

H-GAC PRIORITY CONSERVATION PROJECTS LIST

Presented to the H-GAC Board of Directors on December 22, 2022

LEVEL 1: Projects that H-GAC will provide significant support and coordination for implementation. These projects align well with one or more of the major initiatives outlined in the Regional Conservation Framework, meet four or more level requirements, and are within H-GAC's service offerings (see Addendum 1). *(Maximum 150 hrs. / per project)*

1093 Rails to Trails – The 1093 Rails to Trails local government corporation includes the City of Wallis, the City of Eagle Lake, the City of Weston Lakes, the City of Fulshear, and Austin County. Through the corporation, these entities are working to build a shared-use trail along a rail corridor from Fulshear to Eagle Lake that can accommodate recreational cyclists, create a tourist destination, and generally improve connectivity and safety. H-GAC has been supporting as a regional coordinator and the group would like H-GAC to continue in that capacity and as a grant writer. *(City of Wallis, City of Eagle Lake, City of Weston Lakes, City of Fulshear, and Austin County)*

Katy Prairie Conservancy's Nine-Square-Mile Priority Area – The Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) is working to acquire or hold conservation easements on properties within a 9-square-mile area in Waller County. H-GAC can help connect the project with federal and state agencies for funding and help provide outreach to improve understanding of the value of nature-based mitigation solutions. *(Katy Prairie Conservancy, Waller County)*

Conservation and Natural Areas Plan (Parks Master Plan Update) – The City of Houston wants to update their Parks Master Plan to include management plans for habitat, invasive species, wildlife mitigation, and other conservation measures. This planning effort would be a major step forward in incorporating conservation into the City's parks policy. H-GAC would provide staff support for developing the plan and seeking additional funding to supplement the effort. *(City of Houston)*

Sargent Beach Nourishment – Judge McDonald in Matagorda County is working on a phased conservation project that began in 2008 to prevent subsidence at Sargent Beach. Hardened structures are planned and funded, but the County is seeking assistance in funding beach nourishment efforts for 1.5 to 2 miles of shoreline. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking to purchase, transport, and place the sand. *(Matagorda County)*

Acquisition of ExxonMobil Property – Harris County Precinct 2 wants to obtain and protect 1,200 acres currently owned by ExxonMobil directly adjacent to the Armand Bayou Nature Preserve. Precinct 2 staff has been working on this project with the Armand Bayou Nature Center and an appraisal of the property is underway by a third party (unaffiliated with ExxonMobil). H-GAC can help broker with ExxonMobil and can help with funding matchmaking. *(Harris County-Precinct 2, Armand Bayou Nature Center)*

Boardwalk, Trail System, and Nature Center – The City of Seabrook acquired land in 2008 abutting Galveston Bay. There has been significant public input on potential uses for the property; past studies and a recent 2021 report by a public task force suggest conceptual ideas for a boardwalk and trail system into a park and wetlands area. In addition, the City is looking into building a Nature Center on the property. A Community Garden Phase I was previously funded on the property; other proposed phases are not funded but ready to implement. The immediate

focus for funding is shoreline and prairie restoration, trail connections, and the nature center. H-GAC can help with funding matchmaking. *(City of Seabrook)*

Eagle Lake Municipal Park Nature and Birding Area – The City of Eagle Lake and Revitalize Eagle Lake (REL) have executed an interlocal agreement to manage the planning and development of the Eagle Lake Municipal Park. In 2016-2017, REL worked with the Lower Colorado River Authority to involve community stakeholders, the faith-based community, the educational community, and individuals in a planning process for the Eagle Lake Municipal Park. The project has been partially funded by individual and corporate donations and in-kind support. REL is working to fund the 55-acre Eagle Lake Nature and Birding Area, which will provide an educational opportunity for children; a mile-long exercise loop; and public access to fishing and birding. H-GAC can assist with research and funding matchmaking. *(Revitalize Eagle Lake, City of Eagle Lake)*

Dick Benoit Prairie Preserve – The City of League City owns approximately 44 acres located off State Highway 96 next to the Marbella subdivision. The site contains significant coastal prairie and lowland areas. The existing natural character provides opportunities for passive use and educational activities. The City is seeking to develop trails, a pier platform, nature observation areas and interpretive signage. Other uses may include playground areas, restrooms and parking. H-GAC can help funding matchmaking, peer review of grant applications, data support and additional partnerships. *(City of League City)*

LEVEL 2: Projects that H-GAC endorses and will provide limited support and coordination for implementation. These projects align well with one or more of the major initiatives outlined in the Regional Conservation Framework, meet two or more level requirements, and are within H-GAC's service offerings. *(Maximum 70 hrs. / per project)*

City of Houston's Riparian Restoration Initiative – This large-scale project by the City of Houston will target riparian restoration for 70 parks by removing invasive species and replanting with native plants. This project will provide multiple benefits, including flood mitigation, water quality, and wildlife habitat. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. *(City of Houston)*

Preston-Crenshaw Park - City of Pasadena is in the early stages of creating a new park on city-owned land, with a walking trail around a pond, wetland plantings, and, potentially, boardwalks and kayak launches. Phase 1 of this project is funded by the recent sale of adjacent land to Petroleum Service Corporation (PSC) for a new office. PSC has also offered \$100,000 in-kind donation to the park. H-GAC can provide outreach to increase public awareness of multiple benefits of the project (flood control, habitat, recreation) and help with funding matchmaking. *(City of Pasadena, Petroleum Service Corporation)*

Vince Bayou Greenway - The Vince Bayou Greenway trail in Pasadena is identified in multiple plans and studies, including the recently completed Pasadena Healthy Parks Plan and the Pasadena Livable Centers Study. This project would include an approximately 3-mile-long trail connecting with existing trails. The Pasadena Economic Development Corporation is working to provide funding for initial design and acquisition of land/easements. They hope to apply for other funding to implement within 3 to 4 years. H-GAC serves on the steering committee and can help facilitate relationships with industry partners *(City of Pasadena, Pasadena Economic Development Corporation)*

Brazos River Corridor Trailheads and Land Acquisition – The City of Sugar Land plans to add trailheads on 9-mile corridor along the Brazos River to improve access to existing recreational amenities. The City needs help with wetlands delineations, archeological services, other permitting and is also identifying floodway property along the Brazos River that they could acquire to complete the master plan. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking for land acquisition and costs surrounding trailheads. *(City of Sugar Land)*

Cypress Creek Greenway – The project goal is to further connect the trails and greenspaces that comprise the Cypress Creek Greenway. Harris County Precinct 4’s Parks Department is seeking to install 4,600 feet of walking trails, including a crossing under a rail bridge north of Cypresswood Drive near Champion Forest Park. This project serves three primary functions: (1) To increase and connect recreational opportunities for the residents of Precinct 4; (2) To create "elbow room" for flooding, to include resilient structures and accommodate flood waters; and (3) To provide corridors for area wildlife. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. *(Harris County, Precinct 4)*

Houston Audubon RESTORE Act Effort - This project is a broad RESTORE Act effort enhancing Houston Audubon Society's acquisitions and existing properties on Bolivar Peninsula, including the High Island and Bolivar refuges and other areas. The project includes facility and trail enhancements as well as public outreach elements. Additional funding is needed for various project elements, including parking lots. H-GAC can help address funding gaps and conduct outreach. *(Houston Audubon Society)*

Coastal Prairie Initiative – Using a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) set up a large-scale conservation project to acquire, restore, protect, and provide technical services for coastal prairies. Led by KPC, the project involves a large coalition of non-governmental organizations and local governments. H-GAC is a stakeholder in this project and has an interest in continued support, including helping provide outreach to improve understanding of the value of the project. *(Katy Prairie Conservancy)*

January Planting (Texas A&M Forest Service Reforestation in Riparian Areas) - This planting is part of an ongoing program of Texas A&M Forest Service. The program uses corporate donations to do targeted tree plantings with public participation in priority water quality, flood mitigation watersheds. The corporate partners get modeled results of the impact of each planting. H-GAC serves on the steering committee and can help facilitate relationships with industry partners. *(Texas A&M Forest Service)*

Mobile ArcGIS Tools to Monitor Restoration Projects – As a small component effort of their Buffalo Bayou East program, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP) purchased the ArcGIS Online Creator license from ESRI in September 2021 for use in an ongoing monitoring and adaptive management project to support conservation activities at Buffalo Bayou Park. BBP works through partnership with the City of Houston and their Board includes representation from the City, County, Port, and Precincts, among others. BBP aims to work with others to expand the use of these field monitoring tools. H-GAC can provide training and data support for the project. *(Buffalo Bayou Partnership)*

Lake Houston Watershed Conservation Easements – As part of a long-term conservation effort guided by a strategic plan renewed in 2019, the Bayou Land Conservancy (BLC) is working to obtain conservation easements or other protections on several priority properties in the Lake Houston watershed. BLC will work with the Harris County Flood Control District, other

local government partners, and local stakeholders. Some funding is available, and additional funding is needed. H-GAC can help with funding matchmaking and data support. (*Bayou Land Conservancy*)

East End Lagoon Nature Park and Preserve – The 684-acre East End Lagoon Nature Preserve is one of the few remaining sizable tracts of undeveloped coastal prairie and salt marsh on Galveston Island. Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council (GINTC) has been actively involved with the project since the first conceptual master plan in 2010, and the Park Board of Trustees currently provides funding for programming and assistance with the development of the Master Plan and RESTORE contract. The committee has made great strides, and work is currently underway to extend trails and add a pavilion. Additional funding is needed to execute the draft work plan and design. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking to fill funding gaps. (*Park Board of Trustees, City of Galveston, and Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council*)

57-Acre Park – The 57-acre Park site near State Highway 146 in Kemah, south of Kemah Oaks sub-division, is largely undeveloped with a hike-bike trail on the perimeter. The land belongs to Galveston County, and the City of Kemah maintains it with the restriction that it must be used as park space. Kemah Community Development Corporation (KCDC) will oversee the project to develop the site into a nature park with trails, wet weather ponds, pavilions, an outdoor learning center, birding towers, and bathrooms, but no sports fields or swimming pools. KCDC, the city's Type B economic development corporation, will provide funding for development of the park with this year's budget at \$500,000 of a total project approval amount of \$1.5 million. This project aligns with the goals and strategies in Kemah's Parks Master Plan (2009) and has a local champion-City Councilman and KCDC Board President Isaac Saldaña. While the project is budgeted, additional grant funding would expedite the project and allow the inclusion of more features. The project could also benefit from finding synergies with other communities and projects underway in the same area. H-GAC can help with funding matchmaking and partnership building. (*Kemah Community Development Corporation, City of Kemah*)

LEVEL 3: Projects that H-GAC will track and support on a limited basis to determine future action (including moving the project to Level 1 or Level 2 status). These projects may align with one or more of the major initiatives outlined in the Regional Conservation Framework, meet one or more level requirements, and are within H-GAC's service offerings. (*Maximum 45 hrs. / per project*)

Developing Policy for City of Houston's Legacy Tree Program – The City of Houston seeks to identify good examples of legacy native trees in Houston's natural areas and propagate stock from their seeds. H-GAC can help identify funding sources. (*City of Houston*)

Clear Creek Riparian Reforestation – This City of Pearland project is for riparian reforestation along a natural area along Clear Creek. The project will involve invasive species removal, site preparation, 1,740 five-gallon native trees planted at 10-foot spacing by volunteers/staff, and ongoing watering. Assistance is needed with funding for maintenance costs. This signature project for Pearland will also benefit adjacent Shadow Creek Ranch. H-GAC can support the project by funding matchmaking. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. (*City of Pearland*)

Gannoway Lake Park – The City of Sugar Land owns 51 acres at Gannoway Lake Park, and a developer will soon deed 70 to 100 acres, mostly wetlands, to the City. This property is along Oyster Creek. The Parks Department wants to build some boardwalk trails to provide public

access but keep the area natural. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. (*City of Sugar Land*)

Cullinan Park Improvements – The City of Sugar Land needs more infrastructure (specifically, parking) at Cullinan Park, maintenance funding for invasive species control and lake management, and funding for additional trail development (including wayfinding for trails in the park). The City is focusing on this park as birding destination with walking trails. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking (*City of Sugar Land*)

Fort Bend County Hike and Bike Master Trail Plan - Fort Bend Green plans to use existing data to work with Fort Bend County to establish a master trail plan to link existing greenspace with a greenway/trail system. The data project is underway; planning/trail implementation is not funded. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. (*Fort Bend Green, Fort Bend County*)

Tree Strategy Implementation Group - Facilitated by Houston Wilderness, in partnership with the City of Houston and other local partners, this conservation coordination effort seeks to coordinate tree planting efforts to reach the City of Houston's *Resilient Houston* goal of adding 4.6 million trees. This project is an umbrella effort that includes various local projects. H-GAC can provide information-sharing and coordination. (*City of Houston, Houston Wilderness*)

Hawkins Ranch in Matagorda County - Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) is working on a conservation easement for the entire 30,000-acre ranch that would be purchased from multiple landowners. KPC has applied to Natural Resources Conservation Service programs and RESTORE, and some philanthropic sources are interested. H-GAC can help to build relationships with local officials and provide letters of support. (*Katy Prairie Conservancy*)

Schlipf Road Transfer to Waller County - Katy Prairie Conservancy owns a 152-acre mitigation site and wants to turn the land over to Waller County for a nature preserve. H-GAC can support this project through research and by bringing partners to the table. (*Katy Prairie Conservancy, Waller County*)

Headwaters to Baywaters - Katy Prairie Conservancy, along with other non-governmental partners, wants to better involve municipalities and counties that are working on riparian corridor protection from Cypress Creek down to Galveston Bay. H-GAC can help to build relationships with involved municipalities and counties. (*Katy Prairie Conservancy, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Galveston Bay Foundation, Houston Audubon, Bayou Land Conservancy*)

Trees for Houston: Education Center - Trees for Houston is developing a center for education to support their tree planting goals. A Taking Root Capital Campaign to build a center and native plant nursery to supply tree planting efforts is underway. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. (*Trees for Houston*)

Dr. Ned and Fay Dudney Clear Creek Nature Center Improvements – The City of League City is seeking funds to further improve the nature center. The improvements include a trail extension, an elevated viewing stand, existing bird blind improvements to deal with aging features and to add shade and more seclusion from birds, nature interpretive signage both for the recently restored coastal prairie acreage and the living shoreline within the nature center. (*City of League City*)

Legends Bay Walking Trail – Chambers County is seeking funds to construct nature-based walking-biking trail in a highly developed residential area to connect residential neighborhood. The project aims to increase the connectivity and inject natural spaces where they have diminished. Chambers County has begun discussions with the Legends Bay Homeowners Association. (Chambers County)

The McNair Park Green Infrastructure Project – The City of El Lago will add rain garden/green infrastructure/natural components to McNair Park as part of drainage improvements. This project would be completed within one year of funding/initiation. H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. (*City of El Lago*)

Summary of Projects by Level and Recommended H-GAC Action(s)

| Level 1 | Local Government Partner(s) | Recommended Action(s) |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1093 Rails to Trails | 1093 RTT Local Government Corporation | H-GAC has been supporting as a regional coordinator and the group would like H-GAC to continue in that capacity and as a grant writer. |
| Katy Prairie Conservancy's Nine-Square-Mile Priority Area | Not Applicable | H-GAC can help connect the project with federal and state agencies for funding and help provide outreach to improve understanding of the value of nature-based mitigation solutions. |
| Conservation and Natural Areas Plan (Parks Master Plan Update) | City of Houston | H-GAC would prepare the conservation plan, which could feed into parks master plan. Create guide/model for others. |
| Sargent Beach Nourishment | Matagorda County | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. |
| Acquisition of Exxon Mobile property | Harris County – Precinct 2 | H-GAC can help broker with ExxonMobil and help with funding matchmaking. |
| Boardwalk, Trail System, and Nature Center | City of Seabrook | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. |
| Eagle Lake Municipal Park Nature and Birding Area | City of Eagle Lake | H-GAC can assist with research and funding matchmaking. |
| Dick Benoit Prairie Preserve | City of League City | H-GAC can provide support by funding matchmaking, peer review of grant applications, data support and additional partnerships. |

| Level 2 | Local Government Partner(s) | Recommended Action(s) |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| City of Houston's Riparian Restoration Initiative | City of Houston | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. |
| Preston-Crenshaw Park | City of Pasadena | H-GAC can provide outreach to increase public awareness of multiple benefits of the project and help with funding matchmaking. |

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| Vince Bayou Greenway | City of Pasadena | H-GAC serves on the steering committee and can help facilitate relationships with industry partners. |
| Brazos River Corridor Trailheads and Land Acquisition | City of Sugar Land | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking for land acquisition and costs surrounding trailheads. |
| Cypress Creek Greenway | Harris County, Precinct 4 | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking |
| Houston Audubon RESTORE Act Effort | Not Applicable | H-GAC can help address funding gaps and conduct outreach. |
| Coastal Prairie Initiative | Not Applicable | H-GAC is a stakeholder in this project and has an interest in continued support, including helping provide outreach to improve understanding of the value of the project. |
| January Planting (Texas A&M Forest Service Reforestation in Riparian Areas) | Not Applicable | H-GAC serves on the steering committee and can help facilitate relationships with industry partners. |
| Mobile ArcGIS Tools to Monitor Restoration Projects | Not Applicable | H-GAC can provide training and data support for the project. |
| Lake Houston Watershed Conservation Easements | Not Applicable | H-GAC can provide data support and help with funding matchmaking. |
| East End Lagoon Nature Park and Preserve | City of Galveston | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking to fill funding gaps. |
| 57-Acre Park | Kemah Community Development Corporation | H-GAC can provide support by funding matchmaking. |

| Level 3 | Local Government Partner(s) | Recommended Action(s) |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Developing Policy for City of Houston's Legacy Tree Program | City of Houston | H-GAC can help identify funding sources. |
| Clear Creek Riparian Reforestation | City of Pearland | H-GAC can support the project by funding matchmaking. |
| Gannoway Lake Park | City of Sugar Land | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. |

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| Cullinan Park Improvements | City of Sugar Land | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking |
| Fort Bend County Hike and Bike Master Trail Plan | Fort Bend Green | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. |
| Tree Strategy Implementation Group | City of Houston | H-GAC can provide information-sharing and coordination. |
| Hawkins Ranch in Matagorda County | Not Applicable | H-GAC can help to build relationships with local officials and provide letters of support. |
| Schlipf Road Transfer to Waller County | Not Applicable | H-GAC can support this project through research and by bringing partners to the table. |
| Headwaters to Baywaters | Not Applicable | H-GAC can help to build relationships with involved municipalities and counties. |
| Trees for Houston - Education | Not Applicable | H-GAC can support this project by funding matchmaking. |
| Dr. Ned and Fay Dudney Clear Creek Nature Center Improvements | City of League City | H-GAC can provide support by funding matchmaking and peer review of grant applications. |
| Legends Bay Walking Trail | Chambers County | H-GAC can provide support by funding matchmaking and peer review of grant applications. |

| Non-Leveled / Tracking* | Local Government Partner(s) | Recommended Action(s) |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| City of Houston - Historic Prairie Restoration | City of Houston | No active projects, tracking for future support. |
| Linear Forest Program | City of Houston | No active projects, tracking for future support. |
| City of Houston Policies and Ordinances | City of Houston | No active projects, tracking for future support. |
| Trees for Houston - Native Trees | Not Applicable | No active projects, tracking for future support. |
| Piney Point Village Trail Network | Piney Point Village | Tracking this effort. H-GAC can potentially support by matchmaking with cities who have done this before, researching best practices. |

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| City of Houston Green Stormwater Infrastructure | City of Houston | Tracking this effort. H-GAC can support in the future with funding matchmaking. |
| Lake Creek Greenway | Not Applicable | Tracking this effort. |
| Katy Prairie Bike Route | Not Applicable | Tracking this effort. |
| Harris County - Precinct 2 Project #2 | Harris County - Precinct 2 | Tracking this effort. |
| Prana: Essence of Life Riparian Restoration | Not Applicable | Tracking this effort. |
| Kilgore/Davis Tract Parkland | Chambers County | Tracking this effort. |

* Submitted projects that don't meet criteria and / or don't have a current role for H-GAC are being tracked separately from the levels.

ADDENDUM 1 – PROJECT SCORING CRITERIA

Projects were scored and assigned a level using the criteria detailed below.

Alignment with major initiatives of the [Regional Conservation Framework](#) (one or more must be selected):

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A Flourishing Treescape |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Regional Greenway System |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Signature Projects |

Other key features of the project (requirements differ by level):

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Project has a well-defined scope. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Land acquisition is complete or in-progress. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Project is partially funded or has been funded previously. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a history of direct involvement by H-GAC staff on this effort. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a history of successful partnership between H-GAC and the project lead. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Project lead has coordinated with local partners and communities that may be involved or affected. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Project lead has considered equity of access. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Project lead has a history of successfully implementing conservation projects. |

H-GAC Service Offerings Requested (select all that apply)

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| | Grant writing |
| | Funding matchmaking |
| | Meeting coordination |
| | Public awareness |
| | Data support |
| | Other |