

**TEXAS APPLICATION RESTORE BUCKET 2 ROUND 1 (B2R1)
 BAYOU GREENWAYS 2020 - CLEAR CREEK RIPARIAN CORRIDOR ACQUISITION**

(1) SUMMARY SHEET (APPENDIX A)

Appendix A: Council Member Applicant and Proposal Information Summary Sheet

Commissioner Toby Baker Council Member:		Point of Contact: Richard Seler Phone: 512-239-2523 Email: richard.seler@tceq.texas.gov	
Project Identification			
Project Title: BAYOU GREENWAYS 2020 - CLEAR CREEK RIPARIAN CORRIDOR ACQUISITION			Project
State(s): Texas		County/City/Region: Harris County, City of Houston	
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 is adjacent to the Coastal Zone Boundary for Texas Coastal Management Program, within 25 miles of the coastal zone.			
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 type="checkbox"/> P	Restore and Conserve Habitat	<input type="checkbox"/> S	Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> S	Restore Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> S	Enhance Community Resilience
<input type="checkbox"/> S	Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy		
RESTORE Objectives: <i>Identify all RESTORE Act objectives this project supports. Place a P for Primary Objective, and S for secondary objectives.</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> P	Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats	<input type="checkbox"/> S	Promote Community Resilience
<input type="checkbox"/> S	Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> S	Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education
<input type="checkbox"/> S	Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes
<input type="checkbox"/> S	Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines		
RESTORE Priorities: <i>Identify all RESTORE Act priorities that this project supports.</i>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Priority 1: Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Priority 2: Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Priority 3: Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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"/> Commitment to Science-based Decision Making			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commitment to Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commitment to Engagement, Inclusion, and Transparency			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commitment to Leverage Resources and Partnerships			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Technical Assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation <input type="checkbox"/> Program
Project Cost and Duration			
Project Cost Estimate: Total : \$7,000,000 for Land Acquisition		Project Timing Estimate: Date Anticipated to Start: March/2015 Time to Completion: 12 Months months / years Anticipated Project Lifespan: 50+ years	

(2) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Clear Creek Riparian Corridor Acquisition project, located in Harris County Texas, is part of an overarching initiative called the Bayou Greenways project. The Bayou Greenways project is ideally suited to receive RESTORE Act funding because it aims to acquire, preserve and restore nearly 4,500 acres of riparian buffer corridors along the major waterways (bayous and creeks) running predominately through Harris County and the City of Houston. These bayous are connected to a region known as the Trinity-San Jacinto Estuary (Galveston Bay) - the largest watershed on the Texas coast. This region faces some of the greatest conservation challenges of any system in Texas because it is adjacent to the most populated and industrialized metropolitan areas in the State. The primary objective of this proposal is to restore and conserve habitat, with secondary goals to restore water quality, replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources, enhance community resilience and restore and revitalize the gulf economy.

Over the past 100 years, the waterways and bayous running through the Houston region were not treated as an asset, and today, almost every stream mile is impaired by some pollutant on Texas's 303(d) list. Dumping and pollution remain rampant and this, along with rapid urban development, has diminished the natural riparian habitat and wetlands along these corridors. Through the Bayou Greenways program, however, the Houston Parks Board has partnered with the City of Houston, Harris County Flood Control District and Harris County to preserve, restore and celebrate these important ecological habitats in the 4th largest metropolitan region in the nation.

The project consists of two key steps. First, outright land acquisition of entire parcels along Clear Creek as it makes its way towards Galveston Bay. Second, through a secure funding source already created for the maintenance of the Bayou Greenways project, the Houston Parks Board will provide a net gain by lifting the ecological value of this land through habitat restoration efforts like invasive control and additional native plantings. The Houston Parks Board will also coordinate with Harris County Flood Control on efforts for increased detention to aid in the cleansing of stormwater. Thus, this proposal achieves the goals of habitat protection by purchasing and preserving land in perpetuity as parkland, and habitat restoration through a robust (and already funded) maintenance program.

The total cost for land acquisition of the county-wide Bayou Greenways initiative is approximately \$145 million to preserve greenspace along ten of the major bayous throughout Harris County, with the private sector having already acquired lands valued at approximately \$10 million.

Clear Creek, one of the ten major bayous that run through the Houston metro area, starts in southern Harris County just east of Missouri City and flows eastward until it meets Clear Lake, which then empties into Galveston Bay. Clear Lake is considered a very important nursery hatchery area for the Galveston Bay system (Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation and Vasquez Environmental Services, Inc., 1991), and is an extremely biologically productive estuary due to the absence of a salt wedge.

The target acquisition area for this proposal is along Clear Creek between Christia V. Adair Regional Park and El Franco Lee Park south of Sam Houston Tollway. Several properties will be acquired to complete the corridor connection between these two parks. This proposal for Clear Creek riparian corridor acquisition seeks \$7 million to acquire between 80 to 100 acres of land currently for sale in this area. As will be noted in the uncertainties, property availability and prices fluctuate.

By acquiring these greenspaces, the project will preserve the habitat, the buffer and the absorptive potential of these properties. When leveraged with the entire Bayou Greenways program, the positive effects of these acquisitions are compounded and the benefits substantial. Although it may seem insignificant to acquire relatively small sections of land in such dense urban areas, we know that the more developed and dense the surroundings, the more desperate the need to preserve and restore a riparian habitat buffer in order to help balance the entire system. Moreover, because we permanently protect these lands as city parkland, the preservation is in perpetuity.

Preserving and restoring the bayou corridors has long been emphasized as a significant conservation priority within the region and specifically within the Galveston Bay Estuary Program's strategic plan. In its *Charting the Course to 2015: Galveston Bay Strategic Action Plan*, the program stated that "[s]pecial consideration should be also given to other particularly valuable areas, such as stream corridors that are exceptionally valuable to habitat, water quality and recreation" (13). This is unsurprising, as the best available science supports the idea that riparian forest buffers and riparian corridors are a best management practice and significantly improve the amount of in-stream activity of the ecosystem as well as the processing of pollutants prior to entering the riparian habitat (Sweeney 2004; Sweeney and Newbold, 2014). Thus, preserving land along this naturalized stream corridor will ensure that conservation efforts downstream will benefit as well.

Measures of success will include the completion of the project milestones within the given time, as well as public use and continued positive public response to protecting these significant resources including a focus on wildlife habitat restoration and water quality improvement. As with any other long-term project, there are uncertainties and risks associated with inflation of costs, availability of land and negotiating with landowners, as well as public opinion. These uncertainties however are minimized by the Houston Parks Board's long-standing commitment to the region, and the team in place to implement this project.

(3) PROJECT NARRATIVE

1. Proposal Introduction & Background.

The greater Houston area covers nearly 10,000 square miles, making it one of the most sprawling cities in the United States. It is also a city that still has an opportunity to claim forever the green spaces that remain in the region. These green spaces are essential to the

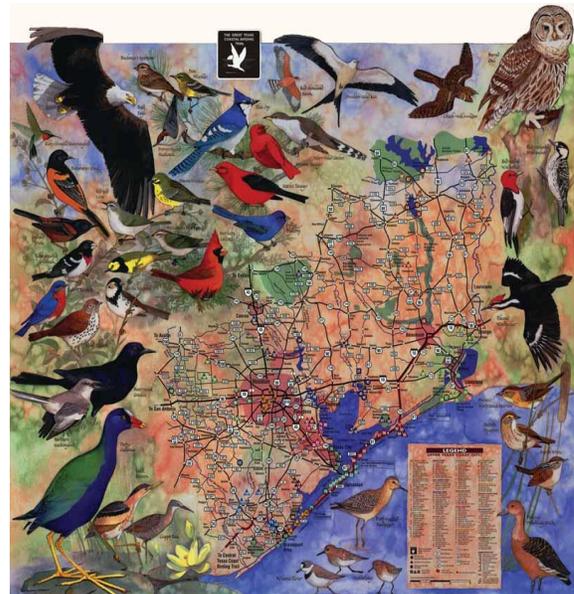
health of the people who live in the Houston region and also to the survival and long-term wellbeing of the unique natural world that exists along the Gulf Coast. A significant step forward in this effort will be to conserve, enhance and protect habitat along the bayous and restore these corridors to provide enhanced ecological benefits including slowing and absorbing flood waters, cleaning runoff water, providing habitat for migratory birds and local wildlife and providing recreational amenities.

This region is part of the Texas Coastal Plain made up of Gulf Coast prairies and marshes, which are rich in natural resources. Originally covered with prairie grasses and native trees, much of this indigenous vegetation has given way to asphalt, subdivisions and commercial development:

“Conversion of native prairies to other uses has been so extensive that only 1% of historical prairies are believed to still exist in Texas (Allen, 2007). In areas where patches of habitat exist, they may be too disconnected to allow safe movement or be able to support populations of wildlife. With fragmentation rates accelerating in Texas, restoring riparian areas can improve wildlife populations by providing corridors that connect wildlife habitats and allow safe movement between fragmented patches of natural area (Lovell and Sullivan, 2006).” (Riparian Restoration, 11).

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in *Clear Creek, Texas, Flood Risk Management, Final – General Reevaluation Report* notes that numerous opportunities exist to preserve remaining habitat as well as create additional habitat to supplement or connect existing high importance areas. The Clear Creek watershed ranges from southern mixed hardwood, bottomland/riparian forest, coastal prairie, coastal salt marshes, small areas of shallow tidal marshlands and one of the few remaining native tall-grass prairies. Although the remaining habitat is highly fragmented and continues to be threatened by development, there is an opportunity to preserve remaining habitat and reestablish native trees, grasses and understory.

The Corps study specifically notes that, “Riparian wetlands occur along Clear Creek and its tributaries and freshwater and brackish wetlands are interspersed within the prairies, forests, and tidal marsh habitats within the floodplain. Many of these areas may remain wet several months to year round. These unique areas provide important functions including wildlife habitat, ground and surface water quality protection and improvement, and flood protection (25).” Our project will not only preserve existing habitat, but will also allow for its reestablishment.



Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

This area also remains critical to the survival of hundreds of species of birds, particularly those that migrate from North America to the Caribbean each year, as well as water fowl and many other living creatures that are essential to a healthy ecosystem. With the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative, the refuge system along the Gulf Coast and urban greenspace play a critical role in providing rest and food in these pathways. These connected areas play such an important role that Texas Parks and Wildlife Department lists Clear Lake as one of its Great Texas Wildlife Trails (Texas Parks & Wildlife).

Perhaps for the first time in the city’s history, Houstonians are paying serious attention to the fact that now is the time to protect and preserve green spaces in our region, and acquiring land so that it can be sheltered from development in perpetuity. The Houston Parks Board is leading the way in this movement through the Bayou Greenways project to connect greenspaces along Houston’s bayous with parks and trails.

It is well documented that development near waterways in urban areas decreases the ability of the area to perform its natural functions of flood control, pollutant removal and wildlife habitat (Chesapeake Bay Commission). To combat this effect, urban buffers (corridors of important remnants of the natural systems) should be preserved and properly managed (Riparian Restoration; Wisconsin; etc.). For the Bayou Greenways program, we will create primary environmental corridors by ensuring a minimum width of 200 feet and by linking over 4000 acres and 300 miles of corridor together. Again, while the minimum width for this program is 200 feet, this proposal, along with a majority of our acquisitions, seeks to acquire entire parcels along the bayou corridors, thus creating linear greenspaces throughout the region to accommodate not only the eventual trail system, but to achieve the highest maximum benefit for flood mitigation and water quality improvements. While additional studies for the Gulf should take place, the water quality benefits are well documented in literature aimed at better land use for agricultural lands:

“In some cases, riparian buffers of only 32 feet in width can reduce phosphorus levels up to 95% (Vought et al. 1995), and nitrate levels up to 80% on row crop fields (Schultz et al. 1995). In addition, buffers as narrow as 20 feet can prevent up to 95% of the sediment eroded from uplands from reaching streams (Collins et al. 2009)” (Riparian Restoration, 5).

While some green spaces along the greenways already exist, they are largely disconnected, disrupted by commercial and industrial development, and public access is difficult if not impossible. The Bayou Greenways project will connect greenspaces along all of the major bayous with newly acquired properties - restoring developed land back into greenspace and preserve undeveloped land. This will provide protection for countless wildlife, birds and fish that would be, or have been, pushed out of their habitats.



Clear Creek



Sample Acquisition Target Properties

Not insignificantly, this project will also vastly increase the amount of time citizens spend outdoors, yielding significant public health benefits, as well as making a considerable and positive economic impact.

Several of the bayous within the Bayou Greenways project - specifically Clear Creek, Greens Bayou and Halls Bayou - are still largely untouched and we have a valuable opportunity to claim these forever if we move swiftly before they are consumed by development. Indeed, much of the target acquisition area is still forested, but since it runs parallel with a major freeway (the beltway), these lands are in grave peril for development.

The Houston Parks Board has evaluated the project area and determined the target properties to be acquired. The target properties are actively listed on the market. Negotiations have not begun with individual landowners, but we estimate it will take 12 months from the start of negotiations to complete the acquisitions.

2. Implementation technology.

To aid in the evaluation of potential land acquisition, the Houston Parks Board (in partnership with the Conservation Fund and Houston Wilderness) developed a GIS-based acquisition framework in 2005 to facilitate identification, evaluation and prioritization of new and equitably distributed parkland acquisition opportunities. This acquisition framework was developed through collaboration with citizen representatives, public entities, and private parks and green space organizations. This framework was developed using criteria agreed upon by a coalition including: Blueprint Houston, Houston Wilderness, The Park People, Greater Houston Partnership's Quality of Life Committee, Bayou Preservation Association, Houston City Council Quality of Life Committee,

Houston Parks and Recreation Department, Trust for Public Land, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Harris County Flood District, Urban Design Division or the Mayor's Office, Central Houston Inc., the Gulf Coast Institute, and Super Neighborhood representatives. Properties along the bayous rapidly became the highest scoring properties evaluated. This in part, led to the Bayou Greenways project.

In 2011, the Bayou Greenways Benefits Analysis Report strongly validated the program's value proposition, concluding that there is unlikely to be any other investment in the greater Houston area that will have a comparable impact on the quality of place, transform its park system, contribute to the health of Houstonians and the natural environment, and reposition the city for the 21st century. While only some of the benefits can be measured reliably in dollar terms, the impact of those that can be measured is eye-opening. Specifically, analysts estimate that the project will conservatively generate more than \$117 million in health, environmental, and economic benefits to Harris County every year on an overall investment for the region of \$490 million (Crompton).

In 2012, the Houston Parks Board engaged an independent consultant to assist in completing a financing plan for the Bayou Greenways project. The plan recommended forming a public-private partnership with the City of Houston to share the cost of completing the Bayou Greenways within the City limits. This effort resulted in the inclusion of \$100 million of matching funds in Proposition B on the Nov. 6, 2012 ballot. Numerous sister organizations supported the bond campaign effort.

The citizens of Houston have been very receptive and enthusiastic about "taking back" the bayous. In the November 2012 election, Houston voters approved the bond referendum providing \$166 million in local parks funding, \$100 million of which was dedicated to completing the Bayou Greenways project inside Houston's city limits. The bond passed by an overwhelming margin with 68% of the vote – the most positive parks referendum in the city's history. We believe our efforts will result in a healthier, more sustainable and more balanced environment which will also aid in attracting the best and the brightest talent to the region. In order to access these public dollars however, the Houston Parks Board must raise private dollars on a one-for-one basis to acquire the land necessary to complete this vision.

The completion of the Bayou Greenways program within the city limits of Houston will be implemented under an interlocal agreement between the City of Houston and the Houston Parks Board. Under the terms of this agreement (approved by City Council on June 26, 2013) funds raised from private sources will be utilized for parkland acquisition along the bayou corridors and the design of trails and associated amenities, while \$100 million in public funds will be utilized for construction of a connected trail system. A single line of shared use path is the only recreational amenity recommended for these long linear park spaces, thus providing a recreational benefit to the conservation priority. The Houston Parks Board and the City are committed to completing the project within the city limits by the year 2020. The county-wide Bayou Greenways initiative is being implemented simultaneously by the Houston Parks Board and is anticipated to continue through 2025.

In October 2013, ETM Associates completed a Maintenance & Operations analysis for the completed Bayou Greenways in order to assist us in establishing a funding mechanism for long-term maintenance. This resulted in the 2020 Economic Development Agreement between the Houston Parks Board and the City of Houston, thus providing a secure maintenance and restoration funding stream for at least 30 years on the project within the City limits of Houston. The maintenance standards meet national standards and include secure funding for 30 years with direction to restore and create additional prairie, control invasives and de-litter on a weekly basis – an unbelievably effective control measure for possible trash pollution.

This proposal will leverage all of these activities since the properties on the northern side of Clear Creek are within Harris County and the Houston city limits - and thus are part of the Bayou Greenways 2020 program.

There are several cases being built for restoration and reconstruction of riparian zones in order to improve habitat for fish, remove or reduce nutrients in the water and stabilize banks against erosion (Mayer, Paul; United States Environmental Protection Agency). Texas Water Resource Institute advocates that adequate vegetation protects banks from excess erosion, slows the velocity of floodwater, reduces and traps sediment, increases groundwater recharge, enlarges floodplain / riparian sponge and sustains base-flow over time (Dictson). Buffers can consist of a variety of canopy layers and cover types including ephemeral (temporary-wet for only part of year) wetlands/seasonal ponds/spring pools, shallow marshes, deep marshes, wetland meadows, wetland mixed forests, grasslands, shrubs, forests, and/or prairies (Wisconsin).

The Conservation Fund finds that by preserving the best natural assets, directing development away from flood-prone areas and ensuring that residents have safe and easy access to local parks, trails and green space, the Houston-Galveston area can achieve lasting benefits in water management, air quality, climate, and community livability. (Conservation Fund). The greatest impact comes from a network of green infrastructure. They state,

“The building blocks of the network are “core areas” that contain naturally functioning ecosystems that provide high quality habitat for native plants and animals. “Hubs” are aggregations of core areas and adjacent undeveloped land that provide ecosystem services like clean water, flood



control, carbon sequestration, and recreation opportunities. Finally, “corridors” are relatively linear features linking cores and hubs together, providing essential connectivity for animal and plant movement.”

The report recommends supporting implementation of the greater Houston Bayou Greenways Initiative.

Each corridor has been internally reviewed by the Houston Parks Board team and parcels have been identified for acquisition. Concept renderings for each bayou have been completed and detailed inventories are underway.

3. Monitoring and adaptive management of the project.

The Houston Parks Board has been engaged in the effort to create, improve and protect equitably distributed parkland and greenspace in Houston since 1976. In those 38 years, the Houston Parks Board has added more than 13,600 acres of land to Houston’s park system – over half the city’s parkland – and completed \$90 million in capital improvements to new and existing parks.

The Houston Parks Board is the driving force behind the Bayou Greenways project and has established the process for its completion. Through multiple collaborations and numerous funding sources, the Houston Parks Board is moving the project forward. As noted, in November 2012, Houston voters approved \$100 million dedicated to the Bayou Greenways project inside the city limits of Houston – known as Bayou Greenways 2020. The Houston Parks Board has committed to ensuring those public dollars are matched with additional funds to complete the project by 2020. But more remains to be done to accomplish the county-wide goal.

The Houston Parks Board has embarked on a capital campaign to raise \$120 million dedicated to fulfilling its promise to match the City of Houston’s \$100 million bond commitment and complete other essential projects associated with the Bayou Greenways 2020 project. The capital campaign has raised over \$79 million in early stage commitments.

Following the 2013 ETM Associates Maintenance & Operations analysis, the Bayou Greenways 2020 Economic Development Agreement was completed to ensure proper monitoring and maintenance of the Bayou Greenways project. As the City and private sector invests heavily in creating these parks and greenways, there is a strong desire to protect that investment. Houston Parks Board and City of Houston negotiated the 30-year Agreement (the “380 Agreement”), in October of 2013. The Texas Constitution and Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code authorize the City of Houston (the “City”) to provide grants or loans for the purpose of promoting economic development. In the 380 Agreement, the City makes a finding that the Bayou Greenways 2020 Project promotes economic development in the City.

The Houston Parks Board has a dedicated Bayou Greenways Maintenance Manager and

two Inspectors who monitor and manage the maintenance aspects daily. Because sediment and nutrients are significant pollutants in Texas, contributing to eutrophication problems and loss of aquatic habitats, as well as decreased aesthetic and recreational value, proper management can help alleviate these water impairments (Riparian Restoration on Farms and Ranches in Texas, 5).

4. Measures of success for the proposed project or program.

One measure of success will be to complete the Bayou Greenways 2020 project within the given time. The Houston Parks Board and City of Houston are on track to achieve this goal with multiple activities simultaneously underway including land acquisition, project design, trail construction, removal of existing buildings and hardscapes if applicable, habitat restoration and maintenance activities.

Another measure of success will be the establishment of, not only the linear greenways along each bayou necessary to establish corridors, but also additional pockets of greenspace to create hubs of habitat for native plants and animals and to provide amplified opportunity for cleaning and slowing storm water and runoff as it enters the system. This proposal above all else is a parks proposal – a proposal to acquire land and permanently protect it with minimal development (a single line of trail) and enhanced maintenance and restoration.

Increasing public use along the greenways due to establishing greater connectivity between points of interest and opportunities for prolonged use is another measure of success. This includes both active and passive recreation and the use of the greenways for alternative transportation, which improves both traffic congestion, health of the user and air quality. This also ensures support for creation of true wildlife corridors throughout the region.

We have thus far enjoyed a positive public response to the Bayou Greenways, which will also help us measure the success of the project. Enthusiasm for the recreational and alternative transportation aspects has already increased, but we also expect to see increasing support and enthusiasm for the benefits the natural spaces provide including wildlife habitat (bird watching), mental respite from the urban environment and cleaner air and water.

Finally, a goal for a net gain in ecological services provided by these corridors will be determined once the parcels of land are acquired. By working with each parcel individually to restore and provide some ecological lift, the project will be successful. This will most easily be accomplished by invasive control and additional plantings of native species with at least a 250 stem per acre count. Within the funding stream additional activities are possible depending on the location of the parcel.

5. Risks and uncertainties of the proposed activities.

There are uncertainties anticipated with the land acquisition aspect of the project. Prices

are anticipated to increase. In addition, there are always uncertainties associated with the continuing availability of land and in negotiations with land owners. Because our project identifies a corridor between two regional parks, any award will be spent for land acquisition within that corridor and we anticipate preserving at least 80 to 100 acres for this cost. The funding is intended to acquire significant sized parcels in order to create hubs along the corridor rather than just a simple right-of-way acquisition for the placement of a trail.

6. Outreach & education opportunities.

Because the Bayou Greenways program was initially funded through a bond election, separate entities took on the task of exciting all Houstonians. After the election, the Houston Parks Board went back into the community, traveling to nearly 50 different community events to explain the project, how it was funded and next steps. These activities included more interactive opportunities like a bike rides and walks. As the Bayou Greenways project continues, we will expand on the outreach and education activities including our scheduled city-wide event in April 2015 entitled Bayou Greenway Day. Through these efforts, Houstonians will become increasingly aware of the benefits associated with preserving and restoring our bayous' riparian corridors for greenspaces, flood reduction, water quality, wildlife habitat restoration/conservation and recreation.

7. Leveraging of resources and partnerships.

This project has significant support in the region, including from the Galveston Bay Council, the coordinating body for the Galveston Bay Estuary Program for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) (support letters attached). Considering the range of area the Bayou Greenways project covers, many partners participate in the project including the City of Houston, HCFCD, various City of Houston Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) and Management Districts and several non-profit organizations. Many of these entities provide matches to federal or state grants or complete projects in tandem and coordination with the Bayou Greenways project.

The project is also one of the projects considered for the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF) by a coalition of Texas conservation organizations including: Audubon Texas, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Ducks Unlimited, Environmental Defense Fund, Galveston Bay Foundation, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Gulf Restoration Network, Houston Audubon, Houston Parks Board, National Wildlife Federation, Ocean Conservancy, Sierra Club - Lone Star Chapter, Texas Conservation Alliance, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, The Student Conservation Association and Turtle Island Restoration Network.

The area's Metropolitan Planning Organization, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), includes several Bayou Greenways projects in the Regional Transportation Plan. The Bayou Greenways project has also received HGAC funding through its

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), including \$3,978,230 in 2014 (CMAQ funding) for shared use path construction along Halls Bayou Greenway. Cypress Creek Greenway received an HGAC Regional Plan for Sustainable Development Case Study grant in 2012 to again document the economic benefits of a project.

Aside from the previously mentioned 2012 City of Houston Bond funding, the Bayou Greenways project has also received federal and state funding to aid in its completion.

Some of these include:

2006 Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant in the amount of \$374,338 for land acquisition for lower Brays Bayou Greenway;

2006 Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) grant in the amount of \$738,000 for land acquisition for Sims Bayou Greenway;

2009/2010 Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) grant in the amount of \$200,000 for land acquisition for Brays Bayou Greenway;

2009 Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program (TE) grant in the amount of \$1,970,390 for construction of shared-use path along Brays Bayou Greenway.

2012 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant – out of the \$18,991,700 federal project award, \$12,818,180 was exclusively for construction of Bayou Greenway trails (White Oak Bayou Greenway, Buffalo Bayou Greenway and Brays Bayou Greenway) and neighborhood connections as alternative transportation.

2014 Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program (TE) grant in the amount of \$607,430 for construction of shared-use path along Hunting Bayou Greenway.

2014 Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program (TE) grant in the amount of \$1,844,655 for construction of a bike/ped bridge and trail segment along Brays Bayou Greenway.

2014 Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program (TE) grant in the amount of \$3,544,579 for construction of a bike/ped bridge along Brays Bayou Greenway in Mason Park.

8. Proposal project benefits.

The Crompton 2011 benefits analysis report outlines and quantifies many of the benefits of the Bayou Greenways project including environmental health (\$22.5 million yearly alone), Houstonians' physical and mental health and Houston's economic health. The Bayou Greenways have important environmental and community benefits. They can help to improve water and air quality, reduce flooding and protect wildlife habitats.

Furthermore they create spaces for recreation and a sense of place by connecting residents to one another. This improved quality of life attracts tax-paying businesses and residents, raising property values and fueling the economic vitality of surrounding communities.

Access to greenspace and parks is vital to the health of individuals and communities. Research clearly demonstrates that exercise and recreation play a major role in preventing or reducing a variety of life-threatening diseases (White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity Report to the President). For example, moderate physical activity (such as biking or walking) significantly reduces the incidence and mortality of coronary heart disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S. Regular exercise reduces obesity and decreases the likelihood of Type II diabetes. A major factor in promoting physical activity is the availability of green space in a community. This is an urgent need in the Houston/Harris County area, where a large percentage of adults (>59% in all neighborhoods) and children (approximately 34%) are overweight or obese (Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services and Houston Department of Health and Human Services, Assessment, p.31).

Beyond these physical health benefits, outdoor recreation also has a significant impact on improving mental health and enhancing the overall quality of people’s lives. Evidence shows that outdoor recreation reduces depression, helps to build self-esteem and confidence (especially in children and adolescents), reduces stress, and encourages personal growth.



As Dr. Crompton states, “The value proposition of the Initiative discussed in this report is remarkable. While only some of the benefits in this report could be measured reliably in dollar terms, the resulting totals are impressive. They demonstrate that there is unlikely to be any other investment in the greater Houston area that will have a significant impact on the quality of place, transform its park system, contribute to the health of Houstonians and the natural environment, and reposition the City for the 21st century – while also returning annual benefits conservatively valued at \$117 million a year” (Crompton, pg.1).

Ecosystem services provided by the bayous and adjacent green spaces are a central part of Houston’s “nature capital”. (Crompton) “[t]hey provide a stream of economic benefits such as local habitat preservation, detoxification, increased biodiversity, migratory habitat

enhancement, increased aesthetics, increased cultural and scientific activities, and carbon sequestration. If these assets are degraded, then the city will have to invest in expensive mechanical systems to perform the services which it currently gets at no cost. Alternatively, if these assets are improved and increased, the city will enjoy the benefit and commensurate value (9).”

Ecosystem Services Benefit is an estimate of the annual value per acre of the various types of ecosystems, using a model developed by Dr. Robert Costanza, Portland State University, and is based on the acquisition and conservation of 1 acre of land within the bayou system. Generally, the value is derived from the land's ability to provide benefits such as pollution control, habitat detoxification, wildlife nurseries, migratory habitat, aesthetic, cultural, educational or scientific activities, etc.

Ecosystem Services Benefit = (freshwater wetlands acreage x (ecosystem service/acre + water quality service/acre)) + (riparian buffer acreage x ecosystem service/acre) + (urban green space acreage x ecosystem service/acre)

Land Use	Acreage	Ecosystem Service/acre	Water Quality Service/acre
Freshwater Wetlands	Est. 10	\$12,428.56	\$970.66
Riparian Buffer	Est. 90	\$3,917.37	-
Urban Green Space	Alternative	\$2,864.48	-
Total	100		

Acquired or restored 10 acres of wetlands = \$124,285.60 + \$9,706.60 = \$133,992.20; Acquired 90 acres of riparian buffer = \$352,563.30

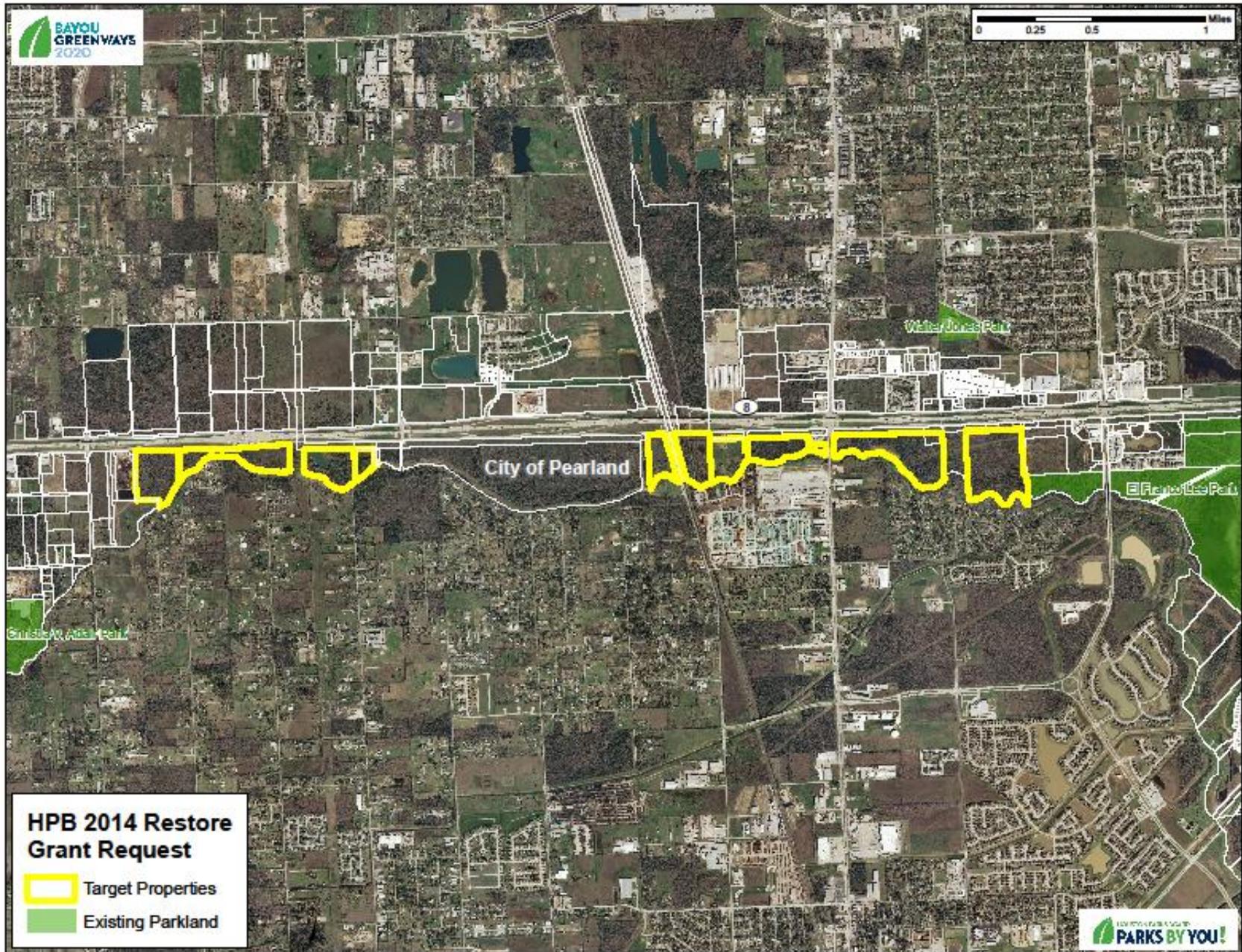
Alternatively, a total of \$286,448.00 could be valued just as urban green space.

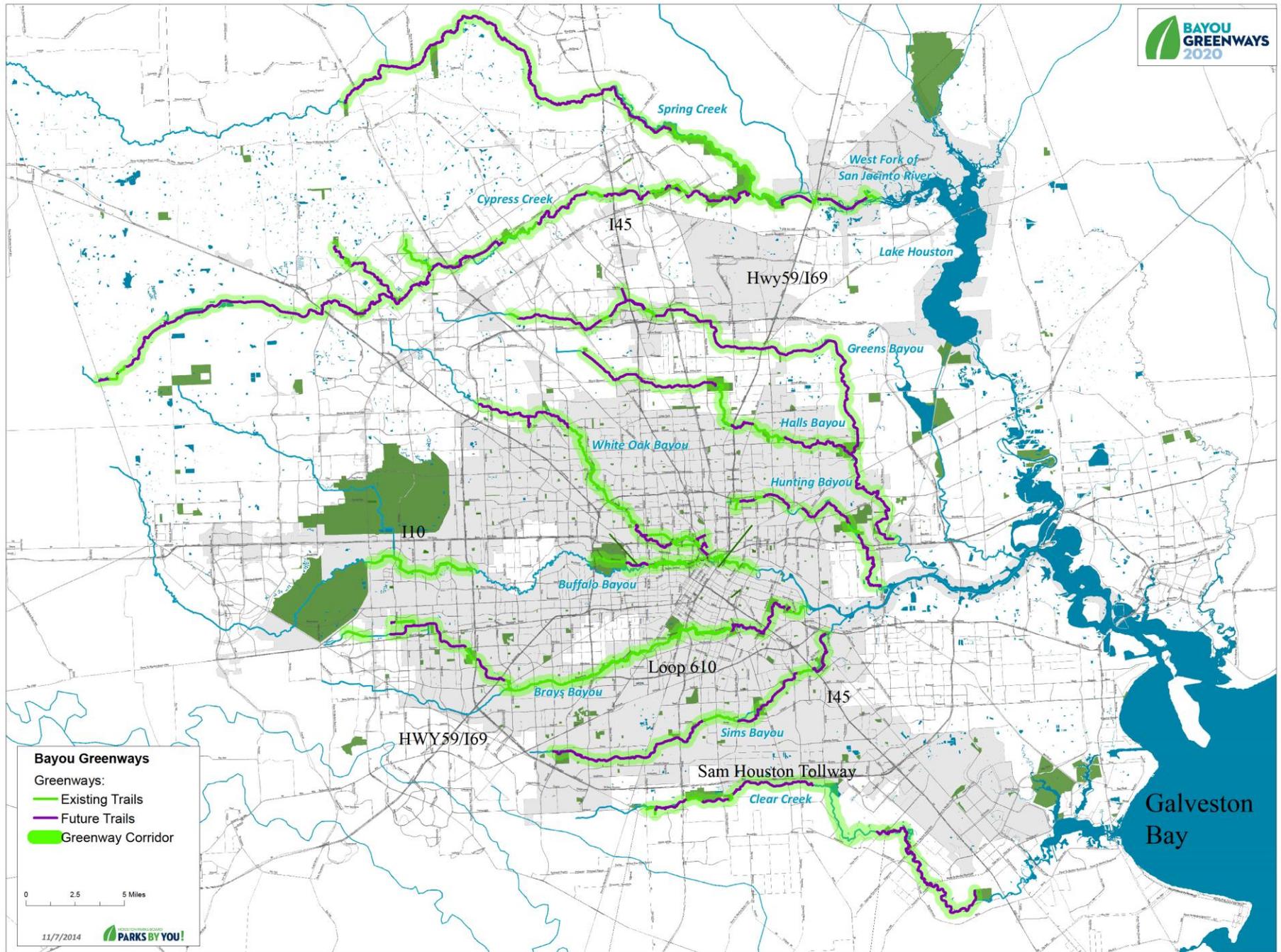
While these figures are estimates depending on the type and size of property eventually acquired, it is important to note that there is a yearly value add for this investment in this community.

Likewise, as articulated above, scientific reviews of the water quality enhancements by the preservation of land, as well as the additional plantings of trees and native prairies is well documented (Sweeney; Riparian Restoration; etc.). Likewise, the value of environmental corridors for habitat are well documented and because these corridors will exceed the minimal proposed of 200 feet, these benefits should be value-adds to the ecological system as a whole.

(4) LOCATION INFORMATION

- Property Acquisitions Location Map
- Bayou Greenways Project Map





(5) HIGH-LEVEL BUDGET NARRATIVE

The Houston Parks Board's land acquisition manager currently prioritizes acquisition to meet the project staff team needs and to take advantage of opportunities as they arise in line with the Bayou Greenways 2020 program. The proposed budget for Clear Creek reflects an analysis of price per acre over the last year as well as a review of properties currently for sale, and those that have been sold over the last 12 months. Historically, because the Houston Parks Board is a non-profit working in concert with a city-wide project, the team has often been able to negotiate below market price.

The Houston Parks Board's land acquisition manager is currently moving a program for acquisition of over 100 parcels across the City and will be able to quickly and efficiently take advantage of any additional funding to acquire properties along Clear Creek. We anticipate a project timeline of less than 12 months to assess, review, negotiate and close on these properties. If awarded \$7 million for this proposal, the budget breakdown would be approximately this:

Target Property Acreage	Target Price	Avg Price Per SF	Due Diligence Costs	Total Value
95	\$ 6,620,000	\$1.60	\$ 150,000	\$ 6,770,000
HPB Administrative and Management Fees (5%)				\$ 339,000
TOTAL ACQUISITION COSTS				\$ 7,109,000

If awarded this \$7 million, the Houston Parks Board estimates that approximately an additional \$21 million in private funding would be leveraged. This is because we estimate at today's prices that the completion of the corridor acquisition to Clear Lake and the Bay will cost an additional \$21 million that will be privately raised through individuals, grants or foundations.

Ecological Lift:

In addition, based on per acre maintenance and restoration costs currently being utilized by the Houston Parks Board for the approximately 1,300 acres of existing Bayou Greenways, if these Clear Lake parcels are acquired, these acres would receive between \$261,920.00 to \$327,400.00 of maintenance and restoration each year including, for example, weekly de-littering, invasive control, targeted restoration to restore greater biodiversity within the channel and upland area where appropriate as well as potentially further tree planting. Each site and corridor is evaluated for different maintenance and restoration activities.

(6) ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST (APPENDIX B)

Appendix B

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Environmental Compliance Checklist

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

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

(7) DATA / INFORMATION SHARING PLAN

Information regarding the projects initiation, procedures, best practices, interlocal agreements for project completion, stewardship, maintenance and preservation will be shared with agencies or other organizations as requested. Bayou Greenways is an enormously collaborative process and multiple agencies and organizations are participating.

For example, the Cypress Creek Greenway case study provides recommendations regarding implementation and sustainability of the initiative that a broad range of communities will be able to utilize (Houston Galveston Area Council, Houston Parks Board, CDS Market Research, MarshDarcy Partners 2013). Most of these studies are publicly available and are being utilized by peer non-profits as well as other jurisdictions interested in expanding the idea of riparian buffer zones throughout the greater Houston region.

(8) REFERENCE LIST OF LITERATURE CITED IN THE PROPOSAL

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<http://www.chesbay.us/Publications/CreditingConservationReport.pdf>

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Crompton, Dr. John L., *Bayou Greenways -- A Key to a Healthy Houston*, 2011,

http://houstonparksboard.org/assets/Bayou_Greenways_Benefits_Analysis_-_John_Crompton_8-26-2011.pdf

Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation and Vasquez Environmental Services, Inc., *Clear Creek Regional Flood control Plan Environmental Baseline Report Clear Creek Watershed for Harris County Flood Control District and Texas Water Development Board*, 1991,

https://www.twdb.state.tx.us/publications/reports/contracted_reports/doc/9483730_clear_creek_regional_flood_control_plan.pdf

Dictson, Nikki, Texas Water Resources Institute, *Texas Riparian and Stream Ecosystems*

<http://watershedplanning.tamu.edu/media/442641/9-w-texas-riparian-and-stream-ecosystem-presentation-compatibility-mode-.pdf>

ETM Associates, L.L.C., *Bayou Greenways 2020 Maintenance Report*, October 2013

Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. 2015.

Charting the Course to 2015 Galveston Bay Strategic Action Plan, 27p. GI-385 4/09
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Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services and Houston Department of Health and Human Services, *Houston / Harris County Community Transformation Initiative Health Equity Assessment*, 2012, here:

- http://www.houstontx.gov/health/communitytransformation/HE_Assessmentt_Final.pdf
- Houston-Galveston Region Clean Rivers Program, *How's the Water? A Basin Highlights Report 2014*, last visited November 6, 2014 here: <http://www.h-gac.com/community/water/publications/2014%20BHR%20Final.pdf>
- Houston Galveston Area Council, Houston Parks Board, CDS Market Research, MarshDarcy Partners, *Cypress Creek Greenway Case Study*, 2013, here: http://www.ourregion.org/documents/Cypress-Creek-Case-Study-Consolidated-Final-Report_Revised%20June-19-2013.pdf
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- Riley, Ann L., California Regional Water Quality Control Board, *Putting a Price on Riparian Corridors as Water Treatment Facilities*, last visited November 6, 2014 here: http://www.floods.org/ace-files/Monetary_value_of_streams.pdf
- Riparian Restoration on Farms and Ranches in Texas*, last visited November 13, 2014 here: <http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu/files/2012/07/Riparian-Restoration-on-Farms.pdf>
- Sweeney, Bernard W. et al., *Riparian deforestation, stream narrowing, and loss of stream ecosystem services*, PNAS, Vol. 101, no. 39 (Sept. 28, 2004).
- Sweeney, Bernard W. and Newbold, J. Denis, *Streamside Forest Buffer Width Needed to Protect Stream Water Quality, Habitat, and Organisms: A Literature Review*, Journal of the American Water Resources Association, June 2014.
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- White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity Report to the President, *Solving The Problem Of Childhood Obesity Within A Generation*, May 2010, here:

http://www.letsmove.gov/sites/letsmove.gov/files/TaskForce_on_Childhood_Obesity_May2010_FullReport.pdf

Science behind riparian buffers and water quality

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http://www.dfw.state.or.us/conservationstrategy/docs/document_pdf/b-habitat_10.pdf

http://ofmpub.epa.gov/waters10/attains_state.control?p_state=TX

(9) OTHER

- Letters of support.
 - Harris County Flood Control
 - City of Houston
 - Galveston Bay Council

RECEIVED

OCT 16 2014

October 14, 2014



9500 Northwest Freeway
Houston, Texas 77002
713-684-0000
www.hcfd.org

Ms. Roxsan Okan-Vick
Houston Parks Board
300 North Post Oak Lane
Houston, Texas 77024

Reference: Support for Acquisition of Lands Along the Riparian
Corridors of Major Bayous in Harris County

Dear Ms. Okan-Vick:

The Harris County Flood Control District (District) writes to support the Houston Parks Board's effort to acquire land along the riparian corridors of ten (10) of the major bayous in Harris County and to submit these land acquisition opportunities for RESTORE Act funding as appropriate.

As you know, the District is a key partner and supporter of the Bayou Greenways Initiative in our region, and in particular, we support the Houston Parks Board's project known as Bayou Greenways 2020. The Bayou Greenways 2020 project will acquire nearly 1,500 acres of land along the riparian corridor inside City of Houston limits and offers quantifiable water quality and flood mitigation benefits. By acquiring and preserving land along the bayous, the District's primary mission of flood mitigation and ensuring conveyance will benefit. In particular, Clear Creek and Lower Greens Bayou acquisitions are in line with our own plans, and thus, we support Houston Parks Board's efforts to leverage this land for the community.

The District values our work with the Houston Parks Board and we look forward to the completion of these exciting projects for our region. If you need any additional information, or have any questions regarding this, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael D. Talbott', followed by a large checkmark.

Michael D. Talbott, P.E.
Director

MDT:GWL:cg

HPB SUPPORT LETTER RESTORE.DOCX

A Division of Harris County Public Infrastructure Department



CITY OF HOUSTON

Parks and Recreation Department
A CAPRA Accredited Agency

Annise D. Parker

Mayor

Joe Turner
Director
Parks and Recreation Department
2999 S. Westside
Houston, TX 77023

T. 832.395.7003
F. 832.395.5452
www.houstonparks.org

November 7, 2014

Roksan Okan-Vick, FAIA
Executive Director
Houston Parks Board
300 North Post Oak Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77024

Dear Roksan,

The City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department is pleased to support the Houston Parks Board's initiative to acquire and along the riparian corridors of ten of the major bayous in Harris County and to submit these land acquisition opportunities for RESTORE Act funding.

The City of Houston is a key partner in the Houston Parks Board's Bayou Greenways 2020 (BG2020) initiative designed to create a 150-mile greenway system within City limits. The project is funded by a \$100 million public commitment of voter approved bond funds passed in 2012 with overwhelming support – a 68% voting margin. The public commitment will be matched by a \$105 million private commitment to acquire nearly 1,500 acres of land along the riparian corridors inside City limits. By acquiring and preserving land along the bayous, BG2020 gives the City multiple benefits including quantifiable water quality improvements and flood mitigation as it enhances Houston's quality of life with increased greenspace.

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department values its partnership with the Houston Parks Board. We look forward to the completion of these exciting projects for our region.

Sincerely,

Joe Turner
Director

JT/LC

cc: Mayor Annise Parker
James Koski
Kippy Caraway

Council Members: Brenda Stardig, Jerry Davis, Ellen R. Cohen, Dwight A. Boykins, Dave Martin, Fictard Nguyen, Oliver Pannington, Edward Gonzalez
Robert Gallegos, Mike Laster, Larry V. Green, Stephen C. Costello, David W. Robinson, Michael Kubacki, C. O. "Brax" Bradford, Jack Christis
Controller: Ronald C. Green

October 13, 2014

Roksan Okan-Vick
Houston Parks Board
300 North Post Oak Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77024

Dear Roksan,

The Galveston Bay Council writes to support the Houston Parks Board's effort to acquire land along the riparian corridors of ten of the major bayous in Harris County and to submit these land acquisition opportunities for RESTORE Act funding, as appropriate.

This project directly implements several of the highest priority actions in The Galveston Bay Plan, which is the state- and federally-approved Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Galveston Bay (Galveston Bay Estuary Program, 1995). The Galveston Bay Plan includes a Habitat Protection Plan, Non-Point Sources Action Plan, Water and Sediment Quality Action Plan, and a Public Participation and Education Action Plan. In addition, the project proposed by the Houston Parks Board supports the number one priority in the Charting the Course to 2015: Strategic Action Plan (Galveston Bay Estuary Program, 2009): protect existing coastal habitats in the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed.

Acquiring and preserving land along the bayous is a documented best management practice that improves water quality, flood mitigation and the health of our gulf ecosystems. The Galveston Bay Council supports Houston Parks Board's efforts to conserve this land for generations to come.

Strong partnerships such as these allow all organizations involved to leverage their funds and in-kind contributions to accomplish so much more.

Please feel free to contact me for more information about the Galveston Bay Council at (713) 692-7371.

Sincerely,

Ceil Price,
Chair, Galveston Bay Council

Cc: Nancy Parra, Vice-Chair, Galveston Bay Council;
Sarah Bernhardt, GBEP;
Kelly Holligan, TCEQ;
Douglas Johnston, EPA Region 6;
Jen Powis, Houston Parks Board



ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Bayou Greenways 2020 – Clear Creek Riparian Corridor Acquisition

PROPOSAL NUMBER

TX-3

LOCATION

Adjacent to the Coastal Zone Boundaries for Texas Coastal Management Program, within 25 miles of the coastal zone.

SPONSOR(S)

Texas

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

Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

Bethany Carl Kraft/ Ben Scaggs

DATE:

11-18-14

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

YES NO

Notes:

The proposal aims to acquire, preserve and restore nearly 4500 acres of riparian buffer corridors in Harris County and the City of Houston.

2. Is the proposal a project?

YES NO

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

YES NO

Notes:

3. Is the proposal a program?

YES NO

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

YES NO

Notes:

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

YES NO

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

YES NO

Notes:



Eligibility Determination

ELIGIBLE

Additional Information

Proposal Submission Requirements

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

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A. Summary sheet | <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

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

YES NO

Notes: