

Narrative: The goal of this program is to acquire large coastal zone properties to secure ownership of the land by federal, state, or local government or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) for conservation purposes. A measure of success for the program will be to maximize the acres acquired with the funds granted. The value of the land in consideration will also be examined to ensure the resources provided by the properties are maximized. More valuable acreage acquired through this program would result in more conservation of the Texas coast. Monitoring will be completed by the subrecipient and should follow their Management Plan during the post-acquisition submissions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All implemented projects will be monitored by the success criteria described in this program for their effectiveness. Review and acceptance by TCEQ and Council of all pre-acquisition

documentation will be required prior to acquisition. After the acquisition has been completed, sub-recipient will provide all post-acquisition document (including the management plan) for review and acceptance prior to closing the project. Upon completion of the acquisition, TCEQ will perform a site visit.

Best Available Science

Note: Also see the Need section above

The Texas coast is dynamic and constantly changing via natural processes and human activity. The coast supports a wide variety of critical habitats, such as nurseries for fish, birds, oysters, and other wildlife. It is also responsible for a large proportion of the Texas economy and population and continues to grow at a higher rate than inland areas. (¹⁵Adams, 2004)

¹⁶(Neumann, 2015). This makes the Texas coast vulnerable to many stressors. As development continues to increase, the critical habitats and ecosystems are being diminished, which adds to the vulnerability of natural and human environments. Habitat types that are found along the coast (marshes, flats, seagrasses, prairies, etc.) not only provide valuable resources, but they also serve as protection from processes such as relative sea level variations, hurricanes, and flooding (¹⁷Ruckelshaus et al., 2016). Losing these natural buffers to coastal development increases the exposure of communities to extreme events.

Conservation of coastal land will protect certain key areas from expanding development and allow the environment to adjust to long-term changes. Acquisition of these lands will also have indirect benefits that include protection of adjacent estuaries, improved water quality, and enhanced coastal resiliency. The long-term conservation of land may also help facilitate the future restoration of degraded areas. Please note, funding made available through this program will be utilized for initial acquisition of coastal land and immediate short-term management and maintenance, not for land modifications or long-term management.

Years of ecological degradation from events such as the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and degradation due to human activity have increased the vulnerability of the environment and the resources provided by the region (¹⁸Samiappan et al., 2019). Development is an added stressor to the coastal zone, and by purchasing these lands, or acquiring conservation easements, potential degradation can be avoided. Conserving this land will protect the valuable resources within the habitats encompassed. In general, the environmental benefits provided by this program span from protecting habitats and conserving biodiversity to improving water quality and storm buffering. The direct benefits to coastal communities by preserving land include reducing erosion and flooding, as well as providing additional economic benefits and recreation. It is important to be proactive when considering habitat loss, and this program aims to preserve the existing environment rather than attempt to replace the resources once they are lost, both in terms of costs and feasibility.

Types of coastal land acquisitions being considered as part of a larger list of potential properties that have been vetted include the Matagorda Conservation Corridor, Armand Bayou, Refugio Goliad Prairie, Columbia Bottomlands, Chenier Plain Conservation Corridor and East and West Galveston Bay Watershed. These locations along the Texas coast provide valuable habitats and resources of coastal lands, and they support a diverse and abundant array of plants and animals.

¹⁵ Adams, 2004 - [The economic significance of the Gulf of Mexico related to population, income, employment, minerals, fisheries and shipping](#)

¹⁶ Neumann et al 2015 [Future Coastal Population Growth and Exposure to Sea-Level Rise and Coastal Flooding - A Global Assessment](#)

¹⁷ Ruckelshaus et al, 2016 [Evaluating the Benefits of Green Infrastructure for Coastal Areas: Location, Location, Location](#)

¹⁸ Samiappan et al., 2019 [Land Conservation in the Gulf of Mexico Region: A Comprehensive Review of Plans, Priorities, and Efforts](#)

Acquisition in the Matagorda Conservation Corridor would benefit multiple resources as the project would ensure long-term protection of high-quality coastal habitats to include emergent marshes, tidal flats, coastal prairies, lagoons, and other coastal wetlands. In addition, it would indirectly protect adjacent estuarine areas from the impacts of land fragmentation and development, prevent development in high-risk areas, and enhance coastal resiliency, including storm surge and flood water mitigation. Not only does the conservation of tracts along the Texas coast ensure long-term ecological benefits, but studies also show that land conservation indirectly protects communities and increases their resilience, as well as providing a range of benefits such as enhanced economic growth, increased property values, and improvements to public health (often at a lower cost than more traditional infrastructure). (¹⁹FEMA-June 2021)

Acquisition of the undeveloped riparian forest floodplains of Armand Bayou would prevent development in high-risk areas and protect riparian habitat and ecosystem functions. The pressures facing this ecosystem include subsidence, changes in wetland vegetation, and drainage, largely due to human disturbances (²⁰McFarlane, 1991). These issues have also resulted in degraded water quality in the area as the mostly rural area has transitioned into residential development. (²¹TX A&M/Sea Grant College Program, 2006)

Acquisition of large upland property in the Refugio Goliad Prairie will help promote long-term preservation and management of high-quality coastal prairie and marsh habitats for migrating songbirds, grassland birds, waterfowl, and wading birds that reside or migrate through the Central Flyway. Threats including subdivision development and industrial projects are jeopardizing the sustainability of this high-quality wildlife habitat. (²²Wilson and Esslinger, 2002)

The Columbia Bottomlands hold a forest that has been identified as a priority habitat for hundreds of species of migratory birds, as well as marsh and coastal wetland habitat. Once spanning over 283,000 hectares, the Columbia Bottomlands has been reduced to 25% of its former extent. (²³Rosen et al., 2008) Acquiring this land would protect the remaining acreage and the habitats it encompasses.

The scope of this program is not limited to these locations, and other properties along the Texas coast will be considered. This program aims to acquire the most beneficial land, both in acreage and in resources provided through land or conservation easement acquisitions.

Budget and Funding

Estimated cost of the program activities and amount to be requested from the Spill Impact Component:

Estimated Funds: \$20,539,358

The amount of funds to be allocated for each project will be detailed in the budget in the work plan for that project and submitted to the RESTORE Council for approval. Of the amount of available funds, 100% will be used for implementation.

Partnerships/Collaborations

¹⁹ FEMA-June 2021 [Building Community Resilience with Nature-Based Solutions](#)

²⁰ McFarlane, 1991 [An Environmental Inventory of the Armand Bayou Coastal Preserve](#)

²¹TX A&M/Sea Grant College Program, 2006 [Armand Bayou Watershed Plan:Phase I](#)

²² Wilson and Esslinger, 2002 [Gulf Coast Joint Venture: Texas Mid-Coast Initiative](#)

²³Rosen et al, 2008 [Conservation Strategies and Vegetation Characterization in the Columbia Bottomlands, an Under-recognized Southern Floodplain Forest Formation](#)

TLACC History of Collaborations for Council-Selected Restoration Component (Bucket 2) FPL3b

As part of Texas' effort to provide input on the Council's Planning Framework Document when developing projects for Council-Selected Restoration Component FPL3b, two Texas work groups were established to provide input on coastal priorities: State & Federal Representatives and NGOs. Online and in-person meetings were held to discuss plans to develop Texas coastal priorities and to ensure the public's involvement. A survey was developed that asked for individuals' coastal priorities. These surveys were available to the public and were also completed by members of the two work groups. Public meetings were conducted in three coastal cities for the public to present their issues and concerns. Information received from work group meetings, discussions with elected officials, public meetings, and surveys were used to develop a list of priorities for the Texas coast. Those priorities were submitted to the Council for inclusion in the RESTORE Council's Planning Framework document. These efforts of collaboration continued throughout the process to develop the original Council-Selected Restoration Component FPL3b TLACC program.

The information that came from those initial efforts will be used to identify and select additional projects as well as guidance and approval from the Office of the Governor's designee. Work will also continue with Texas representatives for NRDA/NFWF to consider leveraging opportunities.

Leveraged Resources

Leverage resources will be dependent on the individual projects. TCEQ will encourage partners to leverage other funding sources in order to make largest impact. Any leveraged funds available for a project will be identified in that project's work plan as required by Council.

Funds Used as Non-Federal Match

Funds used as a non-federal match will be dependent on the individual implemented projects and will be included in that project's work plan. If applicable, TCEQ will leverage RESTORE funding with other available sources of funds to fully complete projects within the approved project work plans.