

State of Texas

Matagorda Bay System Priority Landscape Conservation

The Matagorda Bay System on the central Texas Coast includes four major interconnected bays (San Antonio, Espiritu Santo, Matagorda and East Matagorda Bays) and their associated tidal sub-bays and tributaries. This bay system covers 627 square miles of open water, and includes Matagorda Island and West and East Matagorda Peninsulas. In addition to the inherent diversity and productivity of this system, the Matagorda Bay System project area offers unique opportunities to protect coastal habitats on a landscape scale because of its relative lack of human fragmentation and development. As of November, 2014, Texas state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, working with private sector coastal partners, have identified three tracts of land for fee simple acquisition totaling 17,000 acres at a cost of \$36.6 million as strategic conservation priorities. A fourth tract targeted for acquisition of a conservation easement is 10,000 acres valued at \$8 million. The fee simple acquisitions are available from willing sellers at appraised value and include some 28 miles of frontage on the Matagorda Bay System and the Gulf of Mexico. They protect habitat for endangered whooping cranes, piping plovers and sea turtles, as well as a variety of coastal habitats including beaches, dunes, coastal prairie, pothole wetlands and coastal live oak forests.

In addition, conservation of these tracts will protect extensive adjacent seagrass and shellfish beds. They also protect water quality by conserving local estuarine watersheds, filtering runoff and groundwater recharge and preserving local freshwater inflows. The primary goal of the project is to Restore and Conserve Habitat, but will also directly contribute to the protection of water quality and replenishment and living coastal and marine resources. Each acquisition will add to and/or complement existing conservation projects. Requested funding amount: \$6,800,000 - \$44,922,705.