



Regional Conservation Framework

Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Monday, July 12, 2021

Regional Conservation Framework

March 16, 2021



About the Framework

- Ongoing partnership with Houston Endowment; 13 County-wide focus
- Broad definition of conservation: Preservation, restoration, enhancement
- Natural and built environments, local government focus, building capacity
- Basis for ongoing H-GAC conservation support efforts, NRAC involvement



Phase 1

- Engage local governments to identify shared priorities, shared challenges, partnership opportunities
- Developed
 - Vision and voluntary strategies;
 - Spatial tools; and
 - Funding and model resources
- Big takeaways: Interest, mixed capacity, services valuation is a selling point

Three Big Initiatives

Emphasis on projects that overlap with benefits to resilience, recreation, environmental quality, quality of life, regional character.

A Flourishing Treescape



Regional Greenway System



Signature Projects



Strategies & Actions - Snapshot

LEVERAGE

- Flood Mitigation
- Water Quality
- Transportation
- Economic Development

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SUPPORT

- Partnership Building
- Technical services
- Messaging

FUNDING

- Priority Project List
- Grant Matchmaking
- New Financing Tools



Cypress trees.



Prairie grasses.



Wildflowers.

Other Resources & Tools

- Conservation Toolbox
- Ecosystem Services Benefits
- Model Projects
- Conservation Mapping Tool

Conservation Funding Guide



Houston-Galveston Area Council

H-GAC Resources

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Winter Storm Recovery Resources

Conservation Funding Guide

Search Options

Program Name

Land Type(s)

- ☐ All
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Coastal
- ☐ Forest

- ☐ Rural
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Watershed
- ☐ Wetlands

Use(s)

- ☐ Conservation Easements
- ☐ Environmental Quality
- ☐ Flood Mitigation
- ☐ Green Infrastructure
- ☐ Habitat
- ☐ Land Acquisition

- ☐ Outreach and Education
- ☐ Recreation
- ☐ Resiliency
- ☐ Restoration
- ☐ Wildlife

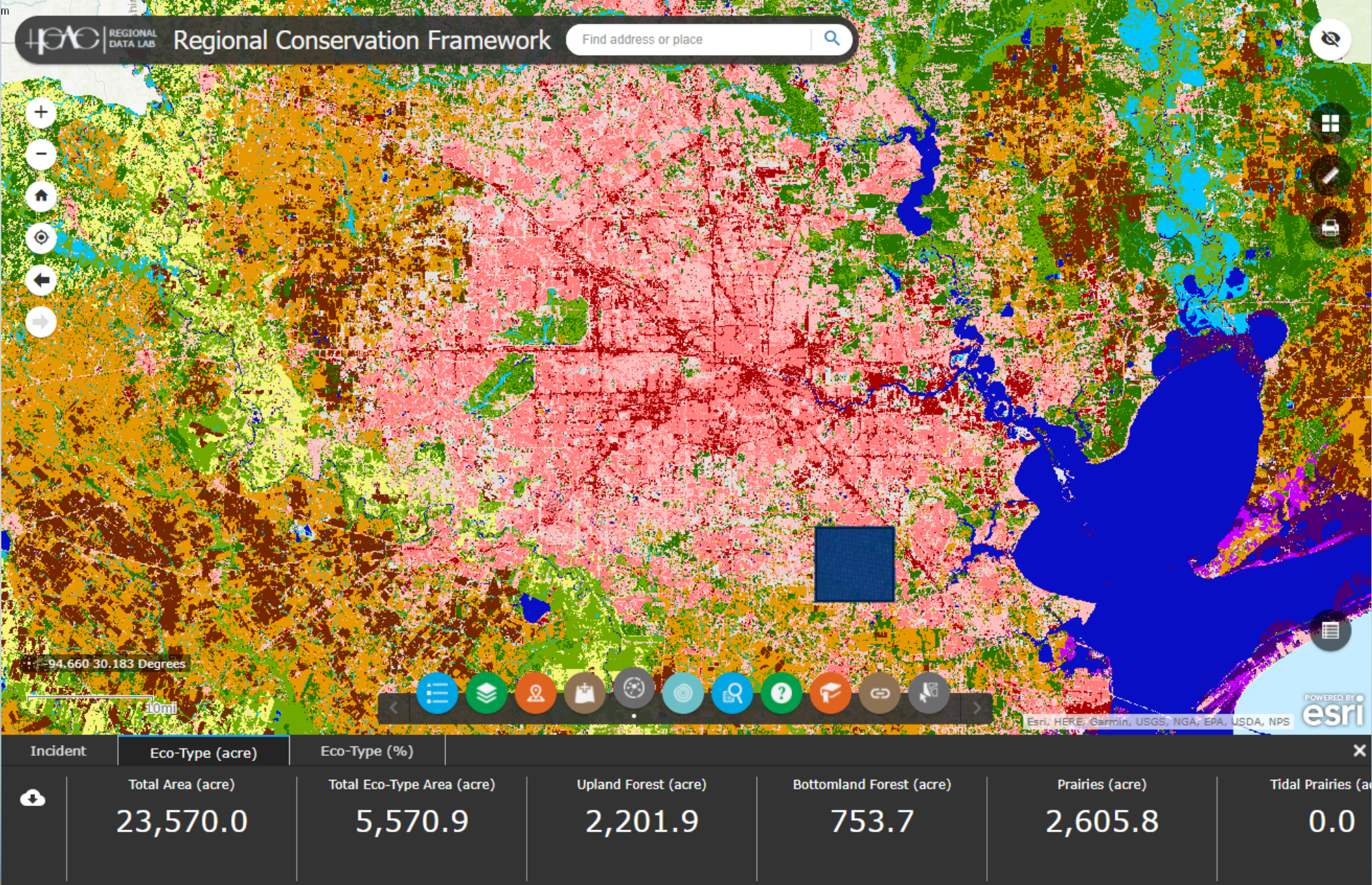
Source(s)

- ☐ Federal
- ☐ State
- ☐ Other

Reset

Search

Regional Conservation
Regional Conservation Framework
Conservation Toolbox
Ecosystem Service Benefits Matrices
Conservation Funding Guide
Conservation Model Projects
Conservation Mapping Tool



Available Online (<https://www.h-gac.com/regional-conservation>)

SECTION 5: APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The text below details the goal of and recommended actions for the three strategies detailed in the Regional Conservation Framework.

STRATEGY 1: LEVERAGE

GOAL: Use existing H-GAC programs, projects, and funding to integrate conservation more fully into planning and implementation activities.

ACTION 1: Working with community and economic development organizations to broaden access to natural areas and open space throughout the region and create opportunities for local businesses.

ACTION 2: Convening a Regional Forestry Work Group composed of local government stakeholders to coordinate with other organizations on large-scale initiatives to enhance the region's treescape.

ACTION 3: Expanding and updating H-GAC's online Forestry Tool,⁸ which enables users to take a detailed look at the tree canopy, down to the street tree level.

ACTION 4: Integrating conservation planning metrics into the following H-GAC-led planning initiatives:

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Regional Transportation Plan
- H-GAC-led Watershed Protection Plans
- H-GAC-led regional and watershed-level flood mitigation projects

ACTION 5: Working with local partners, including nurseries, to increase the supply of native tree species available for tree planting initiatives.

⁸<https://datalab.h-gac.com/urbanforestry>

STRATEGY 2: SUPPORT

GOAL: Support and expand existing efforts in the region through partnerships and communication, data access, and unified messaging.

ACTION 1: Compiling data on existing best practices and policy options, including relevant ordinances, and sharing with local governments.

ACTION 2: Developing and maintaining customizable public awareness materials for communities to use on social media and in press releases, posters, and flyers to build support for conservation initiatives.

ACTION 3: Engaging with decision-makers in the region to discuss the economic benefits of specific conservation strategies.

ACTION 4: Establishing and convening a conservation peer exchange forum, composed of local governments and professionals working on conservation issues across the region.

ACTION 5: Expanding and updating the economic valuation data presented in The Conservation Fund's Houston-Galveston Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services Assessment,⁹ exploring the benefit-relevant indicators for specific conservation practices and sharing those data with local governments and professionals.

ACTION 6: Working with local governments and private sector organizations to encourage conservation strategies – such as tree protection, low impact development, and connecting to existing greenways – being incorporated in community design early on.

ACTION 7: Providing support to local governments on data analysis and mapping, integrating factors such as existing land type and socio-economic data.

STRATEGY 3: FUND

GOAL: Aid local governments or regional partners in receiving new funding or finding projects to fit existing funding sources.

ACTION 1: Connecting local governments with nongovernmental organizations working toward similar goals or project outcomes.

ACTION 2: Developing funding partnerships that support land acquisition, development, management, and promotion.

ACTION 3: Establishing and maintaining a list of priority conservation projects for the region.

ACTION 4: Maintaining and expanding the online Conservation Funding Guide and promoting the tool with local governments.

ACTION 5: Providing support to requesting local governments in accessing grant funding to support conservation initiatives.

ACTION 6: Researching and distributing information on non-grant finance tools, such as bonds, donations from landowners, property tax dedications, and the establishment of a Regional Conservation District.

⁹https://www.conservationfund.org/images/projects/files/Houston_Galveston_Report.pdf



Phase 2

- Implementation/coordination focus
- 2 year effort
- Two major focus areas:
 - Developing/supporting local government capacity to enhance operations;
 - Supporting conservation partnership projects
- NRAC involvement in guiding project



How does this fit?

- Local government capacity, internal and external
- Support existing, spur new
- Coordination of local efforts; representation and coordination between conservation communities
- Long-term continuity

Any Questions?

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Learn more about this project at h-gac.com/regional-conservation

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