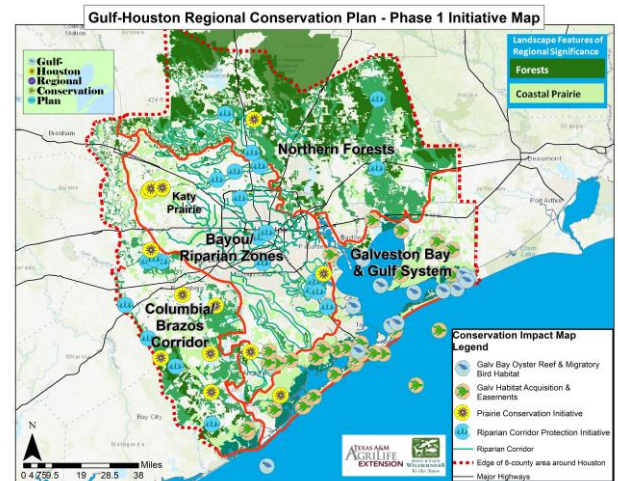


Gulf-Houston Region Targets 24% in Nature-based Infrastructure by 2040

Houston, TX: The 8-county *Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan* (Gulf-Houston RCP) comprised of over 100 governmental, environmental, academic and business groups with a diverse steering committee announce the public launch of the Gulf-Houston RCP's **24% by 2040 Nature-Based Infrastructure Strategy** – a collaboration to improve the quality of life in our 8-county region through increases in protected/preserved land-use in Harris, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery & Waller counties.

How much preserved/protected Nature-Based Infrastructure (NBI) does the 8-county region have now?

A mere 9.2 percent of the 4.8 million acres of land that make up the Gulf-Houston region are protected areas that have been set aside to detain floodwater, provide recreation for people and habitat for wildlife, maintain native vegetation for erosion control and preserve flood-mitigating natural waterways. Meanwhile, over 26% of the 4.8 million acres is currently developed in some capacity – residential, commercial or gray-based infrastructure. That leaves roughly 65% of our 8-county region for necessary increased combinations of nature-based infrastructure and population growth and economic development. If existing NBI plans and projects receive needed funding in our region, before and after Hurricane Harvey, the 8-county region could achieve 24% in nature-based infrastructure by 2040, when regional populations are projected to reach over 9 million.



How do we achieve 24% in preserved/protected NBI by 2040? Over the last four years, the Gulf-Houston region has accelerated and expanded large-scale plans and market-based projects for community resilience. Most of these projects fall into four key areas– riparian corridors, prairies and forests, coastal bays & estuaries or oyster reefs & islands. If these targeted projects, and more recent storm-resilience projects are funded, 24% of preserved/protected land could be achieved allowing for larger tracts of riparian corridors protected, additional prairie and forest lands acquired and preserved, and wetlands restored and enhanced for coastal protection. *“Whether it’s to aid in flood prevention, coastal erosion & sea level rise in Galveston Bay, enhancement of prairie preserves or recreational use, all regional nature-based infrastructure requires both long-term maintenance and a sufficient amount of preserved land to allow for adequate regional protection and resilience,”* explained Dr. Loren Raun, Rice University Faculty.

Over the last four years, over \$180 million in land acquisition and other NBI projects around the 8-counties have been funded, and Harvey-based funds will add significantly to NBI increases. Deborah January-Bevers, President of Houston Wilderness noted that *“local cost-share funding coupled with state and federal funds will allow our region to reach 24% in Nature-Based Infrastructure by 2040 or earlier.”* The remaining 14.8% needed to reach 24% can be achieved in 3 targeted project areas: (1) 6% from the “shovel-ready” NBI projects shown in the Gulf-Houston RCP’s Working-List of Projects (see interactive project map at www.gulfhoustonrcp.org); (2) 6% from public and private NBI projects outlined in various county, city, regional plans, and (3) 2.8% from wetland mitigation projects and future planned communities.

“Hurricane Harvey brought home the need to do things differently in our region,” remarked Jill Boullion, Executive Director, Bayou Land Conservancy. *“This achievable goal of 24% in nature-based land use, including protection of sensitive flood plains, will allow us to grow our economy and provide a high quality-of-life for the millions more that will make the Houston region home over the next 20+ years.”*

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Participating Members of the Gulf-Houston RCP Steering Committee include:

Business	Government	Nonprofit	Academic
Arcadis	City of Houston – Houston Health Department	Armand Bayou Nature Center	Rice University
Asakura Robinson	Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council	Bayou Land Conservancy	Texas A&M
Bank of Texas	Galveston Park Board	Bayou Preservation Association	Texas A&M Galveston
BBVA Compass	Harris County Flood Control District	Buffalo Bayou Partnership	Texas A&M Sea Grant
CBRE	Houston Parks and Recreation Department	Building Conservation Trust (CCA)	Texas A&M Agri-Life
Clark Condon	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition/Cypress Creek Greenway	Texas State University (Meadows Center for Water & Environment)
Conoco Phillips	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	Ducks Unlimited	University of Houston – Honors College
CVS Health	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Coastal	Galveston Bay Foundation	
Empresa Energy	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Community Partnerships	Greens Bayou Coalition	
Frost Bank		Hermann Park	
John Daugherty Realtors		Houston Advanced Research Center	
JPMorgan Chase		Houston Arboretum	
Kirksey Architecture		Houston Audubon	
KPRC		Houston-Galveston Area Council	
NRG		Houston Parks Board	
Port of Houston Authority		Houston Wilderness	
RES (Restoration Environmental Services)		Katy Prairie Conservancy	
Shell		Kinder Institute for Urban Research	
Talley Landscape Architects		Lake Creek Greenway Partnership	
The Howard Hughes Corporation		Lake Houston Greenway	
		Memorial Park Conservancy	
		Student Conservation Association	
		Texas Native Prairie Association	
		Trees for Houston	
		The Conservation Fund	
		The Nature Conservancy	
		Trust for Public Land	
		Turtle Island Restoration Network	