

US Department of the Interior

Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes

The Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes project will be a collaborative effort catalyzed by the Department of the Interior working through a voluntary, science and planning partnership. This work capitalizes on the capacity of the private, state, and federal Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) partnerships in the Gulf Coast Region (GCR), and will be coordinated through a Core Working Group comprised of representatives from Restore Council member organizations and the other partnerships in which they are involved. This approach will facilitate the synthesis of conservation planning in the GCR, providing a strong foundation for identifying conservation needs and priorities. Products from this work include a Conservation Prioritization Tool (CPT) in the first year to evaluate the benefits of individual land conservation projects, and in the second year an initial Gulf-wide Strategic Conservation Assessment (SCA) that will enable end-users to spatially prioritize the GCR to guide landscape-level conservation investments across the Gulf. Advanced analyses in Year 3 will be conducted using Marxan and/or Zonation software to optimize a portfolio of land conservation projects to meet shared priorities and objectives. Engagement with stakeholders from across the GCR will leverage existing efforts, avoid duplication, and ensure the values of local communities and residents are incorporated in all aspects of this project. Total funding for implementing the Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes is just under \$1.9 million over a 3-year period. Recognizing the vital connection between strategic planning and actual on-the-ground delivery, the work described herein is referenced by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) in a companion proposal that focuses on land conservation in practice (acquisitions and easements). Requested funding amount: \$1,879,378.19.