**Regional Conservation News Release Template - Economy and Tourism**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

[Month] [Date], [Year]

Contact:

**[NEWS RELEASE HEADLINE]**

*[News Release Sub-header]*

**[CITY, STATE]** – The Houston-Galveston region is home to diverse natural landscapes from forests and native prairies to more than 16,000 miles of bayous, rivers, and coastline. Conserving these natural areas is essential to protecting communities from flooding and other natural disasters and enhancing environmental quality. However, another often overlooked benefit of conserving natural areas is how it can enhance the local tourism economy.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation and supporting activities added $35.9 billion to Texas’ gross state product in 2019, almost 2% of the state economy. The extensive parks and other natural spaces in the Houston-Galveston region offer prime opportunities for eco-tourism, where residents and visitors can enjoy activities like bird watching, photography, star gazing, hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, and exploring. Eco-tourists spend money for food, lodging, souvenirs, and entry fees to some parks and attractions. They may visit local shops, attend local events, and dine in local restaurants, further contributing to the local economy.

*[Below is an example of a prominent natural area that contributes significantly to the community’s local economy. You can use this as an example to highlight the potential economic benefits of your own conservation project, or you may replace this paragraph with information about your own conservation project and use this paragraph as a guide in how to discuss it.]*

A great regional example of this is the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Chambers County. Located on the Central Texas Flyway and Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail, Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge annually draws hundreds of visitors from around the world to view diverse species of birds among its saltwater and freshwater marshes, native prairies, woodlots, and wetlands. Anglers also enjoy fishing for speckled trout, redfish, and southern flounder in fishing areas among the bays and bayous of the refuge, where multiple boat launches and wade fishing areas are available. Additionally, waterfowl hunting is permitted in designated areas of the refuge, and there are unparalleled opportunities to view and photograph wildlife, such as American Alligators, racoons, bobcats, nutria, and butterflies.

In 2021, the Houston-Galveston Area Council launched the Regional Conservation Initiative aimed at magnifying local conservation efforts and assisting local governments and nonprofits in securing the funding and resources needed to launch their own conservation projects. More information about the initiative, including a conservation funding guide and toolbox, model projects throughout the region, ecosystem service benefits, and mapping tools, is available at [www.h-gac.com/regional-conservation](http://www.h-gac.com/regional-conservation).