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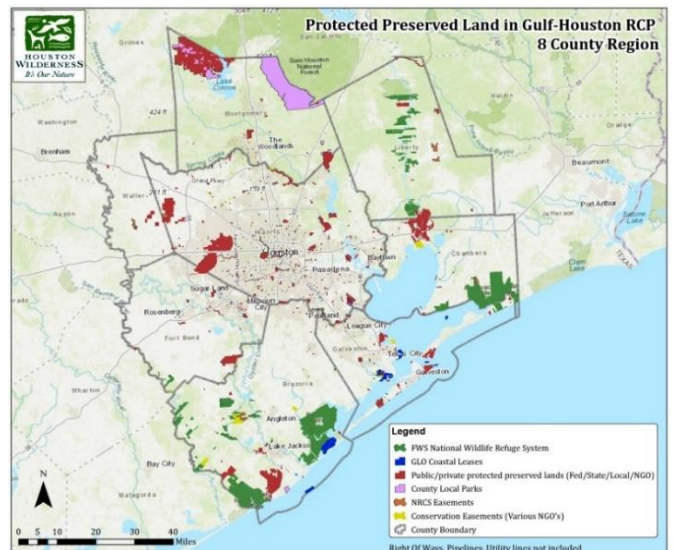
REGIONAL RESPONSE TO IPCC REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Gulf-Houston Region has a strong response to last month's IPCC Report on the dire effects of climate change. And, despite Covid-19 restrictions in 2020, progress is being made on the Three Key Goals of the *Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan (RCP)* to increase resilience through more green space (protected/preserved lands), green stormwater infrastructure and increased organic carbon in regional soils.

First Key Goal, reaching 24% in protected/preserved land by 2040 – From the initial 9.3% in protected/preserved lands across the 8-county Gulf-Houston region in 2018, there was a 5.7% increase in the 4.9 million acres in the region with a current total of 15% of conserved green space (744,600 acres total). The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on funding and land title closing in 2020, so the percentage increase of protected/preserved land in 2020 was less than expected. A larger jump in this percentage is anticipated in 2021 and 2022.

“These innovative environmental projects received the necessary funding from various sources to achieve a higher percentage in nature-based infrastructure for resilience in our region,” explained Chris Amandes, environmental lawyer and Board Chair of Houston Wilderness.

Second Key Goal, reaching 50% in nature-based stabilization techniques by 2040 – Nature-based stabilization techniques, such as green stormwater infrastructure, bioswales, large-scale tree plantings, detention basins and reservoirs, created a more resilient environment against future storms and many other community stressors in 2020. The region's percentage of such techniques has doubled to more than 1.25 million acres of the 4.9 million acres in the eight-county Gulf-Houston region. The Covid-19 pandemic created more opportunities for work on land restoration, which benefitted this Key Goal.



“To achieve the *Gulf-Houston RCP's* second Key Goal, local developers and landowners must continue to implement green stormwater techniques,” stressed Matt Stahman, Vice-Chair of Houston Wilderness.

Third Key Goal of .04% increase in organic carbon sequestration – Public and private partners planted over 430,000 new native trees and hundreds of acres of native grasses and oyster reefs in 2020, helping to achieve a .04% increase (600,000 tons) in carbon absorption in our regional soils in just one year. With the current efforts of public and private entities working to reduce the current annual *emissions* of 14.9 million tons of CO2 in the 8-county Gulf-Houston region, sequestering .04% additional carbon into our soils helps the region reach substantially reduced carbon emissions by 2030.

“The many partners that support the *Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan* have made substantial gains for the region as we work toward reaching all three Key Goals,” commented Deborah January-Bevers, President of Houston Wilderness. “We are confident that we will collectively be able to achieve all three Key Goals.”

For more information on the *Gulf-Houston Regional Conservation Plan*, visit www.GulfHoustonRCP.org.