

# Conservation Assistance Program

## *Galveston Bay Watershed*

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### *2019 Annual Report*



By Matt Singer  
Galveston Bay Foundation  
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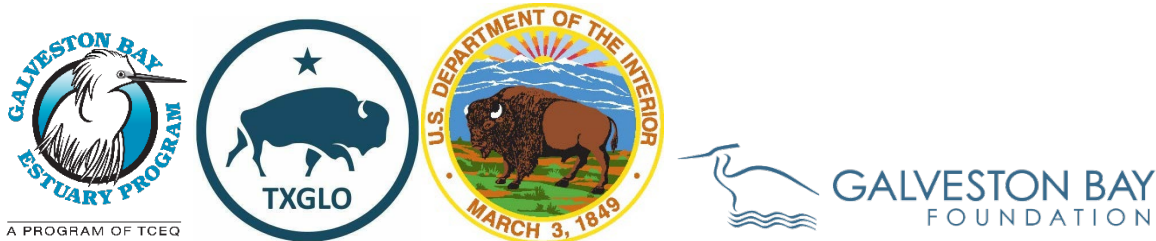


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Galveston Bay Estuary Program  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
17041 El Camino Real  
Suite 210  
Houston, Texas 77058

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By:  
Matt Singer  
Galveston Bay Foundation  
Kemah, Texas



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## Abbreviations

CAP	Conservation Assistance Program
CHP	Artist Boat's Coastal Heritage Preserve
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
FY	Fiscal year
GBEP	Galveston Bay Estuary Program
GBF	Galveston Bay Foundation
GEBF	Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund
GLO	Texas General Land Office
GOMESA	Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act
NAWCA	North America Wetlands Conservation Act
NCWCGP	National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants Program
NFWF	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
NRDA	Natural Resource Damage Assessment
RESTORE	Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act
TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
TFRLCP	Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program
TPWD	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## Executive Summary

The Galveston Bay Estuary Program's Conservation Assistance Program provides regional support for land conservation efforts within the Galveston Bay watershed. Conservation Assistance Program funding was awarded by Galveston Bay Estuary Program to Galveston Bay Foundation to provide financial resources to coordinate, develop and implement land acquisition projects, provide transactional support to local conservation organizations, and organize a workgroup of natural resource partners dedicated to perpetual land conservation efforts within the Galveston Bay watershed. Program objectives include identifying and developing priority land acquisition projects, securing acquisition funding from state, federal, and private sources, implementing conservation strategies, negotiating fee simple and conservation easement acquisitions, and closing land conservation projects.

Tasks identified to accomplish the Conservation Assistance Program objectives include:

- Project administration,
- Conservation workgroup,
- Conservation activities,
- Grant proposals for conservation projects,
- Public outreach, and
- Annual report.

The Conservation Assistance Program supported many conservation project efforts during fiscal year 2019 and helped one, 28-acre land transaction close during the fiscal year. However, Conservation Assistance Program supported projects that have been awarded full or partial acquisition funding and are expected to close in fiscal year 2020 or 2021, will result in the perpetual conservation of more than 5,400 acres of coastal habitat within the Galveston Bay watershed.

## Introduction

Urban growth in the Houston-Galveston region continues to put pressure on remaining open space, in turn, threatening the productivity of existing wildlife and fisheries habitats, agricultural areas, and the quality of water in Galveston Bay. Conversion of natural areas, agricultural lands, and other open spaces to suburban residential and commercial land uses presents a real threat to the sustainability and productivity of the Galveston Bay estuarine system. Subdivision of large ranches and farms into smaller parcels diminishes the ecological value of those lands for migratory and resident wildlife populations along the coast. Also, the expanding suburban edge of the Houston metro area inflates land values of target conservation properties throughout the region.

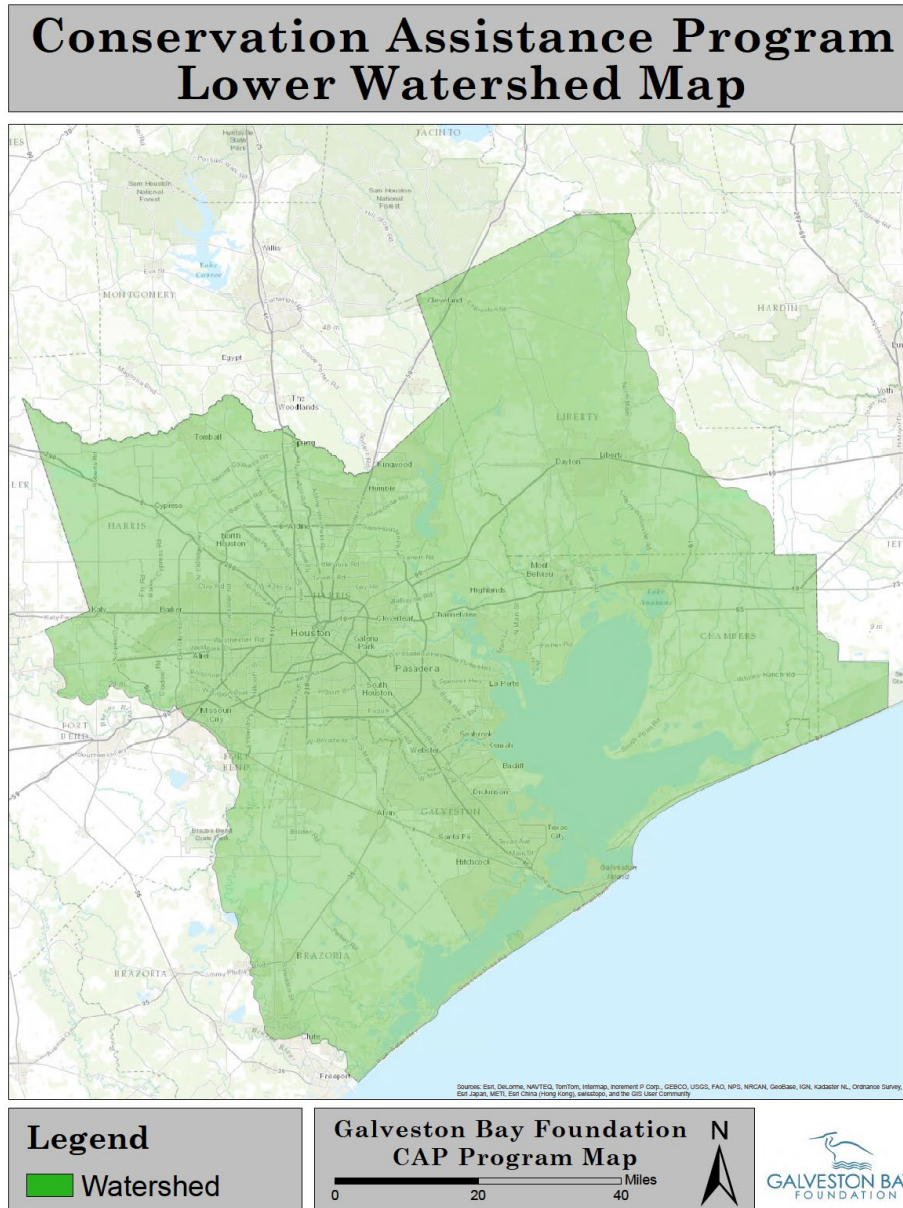


**Figure 1. Texas Coneflower at Angleton Prairie**

In response to these factors, the Conservation Assistance Program (CAP) was reauthorized in 2018 to accelerate acquisition of land resources throughout the watershed and protect critical natural landscapes with specific ecological values. The overall goal of the CAP is to support the Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) and its partners' efforts to preserve wetlands and other important coastal habitats within the Galveston Bay watershed to protect the long-term health and productivity of Galveston Bay. GBEP identified the following CAP goals:

- Identify priority conservation properties with the help and consensus of conservation partners.
- Develop funding strategies for land acquisition projects through grant identification, grant writing, and fundraising efforts.
- Work with willing sellers to negotiate fee simple or conservation easement transactions.
- Provide legal, title, and other due diligence transaction support for CAP-approved projects.
- Finalize the sale and transfer of title to a third-party organization or government entity.





**Figure 2. Galveston Bay Watershed**

Specific objectives for the program were designed to reflect regional conservation priorities, engage conservation stakeholders, and provide support to land acquisition projects within the region. Three CAP objectives are outlined below.

*1. Preserve coastal wetlands and natural areas:*

The Galveston Bay Plan identifies perpetual land conservation as one of the best strategies for protecting the biodiversity and overall health of the estuarine system. Furthermore, the Plan identifies the need for an ecosystem approach that promotes

physical and hydrological connectivity of habitats with existing ecological value. CAP conservation objectives address these needs by targeting land parcels that:

- Possess unique conservation value, such as wetlands, bottomland hardwood forests, floodplains, and associated habitats;
- Have a direct link to coastal riparian areas, coastal prairies, or Galveston Bay;
- Provide public access to Galveston Bay and its coastal tributaries; or
- Reduce or prevent nonpoint source pollution by providing storm water abatement.

*2. Facilitate a conservation workgroup:*

There are many local, state, and national organizations and government agencies actively seeking to protect land along the Texas coast for various conservation objectives. The purpose of this workgroup is to engage stakeholders already working within the Galveston Bay watershed, build consensus and support for land conservation projects, and identify opportunities for partnerships that will accelerate land acquisition within CAP target areas.

*3. Provide transactional support:*

The CAP provides due diligence and real estate acquisition assistance for conservation projects in the Galveston Bay watershed. This includes identifying viable conservation projects, negotiating terms of conservation easement or fee simple sales, managing funding sources, and assisting with the completion of due diligence like surveys, appraisals, and environmental site assessments (ESAs). The CAP can also provide partners with financial support for unfunded due diligence activities when funding is available.

Acquisition of intertidal wetlands, tallgrass prairie, coastal forests, and freshwater wetlands preserves existing foraging and nesting habitats for many avian species protected by federal law and nursery habitat for commercially significant fisheries species. The existence of two or more of these habitats in close proximity promotes overall biodiversity and productivity within the region.

A regional land conservation program helps support and ensure a healthy coastal ecosystem for Galveston Bay. The CAP's three-tier structure includes building capacity within local nonprofit organizations, engaging conservation partners, and providing support for acquisition projects has proven to be a successful model for regional land conservation initiatives.





**Figure 3. Angleton Prairie Plant Community in Brazoria County**

## **Project Significance and Background**

Galveston Bay is the largest and most productive estuary in Texas, and second only to the Chesapeake Bay system among U.S. estuaries in fisheries productivity. Galveston Bay is the single defining geographic feature for the Houston metropolitan region and serves as the foundation for its economy. Galveston Bay and its many waterways and diverse natural features afford an array of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors and play an essential role in maintaining a high quality of life.

Over five million people, or 75 percent of Texas' coastal population, reside in the five counties surrounding Galveston Bay. As a result, human activities have significantly altered the ecosystem and affected its productivity, converting coastal wetlands to human uses, and fragmenting remaining coastal natural areas. The Houston metropolitan area is growing rapidly, and its population is expected to nearly double by 2035 (Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2007). This growth will place increasing pressure on coastal natural resources and likely result in additional coastal habitat loss and fragmentation. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) characterizes coastal wetland and associated habitat loss in Texas as severe (EPA, 1999), and this is a

continuing concern because of the many important functions and values these features provide. Wetland loss in the Galveston Bay system is greater than in other areas of the state.



**Figure 4. Dollar Bay Estuarine Wetlands**

Many local scientists and resource managers believe that continued habitat loss poses the greatest single threat to the Galveston Bay ecosystem. GBEP's habitat loss studies primarily focus on wetlands. However, the bay system features a diversity of habitats, including extensive coastal prairies and forests that contribute to the health and productivity of the estuary, and provide many important functions and values to humans. The upland components of these habitat complexes receive limited regulatory protection and are subject to significant loss and fragmentation. While minimal data exist on fragmentation and loss of these valuable upland features, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) reports that less than one percent remains of the once vast expanses of coastal prairie and considers coastal prairie ecosystems to be "critically imperiled" (USFWS, 2000).

## Methods

The CAP is focused on promoting land conservation within the Galveston Bay watershed by helping non-governmental organizations complete fee simple and conservation easement transactions. The process established to provide this assistance includes strengthening local land conservation organizations, engaging regional partners, identifying land conservation priorities, implementing conservation strategies, and educating local communities on the benefits of land conservation.



## Build Capacity

To accomplish regional land conservation goals, the CAP needed to develop transactional expertise to share with the conservation community and strengthen partnering land trusts. The CAP invested in the education of Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) staff to maintain status as an Accredited Land Trust, implement national standards and practices for perpetual land conservation, and bring tools and strategies to the Galveston Bay region that have been successful in other parts of the state and country. GBF attended the Land Trust Alliance Rally, Texas Land Trust Council Annual Conference, and helped form the Gulf-wide Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation. These educational and capacity building opportunities strengthened GBF as a land trust and expanded expertise in real estate transactions and various land conservation tactics.



Figure 5. Gordy Marsh Prairie Pothole Wetland in Chambers County

## Facilitate a Conservation Workgroup

GBF contracted with a local conservation consultant, Linda Shead, to coordinate with regional land conservation entities and facilitate conservation workgroup meetings. Her local knowledge of conservation projects, governmental processes, funding sources, and local partners brings credibility and substance to the workgroup meetings.

Meetings are scheduled three times per year at the request of workgroup participants and are held at an easily accessible local forum. Agendas are developed by Ms. Shead, in coordination with GBF staff, and distributed prior to meetings. Summary notes are kept on file to document discussion and decisions made by the group. Meeting conversations are typically dominated by updates on acquisition projects, funding strategies, and new opportunities for land conservation within the watershed. Handouts with project information, maps, and habitat descriptions are provided to

attendees and Google Earth is displayed with a projector to provide spatial context and aerial imagery.

## **Maintain a List of Conservation Projects**

GBF has developed a simple list of projects that were proposed, debated, and investigated for conservation merit by the Conservation Workgroup. Many of these were deemed worthwhile and were provided with support by the CAP, while others were not as attractive due to various circumstances. The conservation workgroup has adopted this running list of projects, categorized by level of activity, to track progress and acquisition efforts. Ongoing projects actively seeking acquisition funding or working to complete due diligence activities are compiled on the “Active Projects List.” Projects that have consensus as high conservation value but have major uncertainties about willing sellers, future holders, or funding sources are tabulated on the “Project Investigation List.” Projects that are identified as good conservation value but lack any sort of communication with landowners or traction for acquisition are classified on the “Potential Projects List.” These lists help focus CAP efforts, organize regional projects and coordinating partners, and help determine the need for future CAP resources and assistance.

The current project lists are attached to this report as Appendix A.

## **Project Selection**

Participants in the Conservation Workgroup are encouraged to bring projects for discussion and consideration for CAP assistance. Conservation partners are provided with a standardized form to share project information and details for each project like size, location, habitats, and other pertinent information for the group to consider. To qualify as a CAP project, the targeted land parcel must include one or more of the following attributes:

- Possess unique conservation value, such as wetlands, bottomland hardwood forests, floodplains, and associated habitats;
- Have a direct link to coastal riparian areas, coastal prairies, or Galveston Bay;
- Provide public access to Galveston Bay and its coastal tributaries; or
- Reduce or prevent nonpoint source pollution by providing storm water abatement.

The CAP has identified two primary initiative areas to help focus acquisition efforts. Limited time, resources, and funding provide a significant challenge when attempting to address land conservation on a watershed scale. The size of unprotected land parcels, presences of high-quality target habitats, proximity to Galveston Bay waters, and relatively low price per acre were some of the factors considered when delineating these initiative areas.

### **West Bay Conservation Corridor Initiative**

The West Bay Conservation Corridor Initiative is a concentrated effort in West Bay comprised of numerous conservation, restoration, and habitat protection projects supported by nonprofit organizations, state and federal agencies, and private partners. The objective of the initiative is to protect and restore habitat and associated biological communities critical to the Galveston Bay ecosystem, including fringing intertidal and high marsh, tidal flats, freshwater wetlands, and coastal prairies.

Project partners previously completed a habitat and land use assessment of the West Bay watershed to identify and prioritize key natural areas, and are actively pursuing conservation through a variety of mechanisms including:

- Purchase of development rights,
- Conservation easements, and
- Fee simple purchase.



**Figure 6. Chocolate Bay Coastal Wetland Habitat**

### **East Bay Conservation Initiative**

A special conservation initiative is focused on the East Bay watershed and fringing areas to protect the rich natural features and water quality. Conservation partners, specifically informed through the Trust for Public Land's *Chambers County Greenprint for Growth and Conservation*, have identified East Bay as a high-priority region because of its relatively pristine nature. East Bay's wildlife habitat is integral to its economic and environmental health. Because of its rural character and already protected lands, much of its natural habitat remains intact. Habitat types of concern for conservation in East Bay include:

- fresh and estuarine marshes
- riparian corridors
- oak mottes
- coastal prairies

- flyway corridors for migratory birds

Currently, conserved lands in East Bay include County parks, privately managed preserves, state wildlife management areas, and national wildlife refuges. The dominant change in land use and habitat loss occurring in East Bay is the conversion of farm and ranch land to building sites for single-family homes. The trend toward suburban development, driven in part by increased mobility of people and jobs in the 21st century economy, is common throughout the Houston-Galveston region. Increased urbanization resulting in habitat loss has the potential to degrade water quality and the region's ecological productivity.

Having set initiatives and selection criteria does not preclude projects that are outside of the initiative boundary from receiving CAP assistance. But those projects will need to provide justification for their ecological values and overall conservation benefit. The intent for utilizing a defined project selection criteria process was to focus efforts and resources to complete projects that have the most ecological value for the region.

## **Project Development**

Once a project meets the basic CAP requirements, is approved by the conservation workgroup, and a project lead has been identified, project assistance is provided as necessary to put the project in a position to be a successful transaction. When GBF is the lead project manager, all landowner meetings, negotiations, site visits, correspondence, and project strategies are initiated and coordinated by GBF staff. Other project partners may be added as necessary, when a specific skill set or partnership may bring value to the project. Likewise, if a partner organization is the lead for a project, GBF will only be involved when services or CAP resources are requested. GBF provides project development assistance to our project partners in the form of acquisition strategies, general project mapping, documentation of conservation values and natural resources, landowner communications, and fundraising assistance.

## **Project Implementation**

Executing the conservation strategy and completing the real estate transaction can be a complex and challenging task. The project manager is required to coordinate with the seller on a regular basis, communicate details of complex funding mechanisms, manage contractors conducting due diligence activities, handle legal reviews, negotiate purchase agreements and sales contracts, and see the project through closing. Additionally, complex funding strategies with multiple funders are commonly developed to acquire high value properties. GBF has experience and expertise in handling landowner relations, completing due diligence, and getting the acquisition funding to closing. If GBF is not the lead project manager for a transaction, assistance is provided by identifying appropriate conservation strategies and funding quality







**Figure 8. Wetlands at Dollar Bay With Development Encroaching**

## **Public Outreach**

Both the East Bay and West Bay Conservation Initiatives focus land acquisition on areas where landowners may be wary of government involvement and cautious of land conservation efforts. Gaining the trust of local landowners and educating community leaders on the benefits of conservation easements and land conservation in their communities is critical to the success of any long-term land conservation program. GBF may target stakeholders from time to time and present information to large and small audiences in urban, suburban, and rural areas. These efforts provide an opportunity to reach potential donors, environmentalists, farmers, ranchers, fisherman, hunters, kayakers, and other wildlife enthusiasts and teach them about land conservation tools and benefits.

Any press releases submitted to local media outlets to highlight successful conservation efforts and promote the work of GBEP, GBF, and CAP partners will be consistent with the Back the Bay marketing campaign.

## **Results**

In fiscal 2019, the CAP provided support to eight land conservation projects. Six of these projects have been awarded acquisition funding, in full or in part, that will be used to perpetually conserve the identified tracts. These projects vary in size, conservation method, habitat types, and conservation values. Both fee simple and conservation easement transactions will be used to protect these parcels, employing a variety of state, federal, and private funding sources.

CAP involvement varies from full identification, development, and implementation of conservation projects to simply providing funding to help defray unfunded costs associated with required due diligence for perpetual protection. Of the eight ongoing projects, six are managed by GBF and two are managed by conservation partners. If projects with dedicated acquisition funding are successful, these transactions will result in more than 5,400 acres of perpetual land conservation within the Galveston Bay watershed. Details of completed projects are listed in the table below.

**Table 1. FY19 CAP Conservation Projects**

Project Name	Status	Size (Acres)	Funding Source*	Project Lead
Chocolate Bay	Ongoing	4,650	GEBF	Galveston Bay Foundation
Oyster Bayou	Ongoing	450	TFRLCP / NRCS	Galveston Bay Foundation
Coastal Heritage Preserve	Complete	28	Private Donation	Artist Boat
Dollar Bay	Ongoing	100	GOMESA	Galveston Bay Foundation
Angleton Prairie	Complete (Ongoing)	35 (115)	NAWCA	Galveston Bay Foundation
Follets Island	Complete (Ongoing)	50	NAWCA / NFWF / NRDA	Galveston Bay Foundation
Gordy Marsh	Ongoing	1,200	Undetermined	Galveston Bay Foundation
Armand Bayou	Ongoing	300	Undetermined	Armand Bayou Nature Center

\* Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF), Texas Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program (TFRLCP), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA), North America Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

GBF was successful in securing funding for three CAP projects in fiscal 2019. Each of these projects is described with more information in the CAP Projects section of this report. This table details the funding source and amount awarded for each of the projects.

**Table 2. FY19 CAP Project Funding**

Project Name	Status	Size (Acres)	Funding Source	Amount
Chocolate Bay	Awaiting final award	4,650	GEBF	\$10,500,000
Oyster Bayou	Awarded	450	TFRLCP / NRCS	\$230,000 / \$230,00
Dollar Bay	Awaiting Final Award	100	GOMESA / Private Foundation	\$1,250,000 / \$400,000

Three conservation workgroup meetings were held in fiscal 2019. Conservation partners that attended meetings included nonprofit land conservation organizations, state and federal natural resource agencies, and individuals with conservation interests. Participation in meetings varied, based upon eligibility and status of land conservation

projects and need for CAP assistance. A list of conservation workgroup meeting dates is included below.

**Table 3. FY19 Conservation Workgroup Meetings**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District	11/1/2018
Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District	3/28/2019
Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District	6/11/2019

Three conservation workgroup-approved projects received CAP funding in fiscal 2019 to help finance due diligence costs associated with conservation transactions. These funds helped organizations pay for surveys, appraisals, legal title review, closing costs, or other necessary transactional items. Some CAP contributions provided funding leverage and partnerships which helped projects become more competitive for acquisition funding. GBF provided alternative funding (Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation) for the Follet's Island project to pay for appraisals in 2019, but CAP funding will be dedicated to this project in fiscal 2020. While the program underspent on contractual due diligence support in fiscal 2019, it is anticipated that many projects will require transactional support in fiscal 2020, and additional project funding may need to be raised to meet the demand for partner projects.

A list of projects that received due diligence funding is below.

**Table 4. FY19 CAP Due Diligence Costs.**

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Lead Organization</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>CAP Investment</b>
Angleton Prairie	Galveston Bay Foundation	Complete (Ongoing)	\$5,700
Chocolate Bay	Galveston Bay Foundation	Ongoing	\$6,950
Coastal Heritage Preserve (Addition)	Artist Boat	Complete	\$3,115





Figure 9. Alligator Point at Chocolate Bay and West Galveston Bay

## Discussion

GBF and partners participating in the conservation workgroup continually develop quality projects for acquisition but sometimes struggle to secure timely funding sources to close projects. An overall lack of non-federal acquisition funding sources continues to be one of the biggest challenges to overcome. Federal funding sources are highly competitive, target very specific land attributes, and usually require a significant nonfederal match component. Private foundations have been willing to fund small percentages of land acquisition projects, but state level funding is largely unavailable. For example, TFRLCP, administered by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), receives \$2,000,000 from the state legislature every other year. TFRLCP only supports conservation easements (not fee-simple acquisition). Funding eligibility is statewide, and scoring criteria favors projects with high funding leverage.

Another nonfederal funding source that may be available for coastal land conservation is GOMESA, administered by the Texas General Land Office (GLO), but it has yet to be clearly defined, and the application process is still being developed. While funding levels look very promising, significant rules interpretations will provide challenges for land conservation projects in the Houston-Galveston region. Primarily, the recent interpretation that a government entity must hold fee title to any real estate purchased with program funding.

Federal funding sources, such as NAWCA and the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (NCWCGP), both administered by USFWS, target wetlands and closely related habitats, excluding coastal prairies and forests that are not considered wetlands. These programs also have a limit of \$1 million per project and require anywhere from 25-200% in nonfederal match to be competitive against a national or regional pool of applicants. Additionally, land values in the Galveston Bay

watershed have continued to rise with demand for suburban development, causing projects to be phased into multiyear projects.

Each land conservation project presents unique challenges that provide opportunity to learn and grow as a conservation practitioner. During the grant period, these experiences have provided perspective and clarity on many aspects of conservation acquisition. A couple of salient points to share include flexible and extended-length purchase options and transactions.

To the extent possible, sales contracts, purchase options, and similar real estate documents must be drafted with enough flexibility to react to funding requirements and unexpected changes to project requirements. Also, allowing a lengthy term for due diligence, reviews, and fundraising will help set landowner expectations. It is important to communicate that a conservation acquisition is not a typical real estate transaction and will require patience and communication throughout the process.



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## **Appendix A. CAP Projects**

These eight conservation projects were reviewed against the CAP project selection criteria by the conservation workgroup and were deemed to possess the priority conservation values necessary to meet the goals and objectives of the program. Each of these projects were actively developed or implemented as a CAP project.

### **Oyster Bayou Conservation Easement Purchase (In Progress)**

The Oyster Bayou project will use state and federal funding to purchase a conservation easement on 450 acres of land in Chambers County. The property is adjacent to Oyster Bayou and directly across Whites Ranch Road from the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge and within the Refuge acquisition boundary. The property is currently active in rotational rice farming, and the landowner has an interest in waterfowl habitat management. NRCS has funded the project under their Agricultural Land Easement Program, and the required nonfederal match was awarded by TPWD's TFRCLP. Each program will provide \$230,000 to fund a fair-market-value transaction.

Due diligence funds for this project are unfunded and will require CAP investment. This project began due diligence in November 2019, with plans to close in November or December of 2020.

### **Chocolate Bay Fee Simple Acquisition (In Progress)**

The Chocolate Bay project will use NFWF's GEBF funding to purchase the fee simple interest in approximately 4,650 acres in Brazoria and Galveston Counties. A full proposal for this project was requested and submitted for review in June 2019. It is anticipated that a formal award will be made in November 2019, and the project is scheduled to close in August 2020.

### **Dollar Bay Fee Simple Acquisition (In Progress)**

The Dollar Bay project will utilize funds from GLO's GOMESA funding and private foundation funding to purchase the fee simple interest in approximately 100 acres in Galveston County. Acquisition funding was requested from the GLO's Coastal Management Program, and was selected as a "Project of Special Merit." This acquisition project is located directly adjacent to a large wetland restoration and creation project underway in Dollar Bay and will help ensure the long-term success of that project. The landowner holds an active permit to develop the property into a waterfront community that would threaten the ecological values of the area. The landowner is willing to sell the property at a bargain sale if necessary, depending on the valuation to be determined by a qualified appraisal. A private foundation has also contributed to the acquisition of this property. GOMESA funding is expected to be available in November 2020 and private foundation funds are already in hand.

### **Angleton Prairie Fee Simple Acquisition (Completed / Ongoing)**

The Angleton Prairie project will utilize USFWS's NAWCA funding to acquire the fee simple interest in 35 acres in Brazoria County. This is a piece of a larger, highly diverse and intact native coastal prairie. This property has only recently been subdivided, and the adjacent parcels are also being pursued for conservation. The 35-acre tract will close in September 2019; any additional acreage related to this project will be acquired in 2020.

### **Follets Island (Completed / Ongoing)**

The Follets Island Coastal Management Area was created by TPWD to set aside critical barrier island and coastal wetland habitats. Texas Coastal Partners has coordinated with funding partners and TPWD to expand upon previous conservation efforts on Follets Island. Fiscal 2019 efforts focused on securing purchase agreements, appraisals, and other transactional due diligence for one tract.

### **Gordy Marsh (Phase 2)**

The Gordy Marsh project is a phased effort to protect up to 3,500 acres of high-quality coastal prairie and wetland habitats on Smith Point in Chambers County, adjacent to Trinity Bay and Lone Oak Bayou. Phase 1 was successful in conserving 1,739 acres with a conservation easement. Future phases will be focused on acquiring fee simple interest in unprotected property first, then the underlying fee interest of the conservation easement area. Proposals have been submitted to Deepwater Horizon related funding sources in the past. Efforts in 2020 will be focused on securing funding from NAWCA, NCWCGP, and Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States (RESTORE) Act funding.

### **Armand Bayou**

The Armand Bayou project is focused on purchasing land in the upper Armand Bayou watershed in Harris County. Partners involved in the project include Harris County Precinct 2, Harris County Flood Control District, and Armand Bayou Nature Center. Primary funding targets include RESTORE and any funds tied to Hurricane Harvey/Federal Emergency Management Agency recovery. The CAP has pledged minimal due diligence funding to help show regional support and help initiate project development efforts.

### **Coastal Heritage Preserve Addition (Completed)**

The Coastal Heritage Preserve (CHP) is the largest undeveloped, unfragmented tract of land on west Galveston Island. Acquiring parcels within the CHP project area contributes to ongoing efforts to maintain the physical and biological integrity of Galveston Island and the productivity of West Bay. The CAP provided due diligence funding to the Artist Boat to facilitate a 28-acre donation along Settegast Road, adjacent to West Galveston Bay. Artist Boat holds title to the property and will ensure long-term management.