

The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust

Shorebird and Waterfowl Habitat Conservation and Restoration

Project Description

This Project will permanently preserve 2,000 acres of wildlife habitat in Calhoun, Goliad, Refugio, and Victoria counties through acquisition of perpetual conservation easements in accordance with Subchapter A, Chapter 183, Texas Natural Resources Code. Exhibit 3 shows the prioritized target areas for acquisition. This Project will also restore 1,000 acres of habitat for waterfowl and wetland-dependent species, including marine/estuarine wetlands, freshwater wetlands, and riverine and upland sites. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust shall use SEP Funds to conduct due diligence, purchase conservation easements from private landowners, conduct restoration activities, and provide property stewardship.

After a property has been identified for conservation easement acquisition, The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust shall submit a proposal to TCEQ that includes property owner information, metes and bounds, purchase price, amount of SEP Funds to be used for due diligence and purchase, deed encumbrance language, and any other information that may be requested by TCEQ. Upon written approval by TCEQ, The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust may use SEP Funds for approved due diligence activities and purchase of the conservation easement. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust shall address and remedy all encumbrances to the property title, including mortgages and other liens, prior to closing on the conservation easement purchase. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust shall not sell conservation easements or any other land interests acquired with SEP Funds. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust shall record a copy of each conservation easement in the county deed records within 15 days of closing. After a conservation easement is acquired, The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust shall use SEP Funds for property stewardship to ensure that the terms of the easement are followed. Property stewardship activities include monitoring the property, compliance enforcement, and providing continual resources to the property owner. SEP Funds shall not be used for any legal fees associated with property stewardship. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust certifies that the conservation easements purchased for this Project will not be part of a mitigation project.

The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust shall also use SEP Funds for habitat restoration and enhancement, including planting native species, removal of invasive species, and grading. Exhibit 3 shows the prioritized target areas for restoration. Restoration activities will be conducted by a contractor and will take place on public land managed by entities such as the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services or private property protected by a conservation easement. Restoration activities will take place on former wetlands with effectively drained hydric soil map units, filled areas with no development, impounded areas, excavated areas, or farmed wetlands as well as degraded wetlands that are partially drained, impounded, excavated, farmed, or contain tidal restrictions. Prior to commencing restoration activities, The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust 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, The Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust may use SEP Funds for the approved restoration activities.

Environmental Benefit

This Project is needed because important wildlife habitats for wetland-dependent and other species are under threat from expanding human footprint into previously undeveloped areas. Conserving properties through conservation easements will ensure that those lands are permanently protected from environmentally harmful activities and use. Restoring habitats through native plantings, removal of invasive species, and grading will protect water quality and provide habitat for native birds and other aquatic and coastal species, such as the whooping crane, piping plover, reddish egret, sooty tern, white-faced ibis, white-tailed hawk, black-spotted newt, sheet frog, and northern aplomado falcon.

Potential property acquisition areas have been identified and prioritized as the highest quality habitat based on data derived from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with input from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Ducks Unlimited, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, and the International Crane Foundation. Protection of these strategic sites will also protect and improve both water quality and quantity through increased filtration into groundwater sources and increased filtration of pollutants.

Potential restoration activity areas have been identified and prioritized based on maps of historic wetlands from the National Wetland Inventory and local wetland maps that have been detailed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services through the Coastal Prairie Conservation Initiative.

Eligible Areas and Counties

Aransas, Atascosa, Bandera, Bastrop, Bee, Bexar, Blanco, Caldwell, Calhoun, Comal, DeWitt, Fayette, Gillespie, Goliad, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Hays, Jackson, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Lavaca, Live Oak, Medina, Nueces, Real, Refugio, San Patricio, Travis, Victoria, and Wilson Counties

Minimum Contribution Amount

\$1,500