

Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges



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The Friends of Brazoria Wildlife
Refuges is a non-profit 501(c)(3)
Corporation. Tax ID number
76-0440298

August 22, 2012

Robert C. Wilson III, President
The John M. O'Quinn Foundation
P.O. Box 27501
Houston, Texas 77227

Dear Mr. Wilson:

The Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuge Complex was formed in 1994 with a mission to promote, support, and assist the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex in the operation and development of its refuge programs. To that end, and through this proposal, we request \$424,280 to acquire 212.7 acres in the Columbia Bottomlands Ecosystem - the only expanse of hardwood forested wetlands in Texas adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. Acquiring this acreage, the "Texas Red Oak Tract," serves a larger purpose: conserving the internationally-significant Columbia Bottomlands Ecosystem, found nowhere else in the United States. The land helps preserve quality of life for coastal communities while providing open space, recreation, and environmental education in a fast-growing region of Texas.

The project supports the ultimate goal of acquiring and protecting 70,000 acres of this old-growth bottomland forest in the floodplains of the Brazos, San Bernard, and Colorado rivers near the Gulf of Mexico. The Texas Red Oak Tract will add 212.7 acres to the 24,000 acquired to date, tying existing conservation areas into a corridor of prime waterfowl and forest songbird habitat. Also, the conservation of such priority tracts will protect the San Bernard River watershed, which provides fresh water to the Refuge's estuarine marshes. These estuaries are essential for conserving the coast's biological resources, including fish and shrimp, which support commerce and recreation.

The Columbia Bottomlands Ecosystem has high wildlife and wetland values, and the wetland types protected under this project are among the most productive for waterfowl and wildlife in the United States. A great diversity of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians rely on these wetlands for all or part of their life cycles. Millions of Nearctic-Neotropical songbirds make landfall in the Bottomlands during spring migration and also use the area during fall migration. Migrating birds depend on the forest tracts for rest and feeding after crossing the Gulf. Of the 650 species of birds known to occur in the United States, 320 species are found on the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge - and most of them are likely to spend part of their life cycles on the Texas Red Oak Tract.

A \$424,280 grant from the John M. O'Quinn Foundation will fund pre-acquisition due diligence activities (e.g., survey, environmental assessments and reporting, closing costs) as well as the actual purchase of the Texas Red Oak Tract. Ultimately, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will protect and preserve the tract, in perpetuity, as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In the next pages, we present detailed information that describes the value of this project. Should you require additional information, please contact me at (979) 297-1815, Michael Lange, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (979) 964-4011, or Tom Smith, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, at (505) 292-2143. You might also consider discussing the project and Mr. O'Quinn's support for our conservation efforts with David Towery. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Ed Barrios
President, Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges