

# Fort Bend Ag & Natural Resources Newsletter

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## A New Chapter

Greeting Everyone!

I wanted to open this newsletter by announcing that it will be the last one written by me as I have taken a new employment opportunity and starting a new chapter in my life. As I look back over these last two years I think about all of the challenges and successes I have encountered during my time here in Fort Bend County! As urbanization continues to become more and more prevalent in the county, I hope that the work I have done here has assisted in preserving conventional agriculture while allowing new landowners and urban agriculturalist to explore new avenues within the industry. I am grateful for all of the opportunities and experiences that you all have granted me and I wish everyone the best in their 2024 growing season.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### AGRICULTURE EVENTS:

- **5/1/2024: New Landowner: Poultry 101**- If you are a back yard or small acre poultry producer looking to learn the basics of poultry production, breed selection, housing best management practices, and poultry health please join us at our Poultry 101 course. Register at the following link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/landowner-6-part-series-tickets-871853395977>
- **5/18/2024: Smokin' Savvy** - Celebrate National Beef Month with a workshop all about Beef Nutrition & the Art of Mastering a Brisket! Topics include: How to Smoke a Brisket, Beef Beyond Brisket, and Beef Beyond the Label. Guest speakers and goodie bags will be available. Space is limited to first 30 paid registrants. Cost is \$25.00 per person. Register at: <https://fortbend.agrilife.org/fch/healthy-eating/smokin-savvy/>
- **5/22/2024: New Landowner: Cattle 101**- Whether you are just considering getting a few cattle for your newly purchased property or are an experienced cattle producer who would like to learn more about modern production practices, join us at our Cattle 101 course and earn the how to select cattle breeds, the basics of cattle nutrition, and livestock health and pest. Register at the following link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/landowner-6-part-series-tickets-871853395977>
- **5/29/2025: Fishpond & Aquatic Weed Management**- Have you ever wanted to produce fish on the pond at your property? Perhaps you want to get rid of some pesky weeds in your pond. If any of these topics interest you, sign up for our Fishpond & Aquatic Weed Management program! Register at the following link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/landowner-6-part-series-tickets-871853395977>

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Visit our office at  
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Rosenberg, TX 77471

281-342-3034

<https://fortbend.agrilife.org>

See all events at:  
<https://fortbend.agrilife.org/events/>

# Fort Bend Ag & Natural Resources Newsletter Continued

## UPCOMING EVENTS CONTINUED

### AGRICULTURE EVENTS CONTINUED:

- **6/11/2024: Wild Pigs Management in Brazoria County**- Dr. Abdul Hakeem will be hosting a FREE virtual workshop discussing the current best management practices for controlling wild pigs! If you would like to attend this program you may register at the following link:  
[https://pvpanther.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAlfuCtgD4pHtI6PRadS8z1uBYwY87\\_Jpyr#/registration](https://pvpanther.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAlfuCtgD4pHtI6PRadS8z1uBYwY87_Jpyr#/registration)
- **The Coastal Prairie Conservancy** would like to work with Fort Bend County Producers in an effort to protect and conserve local prairies and natural land within the county. Many of their programs offer funding to private landowners to conserve prairies, wetland, farms, and ranches through the National Resources Conservation Service as a part of its Regional Conservation Partnership Program. More details on the programs they offer can be found in the flyers at the end of this newsletter

### HORTICULTURE EVENTS:

- **The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' Landscape Success Program** is still offering classes from May to August. If you want to learn how to improve your landscaping skills please register for their classes at the following link:  
<https://fortbend.agrilife.org/landscape-success/>
- **The fort Bend County Master Gardeners' are hosting a few more classes in their well-known Grow Your Own seminar series.** If you want to be self-sustaining and grow your own food please register at the following link:  
<https://fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own/>

If you have any suggestions or recommendations for Ag programs in the future, please feel free to reach out to us!



## NOTICE OF UPCOMING OFFICE HOLIDAY CLOSURE

Please note that our office will be closed for the day on Monday, May 27, 2024 for the Memorial Day Holiday.



#### TCPI PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

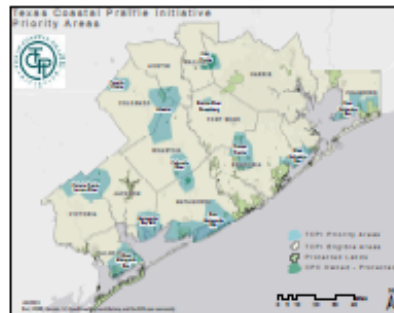
- ARMAND BAYOU NATURE CENTER
- AUDUBON TEXAS
- COASTAL PRAIRIE CONSERVANCY
- COLORADO RIVER LAND TRUST
- DUCKS UNLIMITED
- ENVIRONMENTAL INSTITUTE OF HOUSTON
- GALVESTON BAY FOUNDATION
- GUADALUPE BLANCO RIVER TRUST
- GULF COAST JOINT VENTURE
- HARRIS COUNTY PRECINCT 2
- HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL
- INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION
- MATAGORDA BAY FOUNDATION
- MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT TEAM
- NATIVE PRAIRIES ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS
- THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN TEXAS
- QUAIL FOREVER
- TEXAS A&M NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE
- TEXAS AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST
- TEXAS CONSERVATION PARTNERS LLC
- TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
- TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
- TEXAS RICE INDUSTRY COALITION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
- UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COASTAL CENTER
- WILDLIFE HABITAT FEDERATION



## ABOUT THE TEXAS COASTAL PRAIRIE INITIATIVE

### OVERVIEW

The Coastal Prairie Conservancy and its partner organizations have joined together to sustain the imperiled coastal prairie ecosystem through the **Texas Coastal Prairie Initiative (TCPI)**. The initiative, which will provide funding to private landowners to conserve prairies, wetlands, farms, and ranches, is funded through an award from the **National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** as part of its **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**. The Coastal Prairie Conservancy and its partners will work to increase landowner awareness and accessibility to NRCS funds to permanently protect working and natural lands through conservation easements. The initiative will also provide funding to help landowners manage and enhance habitat on privately owned lands for the benefit of the grassland and wetland-dependent species that reside on the coastal prairie, such as the whooping crane, mottled duck, and western chicken turtle.



### ELIGIBILITY

Farmers, ranchers, and landowners who own agricultural or natural lands within the 13-county region that includes Austin, Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Jackson, Matagorda, Victoria, Waller, and Wharton counties are eligible to be considered for the program.

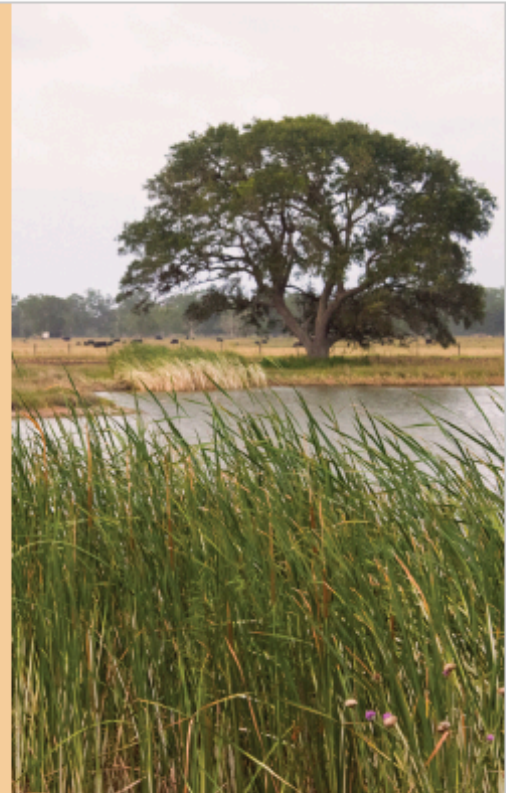
### Strategic Focus Areas

The coastal prairie ecosystem requires large, contiguous protected areas to survive, as the foraging, mating, and brood-rearing requirements of many species require large, connected areas of land to maintain healthy populations. Protected landscapes are also vital as stopover habitat on the Central Flyway. In Texas, where approximately 95% of lands are privately owned, unprotected lands along the Texas Gulf Coast are under significant threat of development or fragmentation. TCPI partners have identified critical coastal prairie habitat zones for priority conservation in order to sustain the coastal prairie ecosystem on a landscape level. While any project within the 13-county area may be eligible if it meets the criteria for the TCPI, those within the strategic zones will be prioritized.

# ROUND THREE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

## CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Many landowners who own a farm, ranch, or natural area worry about the future of their land. Some want to preserve the Texas landscape but worry it will be lost once they are no longer able to own and manage the property. Others want to keep land in agriculture for their heirs or for other local farmers and ranchers. And many landowners want to preserve open and connected spaces to help maintain the biodiversity of the coastal prairie, provide essential wildlife habitat, and sustain a resilient landscape. Landowners who wish to maintain ownership of the land, or eventually pass the land along to their heirs or sell to a third party, have options for conserving land through voluntary conservation easements. TCPI partners seek landowners who want to permanently protect their farm or ranch land, wildlife habitat, and natural resources with conservation easements from an eligible land trust. TCPI may award up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement.



## HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Landowners can support wildlife habitat and biodiversity by adopting wildlife-friendly land management practices. The TCPI expands access to NRCS funded practices that improve native plant biodiversity and improve water quality. These practices may include brush and invasive species control, native prairie restoration, wetlands enhancement, grazing management, and other practices that improve wildlife habitat on working lands. TCPI representatives are available to provide technical assistance to landowners in order to develop a conservation plan that identifies existing resources and suitable practices for their property that benefit coastal prairie wildlife, particularly grassland and wetland birds. Upon completion of the conservation plan, financial assistance may be available to support eligible practices.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GREG LAVATY, KAREN SACHAR

## Applying for Assistance

Local TCPI partner staff will work with individual landowners who are interested in the program. Approved projects will meet eligibility requirements established by TCPI partners. Please contact TCPI by emailing [tcpi-info@coastalprairieconservancy.org](mailto:tcpi-info@coastalprairieconservancy.org) or through the online contact form at <https://www.prairiepartner.org/contact> in order to be contacted by a TCPI partner.

- Technical Assistance to Landowners: Year-round
- Conservation Easement Project Worksheet Due: September 13, 2024
- Habitat Management Project Worksheet Due: September 13, 2024
- TCPI to Submit Eligible Applications to NRCS prior to announced NRCS deadline.

For more information, visit  
[prairiepartner.org](http://prairiepartner.org).



TEXAS COASTAL PRAIRIE  
INITIATIVE

This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Regional Conservation Partnership Program Supplemental Agreement number 2332-A-0651. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, any reference to specific brands or types of products or services does not constitute or imply an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for those products or services. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



The Coastal Prairie Conservancy has been working for more than 30 years to protect the coastal prairie for wildlife and for people.



The Katy Prairie Preserve is home to over 700 species of wildflowers and grasses; more than 300 resident and migratory bird species; 110 species of mammals, amphibians, and reptiles, and thousands of terrestrial insects and aquatic invertebrate species.



**WIDE-OPEN SPACES** | We believe nature is a critical part of a life well lived, and everyone should have access to nature and to fun. Land conservation affords places for families to explore the outdoors, offers up beautiful spaces for the public to enjoy, and conserves living laboratories for research and educational programming. Today's and tomorrow's adventure seekers have a place to go thanks to protected spaces.



**THRIVING WILDLIFE** | We believe in giving the flora and fauna of the prairie a vibrant home. The Katy Prairie Preserve is located in the middle of the Central Flyway and has been designated a Global Important Bird Area by Audubon. Restored wetlands and tallgrass prairies are rich habitat for wildlife and refueling stops for migrating Monarch butterflies.



**A HEALTHY COMMUNITY** | We believe in supporting a vibrant ecosystem that plays an important role in flood control, cleaner air and water, and local food production. Natural lands help tackle climate change. Prairie grasses absorb and hold floodwaters back from downstream, native grassland soils store carbon, and wetlands filter water and help improve water quality. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat are all part of a healthy community.



The Coastal Prairie Conservancy is safeguarding healthy ecosystems by protecting large, connected pieces of coastal prairie by purchasing land and with voluntary agreements with landowners.



# LONG-TERM GOALS

Protect between 30,000 - 50,000 acres of the coastal prairie.

Manage protected land to preserve and enhance its natural resources.

Restore and improve habitat for upland –and wetland– related species.

Play a role in tackling climate change

Provide access and offer programs that connect people with nature.

Conduct and facilitate research that helps achieve our mission.

Collaborate with many different organizations and individuals to create a resilient and healthy region.



Land conservation ensures healthier land, healthier water, and healthier communities. Prairie grasses absorb and hold back floodwaters while sequestering carbon. Wetlands protect water quality and store floodwaters. Diverse wildlife call the prairie home. Protecting coastal prairie now means current and future generations will continue to find adventure in these wide-open spaces.



Since 1992, the Coastal Prairie Conservancy has been helping sustain a resilient Texas by preserving coastal prairies, wetlands, farms, and ranches to benefit people and wildlife forever.

### FOLLOW US!

@coastalprairieconservancy



[coastalprairieconservancy.org/donate](https://coastalprairieconservancy.org/donate)

For more information, please contact Ali Dodson at 713.523.6135 ext. 4012

Photots courtesy of Jaime Gonzalez, Ashley Unbehagen, Pat Conner, Rachel Rommel, Greg Lavaty, Chuck Duplant, and Don Pine.



**NRCS has announced an award of \$25 million for the Texas Grasslands and Savannas Initiative. Coastal Prairie Conservancy will be negotiating a Project Agreement in 2024 and anticipates funding will be available in 2025.**

## Partners

- Audubon of Texas
- Bayou Land Conservancy
- Coastal Prairie Conservancy
- Environmental Institute of Houston @ University of Houston-Clear Lake
- Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust
- Gulf Coast Joint Venture
- Harris County Precinct 4
- Harris County Flood Control District
- Houston-Galveston Area Council
- Houston Wilderness
- Native Prairies Association of Texas
- The Nature Conservancy
- Texas Agricultural Land Trust
- Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute
- Texas Coalition of Rural Landowners
- Texas Land Conservancy
- Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
- Texas Rice Industry Coalition for the Environment
- Yardstick

Technical assistance: Wildlife Habitat Federation

