



West Bay Conservation Initiative



A PROGRAM OF THE TCEQ

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The Galveston Bay Estuary Program

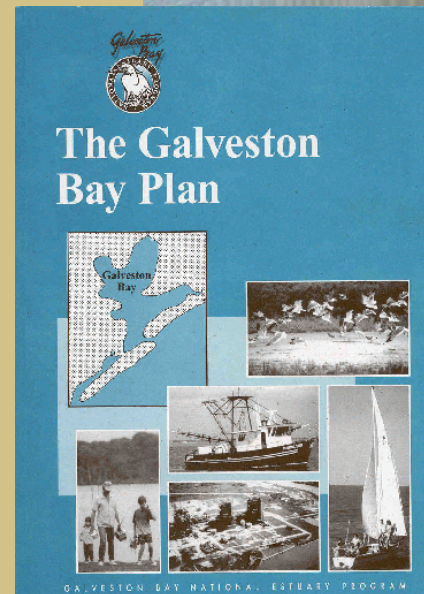
- Established by Congress to protect this estuary of national significance
- Non-regulatory Program of the TCEQ





The Galveston Bay Estuary Program

- 41-member Galveston Bay Council
- Diverse stakeholder representation
- Implements *The Galveston Bay Plan* through partnerships





Estuary Program Accomplishments

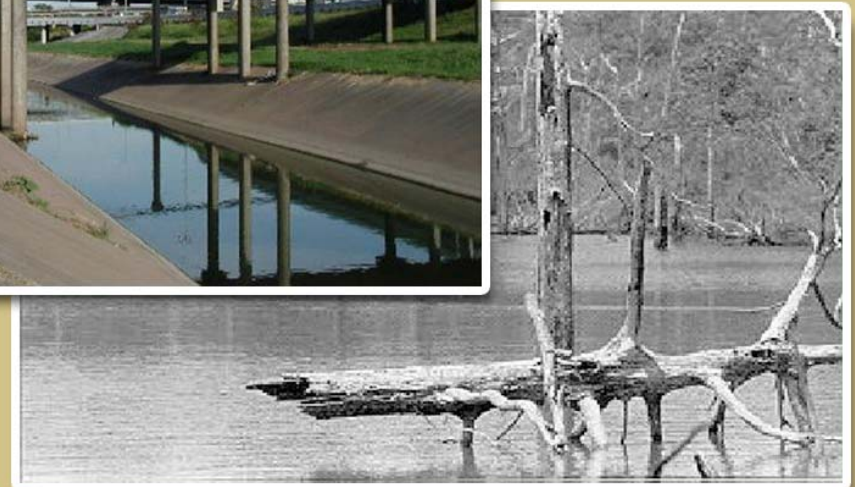
- Protected and restored over **15,000 acres** of wetlands and important coastal habitats
- Implemented several successful water quality projects
- Developing WPPs-Armand, Dickinson, Bastrop, potentially Highland/Marchand
- Fostered first bay-wide seafood safety program
- Sponsored essential research
- Conducted numerous successful public outreach programs





Galveston Bay's Challenges... Habitat Loss

- Nearly 35,000 acres of wetlands were lost between 1950 and 1990 (24%)
- Freshwater- 53% of loss (1950-1990)
- Over 2,900 acres of estuarine (1992-2002)
- Over 9,000 acres (3%) freshwater wetlands (1992-2002)





Natural Resource Uses Subcommittee

- To address habitat loss, the Estuary Program worked with other resource agencies, local governments, citizens, industry to protect and restore 15,000 acres of wetlands and important coastal habitats in last twelve years
- In West Bay area, we've protected and restored over 3,000 acres, at a cost of over \$11 million



Key Partners

- Counties of Galveston, Harris, Chambers
- Cities of Alvin, Houston, Pasadena, Seabrook, League City, Pearland, Nassau Bay, Webster, Dickinson, Jamaica Beach
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- US Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Coastal Program
- Galveston Bay Foundation
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- The Trust for Public Land
- NOAA Fisheries
- Reliant Energy
- NRG Texas Power, LLC
- Port of Houston Authority
- Texas General Land Office
- SCENIC GALVESTON, Inc.
- EPA
- Audubon Society
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Many others



Watershed Level Conservation

- Much of Estuary Program's early work involved intertidal marsh protection and restoration
- Recently, moving towards more comprehensive ecosystem/watershed management, recognizing importance of inland resources to estuary
- Land/habitat conservation projects critical strategy to achieve conservation goals-habitat, species and water quality protection
- Completed several acquisition projects through highly successful partnership with The Trust for Public Land, several under development



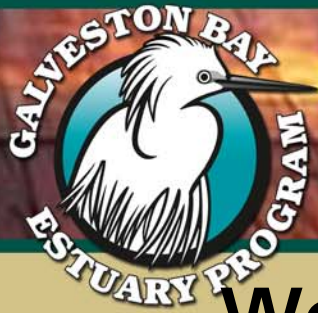
Land and Habitat Conservation

- Land acquisition primary mechanism
- Integrated approach most successful
 - Parks and open space preservation
 - Public recreation
 - Water quality protection
 - Flood damage reduction
 - Community involvement



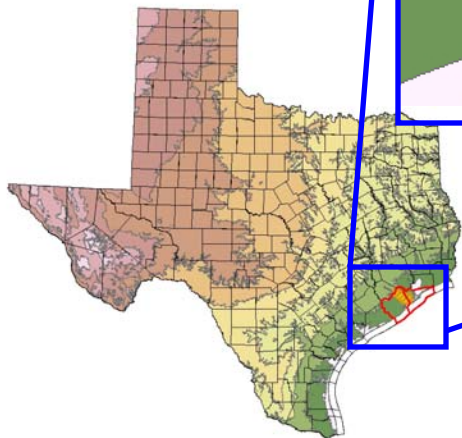
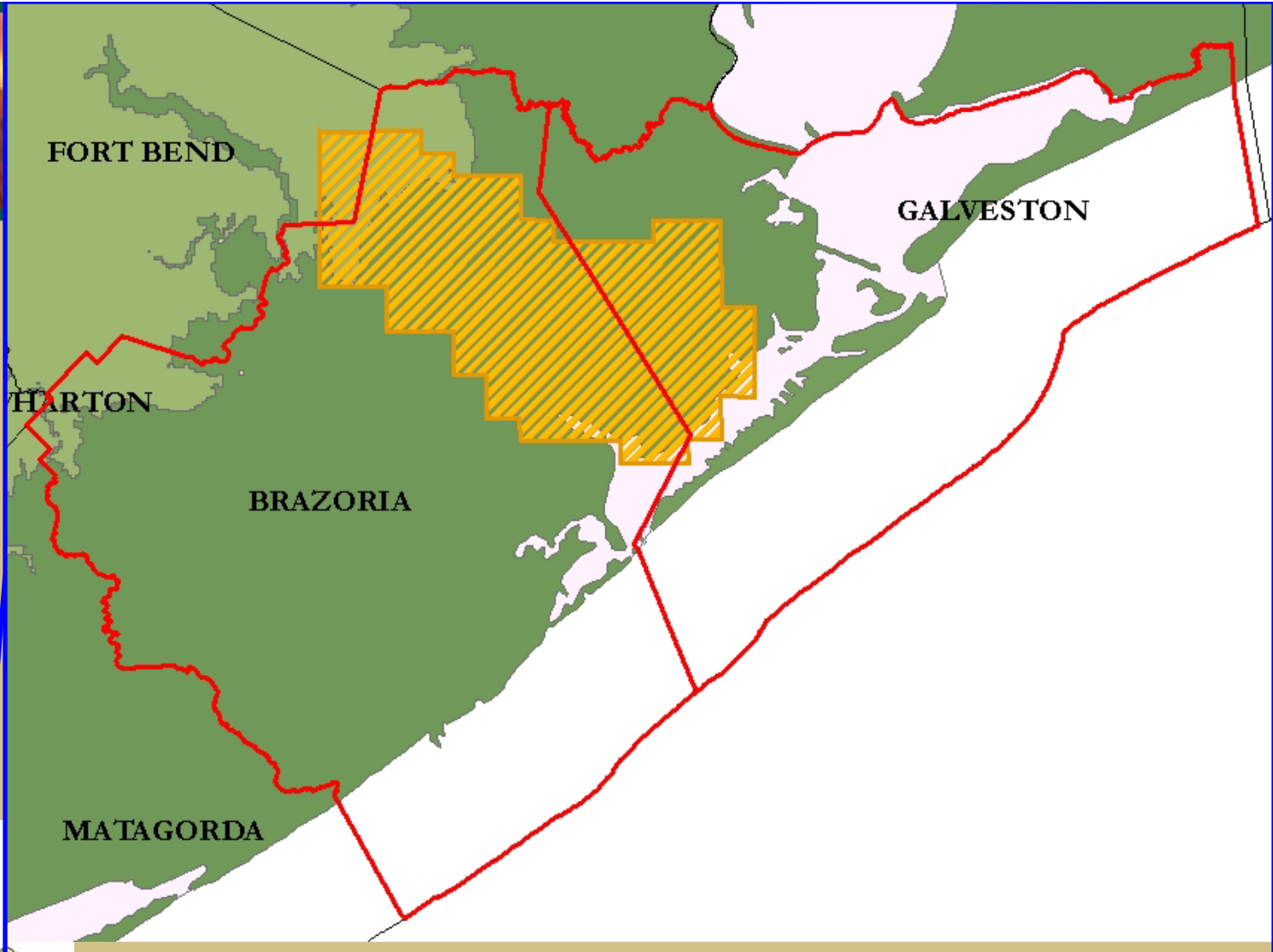
New Approaches and Opportunities

- Look at outlying areas
- Collaborate with local governments to assist with community and parks & open space initiatives
- Work with private landowners
 - Purchase of Development Rights, SB1273
 - Conservation Easements
 - Farm Bill, Conservation Security Program, and other agriculture programs
- Collaborate with other state and local programs, Highland, Bastrop, Dickinson



West Bay Conservation Initiative

- Relatively pristine in terms of intact contiguous habitats, stream corridors, lack of urbanization, water quality
- West Bay Watershed covers 900,000 acres, is mostly undeveloped, land use is primarily agricultural
 - 400,000 acres in cultivation (rice, etc.)
 - 200,000 acres of rangeland
- Less intense growth pressures and lower land prices compared to other areas
- Presents and opportunity to work with local communities to achieve landscape level conservation, preserving the unique biological and geographic characteristics of the region, as well as its unique cultural heritage
- Important to act now-H-GAC projects 40% population increase in Galveston and Brazoria Counties by 2025



West Bay Watershed
Protection Project Target Area

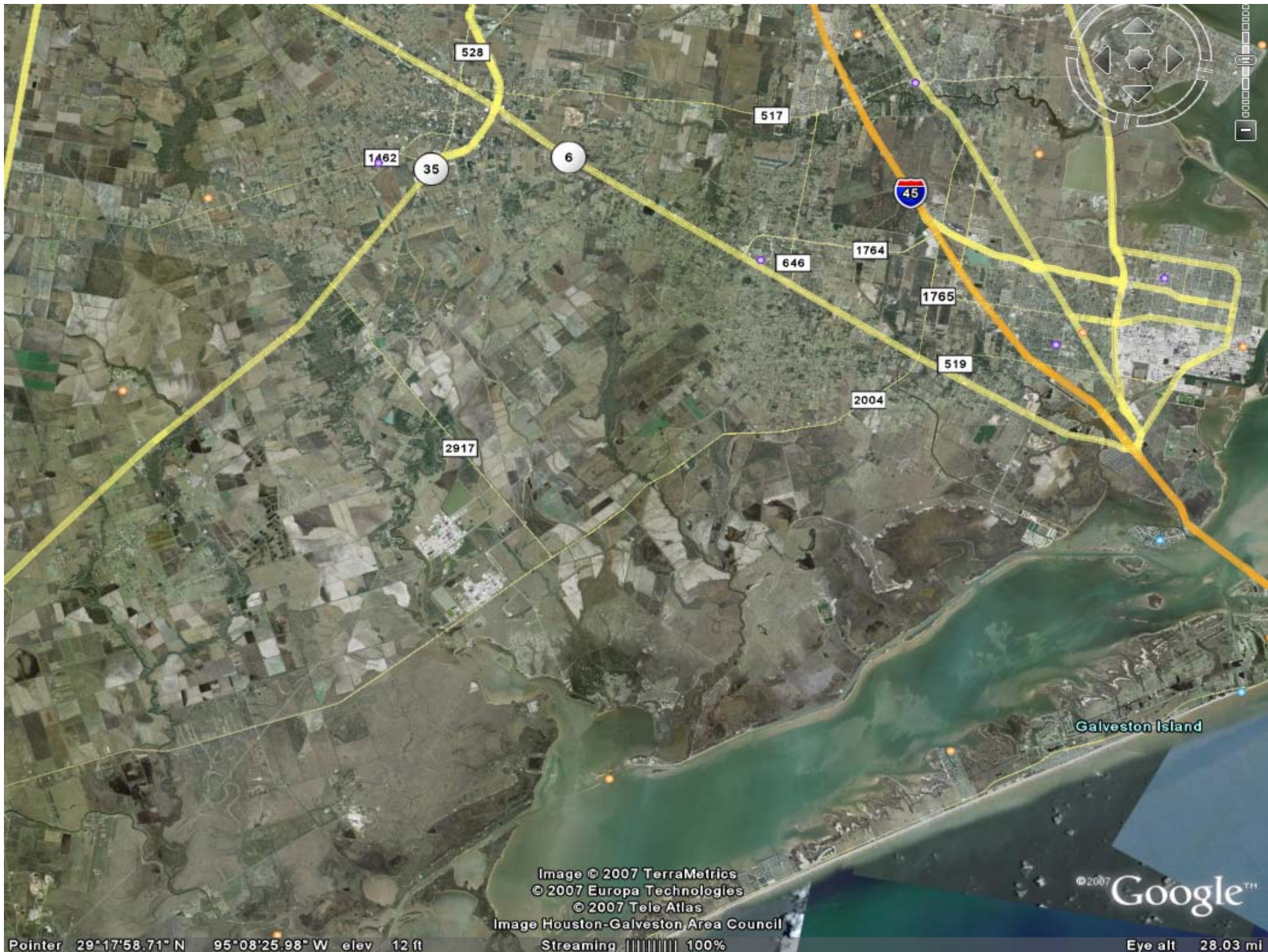


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Image Houston-Galveston Area Council

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Pointer 29°17'58.71" N 95°08'25.98" W elev 12 ft

Streaming 100%

Eye alt 28.03 mi

















Progress

- Established partnership with Texas State University's River Systems Institute
- Conducted watershed habitat assessment, identifying key areas for conservation-simply as tool for stakeholder led planning
- Established technical advisory group
- Established relationships with key local leaders and stakeholders
- Established relationships with landowners of priority areas
- Progress in fundraising-state/federal grants and GLO's Texas Farm and Ranch Land Conservation Program



Path Forward

- Will collaborate with groups working in nearby watersheds-Bastrop, etc.
- Will work to further capitalize on current opportunities (CIAP, CMP, USFWS, USDA, TPWD, etc.) for on-the-ground conservation work
- Will expand relationships with landowners of priority areas
- Will reach out to corporate and industrial landowners