



## **HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL**

3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120  
Houston, TX 77027  
h-gac.com | @HouGalvAreaCog

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Kristina Michel / 713.933.4559 / [kristina.michel@h-gac.com](mailto:kristina.michel@h-gac.com)

### **H-GAC'S REGIONAL CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK RECOGNIZED BY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND REGIONAL COOPERATION**

*Framework Offers a Blueprint for Supporting Efforts to Preserve and Enhance the Region's Unique and Diverse Natural Ecosystem*

**HOUSTON, TX** – The Houston-Galveston Area Council's (H-GAC) Regional Conservation Framework has been honored with a General Achievement and Leadership Award by the National Association of Regional Councils. The award was presented to H-GAC on June 16 at a virtual ceremony held at the association's annual conference and exhibition.

The Regional Conservation Framework has been hailed as a milestone toward a coordinated, comprehensive approach in protecting and preserving the Houston-Galveston region's unique ecological landscape. It outlines three key strategies – leverage, support, and fund – to strengthen conservation efforts by local governments, community partners, and stakeholders. A resolution of support for the framework was unanimously adopted by the H-GAC Board of Directors in March 2021.

“The Houston-Galveston region is situated at a unique ecological crossroads of coastal prairies, forests, and a dense network of bayous and other waterways, all of which teem with diverse wildlife. These natural systems provide a wealth of benefits, including reducing pollution, absorbing floodwaters, and providing recreation for our growing communities,” said Jeff Taebel, director of community and environmental planning at H-GAC. “A comprehensive approach to conservation of our natural areas is necessary to accommodate the burgeoning development we're experiencing and mitigate the environmental impacts.”

Thanks to the initial grant from the Houston Endowment, H-GAC created the framework in collaboration with local elected officials, staff from local, state, and federal agencies, and nonprofit conservation organizations. In addition to outlining key strategies and action items for launching and funding conservation projects, the framework highlights past successes in the region that can be used as models to emulate, such as the Palacios Prairie Wetlands, Turtle Bayou Nature Preserve in Chambers County, Baytown Nature Center, Spring Creek Greenway,

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H-GAC is a voluntary association of local governments and local elected officials from the 13-county Gulf Coast planning region, which includes an area of 12,500 square miles and more than 7 million people. H-GAC works to promote efficient and accountable use of local, state, and federal tax dollars; serves as a problem-solving and information forum for local governments; and helps analyze trends and conditions affecting the region. For more information, visit [h-gac.com](http://h-gac.com).



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and Exploration Green in Harris County.

Houston Endowment has given H-GAC another grant to work to implement the Regional Conservation Framework and incorporate it in its long-term planning processes. H-GAC will focus on identifying priority projects across the region, aiding local governments and partners in securing grant funding for their projects, enhancing data and resources available to local governments, and raising public awareness to support conservation initiatives.

“The Regional Conservation Framework expands on the work of other Houston-area conservation efforts by focusing on building local government capacity and fostering multijurisdictional partnerships on a regional level, said Taebel. “In addition to traditional efforts to protect existing natural areas, the framework seeks to promote restoration of degraded areas and add natural function in our built environment.”

Additionally, H-GAC has created a full suite of free online toolkits, resources, and funding guides local governments can use to bolster their conservation efforts. To view these tools and to read the Regional Conservation Framework in its entirety, visit [h-gac.com/regional-conservation](http://h-gac.com/regional-conservation).

For more information about other community and environmental programs at H-GAC, visit [h-gac.com](http://h-gac.com).

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