

Bayou Land Conservancy

Lake Houston Watershed – Western Watershed Protection Project

Project Description

Bayou Land Conservancy (“BLC”) has identified approximately 600 acres along the West Fork of the San Jacinto River, Spring Creek, Cypress Creek, and Lake Creek for acquisition of perpetual conservation easements in accordance with Subchapter A, Chapter 183, Texas Natural Resources Code. The goal of this Project is to protect the floodplain within the western tributaries of the Lake Houston Watershed. BLC shall use SEP Funds to conduct certain due diligence activities and to purchase conservation easements from private and public landowners. BLC shall also conduct restoration work as necessary on properties that were previously degraded before being placed under a conservation easement. Targeted properties are owned by Harris County, Montgomery County, and private landowners.

After a property has been identified for conservation easement acquisition, BLC shall submit a proposal to TCEQ that includes property owner information, approximate boundaries and aerial maps, preliminary flora/fauna lists and environmental details of stream frontage, wetland acreage, habitat type, and any other information that may be requested by TCEQ. Upon written approval by TCEQ, BLC may use SEP Funds for approved due diligence activities and purchase of the conservation easement.

After TCEQ approval, BLC shall prepare a baseline inventory and mapping of the property. The baseline inventory will assess the ecological health of the tract, including onsite biological inventories of all flora and fauna species. Mapping will be completed by collecting data to prepare flood, topographic, wetland, soil, and aerial field maps. This information will determine whether restoration activities will be necessary and will also ensure that BLC can preserve the ecological health of the property in the future.

BLC shall address and remedy all encumbrances to the property title, including mortgages and other liens, prior to closing on the conservation easement purchase. BLC shall not sell conservation easements or any other land interests acquired with SEP Funds. BLC shall record a copy of each conservation easement in the county deed records within 15 days of closing. BLC certifies that the conservation easements purchased for this Project will not be used as any additional or future mitigation project. BLC shall also use SEP Funds for habitat restoration and enhancement, including planting native trees. Restoration activities will be conducted by a contractor and will take place on property protected by a conservation easement. Prior to commencing restoration activities, BLC shall submit a proposal to TCEQ that includes the exact property location and description, property owner information, specific restoration activities to be conducted, amount of SEP Funds to be used for restoration activities, and any other information that may be requested by TCEQ. Upon written approval by TCEQ, BLC may use SEP Funds for the approved restoration activities.

Environmental Benefit

Rapid development in the Lake Houston Watershed has led to removal of the natural riparian buffers along the waterways, which jeopardizes the air and water quality. Spring Creek, Cypress Creek, Lake Creek, and the West Fork of the San Jacinto River are major water sources for Lake Houston, which is Houston’s primary source of drinking water. When land is cleared and developed within these floodplains, the water becomes more turbid and often has increased E. coli bacteria and other negative water quality contaminants.

Lands permanently preserved with conservation easements maintain vegetated banks and wooded floodplains to allow river overflow. When floodwater passes through the floodplain, the vegetated substrates are not eroded away, and the banks are maintained. Preserving the natural vegetated banks will help maintain water quality in this area. Additionally, many of the properties BLC will secure with conservation easements will be open to the public for low-impact recreational uses, and wildlife will benefit from connected habitat and undisturbed access to water sources.

Eligible Areas and Counties

This project may receive contributions from the following:

Angelina, Aransas, Atascosa, Austin, Bee, Brazoria, Brazos, Brooks, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Colorado, De Witt, Duval, Fayette, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Gonzales, Grimes, Hardin, Harris, Hidalgo, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Karnes, Kenedy, Kleberg, Lavaca, Liberty, Live Oak, Matagorda, McMullen, Montgomery, Newton, Nueces, Orange, Polk, Refugio, Sabine, San Jacinto, San Patricio, Starr, Trinity, Tyler, Victoria, Walker, Waller, Washington, Webb, Wharton, Willacy, and Zapata Counties

River Basin:

San Jacinto River Basin

Aquifer:

Gulf Coast Aquifer

Minimum Contribution Amount

\$1,000