

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

June 24, 2013

E. Gail Purvis, Director
The Trull Foundation
404 Fourth Street
Palacios, Texas 77465

Dear Mr. Purvis:

The Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (“the Friends, “the Friends Group”) requests \$26,500 toward the acquisition of 11.05 acres within the Columbia Bottomlands Ecosystem - the only expanse of hardwood forested wetlands in Texas adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. Acquiring this acreage, called “the Poole Tract,” serves a larger purpose: to conserve the internationally-significant Columbia Bottomlands Ecosystem, found nowhere else in the United States. The overall conservation effort helps preserve quality of life for coastal communities while providing open space, recreation, and environmental education in a fast-growing region of Texas.

Our mission is to promote, support, and assist the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex in the operation and development of its refuge programs. The Friends Group believes that public education, refuge improvements, and volunteer efforts are critical to conserving a unique habitat. We obtain resources for Refuge facilities, programs, and materials; recruit volunteers; and participate in habitat improvement, natural history experiences, community outreach education programs, environmental education programs, fund-raising, facility improvements, and land acquisition. To date, the Friends Group has contributed significantly to the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge, not only by donating thousands of volunteer hours but also by raising over \$1,500,000 for 40 projects and programs. In 2011, we obtained a \$300,000 grant from Houston Endowment for pre-acquisition funds to facilitate the purchase of ten tracts in the Columbia Bottomlands Ecosystem.

The project we propose is specific to habitat acquisition and protection. Our goal is to protect, permanently and through fee title, 11.05 acres of coastal prairie. The project supports the ultimate goal of acquiring and protecting 70,000 acres of this unique, old-growth bottomland forest in the floodplains of the Brazos, San Bernard, and Colorado rivers near the Gulf of Mexico. Although the purchase will add a mere 11.05 acres to the 30,000 acquired to date, it helps tie existing conservation areas into a corridor of prime waterfowl, coastal prairie, and forest songbird habitats. Though small in terms of acreage, the Poole Tract has habitat value. It lies in the Columbia Bottomlands; it is comprised of coastal prairie wetlands that support prairie-dependent species (e.g., Le Conte’s Sparrow); the tributary of a slough cuts through it. However, its primary importance stems from its location: the Poole property is a private, “in-holding” tract: it lies within the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge proper. We have concerns about potential development of the land for residential or commercial purposes. Development within the Refuge itself threatens its environmental integrity. The Friends wish to purchase the acreage and add it to the Refuge system for preservation as habitat.