

Green Sector Initiative for Sustainable Development

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Houston native, 44 years old, two sons.

Current : HCFCO Environmental Services Manager -1992-present
Senior Environmental Specialist

Professional: Board Certified Professional Wetland Scientist # 995

Professional History: Executive Director of Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens 14.5 years 1976-1991.
Executive Director of Parks Planning, Harris County Precinct Four 1991-1992

Education: University of Texas 1972-1973 - Chemical Engineering
University of Texas A & M 1973-1976 - Wildlife Ecology

Affiliations: Society of Wetland Scientists
Association of State Wetland Managers
Native Plant Society of Texas
Society for Ecological Restoration
American Orchid Society

Summary: John Koros is a Houston native with a commitment for conserving, preserving and restoring the Houston Environment. A specialist in native plants, he has been active in many facets of ecological analysis, education, restoration, etc. Throughout his professional career, he has been recognized for contributions to Houston's environmental quality of life through numerous environmental awards. He is a published writer and photographer on various aspects of the natural environment and has lectured internationally. His current area of interest is on ecological restoration with a strong focus on wetlands.

Personally, he is a passionate horticulturist who enjoys **all** plants and the challenge of unlocking their cultural secrets and ecological dynamics.

GREEN SECTOR INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

John Koros, PWS
Harris County Flood Control District,
a Division of
Harris County Public Infrastructure Department

THE BACKGROUND

- Many people in Harris County have been adamantly opposed to land use planning, zoning, or any initiative, good or bad, that forces the land owner in a direction through regulation. Even if for a good purpose, most Harris County stakeholders (and Texans in general) do not want regulatory mandates dictating how they use their land. Even so, as flooding issues hit home, as our wild lands disappear, and as the regulatory matrix tightens, it is to everyone's advantage to voluntarily embrace a program that solves problems on both sides of the issue.

CONCEPT

- Create a regulatory vehicle that enables sustainable development and preserves the best of Harris County's wild lands.

SITUATION

- 1700 square miles of flat coastal topography
- Tremendous developmental pressure resulting in greater infrastructure needs
- Cumbersome & duplicative regulatory matrix frustrating everyone
- Organized environmental opposition
- National trend against development in the flood plain

RESULT

- Reactive not proactive response to regulations...revisits the pain of permitting over and over while not solving anything
- Fragmented natural landscape *and* development
- Increased cost to public and private for regulatory compliance
- Lack of predictability in permit processing times interferes with project critical paths

HCFCD MISSION STATEMENT

- We strive to build urban flood control projects *that work*- with appropriate regard for human and natural values.

REGULATORY MISSION

- Implement efficient regulatory programs *that work* -to protect vital natural resources with appropriate regard for economic and political reality

GOALS

- Create a comprehensive programmatic general permit that enables *sustainable* development and discourages flood plain development while preserving the best of Harris County's wild lands for posterity.

- Coordinate current initiatives for interagency MOAs and programmatic permits to be consistent with this initiative.

Senator / County Judge Jon Lindsay

- Cypress Creek Parkway
- Clear Creek Parkway

OBJECTIVES

- Build consensus of divergent interests to back the plan by showing the **win/win**
- Create funding mechanisms that fund the implementation of the plan
- Legislatively enable the plan
- Incentives - regulatory streamlining
- Impact fee mechanism
- Funding referenda

TIMING

- Frustration high on all sides of the issues
- New thinking nationally about sustainability of development in floodplains
- State and Fed seeking efficient but effective regulation of valuable natural resources.....TNRCC/USACE MOA
- TxGLO / USACE programmatic permit
- TNRCC/TP&W/TxGLO MOA

THE PLAN

- Create a tiered regulatory program that encourages development in logical places through expedited permits and discourages development in encumbered locations not in the public interest
- Delineation of county into categories according to developability, recognizing encumbrances of flood plains, environmental, archeological, while recognizing demographic trends & political realities

THE PLEDGE

- I PLEDGE TO NOT TAKE THE LOCATIONS DEPICTED LITERALLY AND TO REALIZE THE PURPOSE OF THE NEXT MAP IS TO CONVEY THE CONCEPT ONLY!

BENEFITS

- Predictability in permitting with great ease in the GREEN SECTOR
- New market for heavily encumbered lands in the RED SECTOR
- Public infrastructure freed from bad projects to bail out bad development... passive flood control
- Reduced opposition from detractors...we all become good guys

BENEFITS

- Developers are willing to pay the cost of mitigation if predictable
- Multiple funding sources exist/NRCS,FEMA
- Coordinates many facets of regulation into one stop shopping
- Stakeholders can be involved in designation of sectors
- Urban counties preserve the best of their natural lands, increasing land values

CONSTRAINTS

- FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN or anything that sounds like zoning
- Complex matrix of State and Federal regulations
- POLITICAL WILL

STRATEGY

- Formulate a marketing plan that identifies target audiences/ supporters and opposition
- Timing couldn't be better; frustration is why we are here
- Lobbying of target audiences
- Solicitation of support letters from regulatory agencies
- Legislative...incentive for both sides to get it done

CONCLUSION

- Reduces regulatory burden & expense for responsible development...public & private
- Provides incentive for better land planning in Harris County without the *Z word*
- Provides strong incentive for not developing in flood plains
- Preserves the best of our County for posterity
- We all become heroes