

Philanthropic Partnership Conserves Powderhorn Ranch

Thanks to an innovative partnership involving state government and private philanthropic organizations, one of the largest remaining tracts of unspoiled coastal prairie in Texas has been conserved for future generations. A multi-partner coalition, led by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF) purchased the 17,351-acre Powderhorn Ranch along the Texas coast in Calhoun County in 2014.

TPWF is the nonprofit funding partner of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the state agency responsible for conserving the natural and cultural resources of Texas. In years to come, Powderhorn Ranch will become a state park and wildlife management area.

At \$38.8 million, it is the largest dollar amount ever raised for a conservation land purchase in the state and represents a new partnership model of achieving conservation goals in an era of rapidly increasing land prices. The total project cost is \$49.2 million, which includes the purchase of the property, habitat restoration and management, as well as a long-term endowment.

Safeguarding this natural treasure has been contemplated for more than 30 years by several organizations including The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. These organizations, along with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and TPWF are playing a critical role in the acquisition and long-term conservation of this property. TPWF is spearheading the fundraising effort and is stewarding the property until it is turned over to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in a few years.

“This transformational project will conserve irreplaceable wildlife habitat and will bring the people of Texas an exciting new recreational opportunity,” said Dan Friedkin, Chairman of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. “This historic investment is only possible because of this extraordinary public/private partnership and is a bold example of how landscape-scale conservation projects can be achieved in Texas and beyond.” Friedkin also serves as chairman of the TPWF’s *Keeping it Wild: The Campaign for Texas* which includes funding for Powderhorn.

The acquisition conserves a spectacular piece of property with forests of coastal live oak and intact wetlands. This range of habitats is perfect for low-impact recreation such as public hunting, fishing, hiking, paddling and bird watching. These nature tourism activities currently bring hundreds of millions of dollars to the Texas coast. The property also includes thousands of acres of freshwater wetlands and salt marshes that offer vital fish and wildlife habitat, provide natural filtering to improve water quality and shield people and property from storm surges and sea level rise. From the 1950s to the early 1990s Texas lost more than 200,000 acres of coastal wetlands. The Powderhorn acquisition helps combat this trend, protecting local economies, people and property as well as wildlife. The ranch includes more than 11 miles of tidal bay front on Matagorda Bay and provides habitat for hundreds of species of birds and animals, including the endangered whooping crane.

A significant portion of the funding for the project is being provided by NFWF's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, which was created with dollars paid by BP and Transocean in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. NFWF has committed \$34.5 million to the project.

"The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is proud to be part of this remarkable conservation effort along the Texas Gulf Coast. The size and diversity of species and habitat found on Powderhorn Ranch make it an integral project in the overall recovery process of the gulf from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill," said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. "The combined effort of so many groups exemplifies the tremendous cooperative effort necessary to protect and restore wildlife and habitat."

The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy of Texas each provided \$10 million in interim funding so Powderhorn Ranch could be purchased in 2014. The two organizations were reimbursed by Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. TPWF now holds title to the property and will turn it over to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in a few years. Restoration work is underway and limited public access will be made available in the interim.

TPWF has raised \$46.5 million toward the \$49.2 million project so far, including the NFWF

commitment. Several members of Philanthropy Southwest have made major donations to the project including, Knobloch Family Foundation, Meadows Foundation and The Brown Foundation. Additional contributions are welcome and interested donors can contact Anne Brown at the TPW Foundation for more information at 214-720-1478 or abrown@tpwf.org