Hannah Sodolak

From: Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation <julia.weaver@gulfpartnership.org>

Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2020 2:57 PM

To: Hannah Sodolak

Subject: Conservation News for January 22, 2020



Conservation News for the Gulf of Mexico Region

January 22, 2020

The Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation (Gulf Partnership) seeks its first Executive Director.

The Gulf Partnership will begin operating as a separate 501c3 non-profit in 2020 after nine years of operation with a fiscal agent. As part of the transition, the organization is seeking its first Executive Director. The Gulf Partnership was created in part as a response to the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil disaster and worked to get land conservation included in the DWH oil spill ecosystem restoration strategy during its early years. The organization continues to work on oil spill restoration but has broadened its focus to include on-going challenges facing the region: climate change, community resilience, increasing urbanization, loss of habitat, forests, working lands, water quality and quantity problems, and other issues.

The duties of the Executive Director include:

- · Capacity building;
- · Communications and outreach;
- Organizational development and financial management; and
- Fundraising

Read the full job description here. Applications will be accepted until Feb. 14, 2020 or until filled. Please send cover letter and resume, with subject line: PGCLC Executive Director Position to Julia Weaver at julia.weaver@qulfpartnership.org.

The Gulf Partnership is a network of 28 local, regional, state and national land trusts whose mission is to increase the pace, quality, and permanence of voluntary land and water conservation in the Gulf of Mexico Region.

New report issued on the status of Texas working lands.

Privately owned farms, ranches, and forests, are under increasing land conversion pressure driven by rapid population growth, suburbanization, and rural development, creating implications for rural economies. In the report *Texas Land Trends: Status Update and Trends of Texas Working Lands,* researchers from Texas A & M summarize land and demographic data related to Texas' changing working lands in four primary sections: population growth, land value, ownership size, and working lands. Findings from the 2019 report are compared to previous Texas Land Trends reports to assess current and historic land use trends. Read the report here.

The Nature Conservancy to host webinar: Tools to Protect Habitat, Enhance Coastal Resilience and Reduce Flood Insurance Rates

This webinar will focus on The Nature Conservancy's efforts to link conservation and restoration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System (FEMA CRS). Conservation activities, such as buying and protecting undeveloped lands and restoring wetlands, are 'nature-based solutions' that are creditable under CRS.

Working with cities and land trust partners in Gulf coast communities, TNC has developed tools that facilitate identification and selection of nature-based projects that can protect habitats and enhance coastal resilience while earning CRS points to reduce rising and uncertain flood insurance rates. The approaches being shared during this webinar, including the CRS Explorer App and the CRS Greenprint process, have direct application for the land trusts in the Gulf of Mexico and across the US.

Land conservation practitioners are invited to attend the webinar on Wednesday, February 19, 2020 at 10:00 am CT/11:00 am ET.

Join Skype Meeting

Join by Phone

Toll-free number: +1 (855) 297-9064, 1048162153# Toll number: +1 (605) 475-5602, 1048162153#

Conference ID: 1048162153

Alabama officials invite project suggestions for GOMESA-funded projects by February 14, 2020.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), State Lands Division (SLD), Coastal Section is accepting project suggestions to be funded through the Alabama Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act Program. The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) was enacted by Congress in 2006 and significantly enhances Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas leasing activities and revenue sharing in the Gulf of Mexico.

The GOMESA authorizes uses of the proceeds for the following purposes:

- Projects and activities for the purposes of coastal protection, including conservation, coastal restoration, hurricane protection, and infrastructure directly affected by coastal wetland losses;
- Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, or natural resources;
- Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan;
- Mitigation of the impact of outer Continental Shelf activities through the funding of onshore infrastructure projects;
- Planning assistance and the administrative costs of complying with this section.

For information regarding submission requirements, click here.

Texas land trusts protect critical habitats and water resources.

Thanks to our friends at the <u>Texas Land Trust Council</u> for reporting on the good work being done by Gulf Partnership member land trusts in Texas.

Colorado River Land Trust: Tributary Sporting Club, Burnet County, 3,724 acres
The Tributary Sporting Club, located along Lake Buchanan, is a spectacular, undeveloped portion of the
Texas Hill Country that is home to an abundance of native flora and fauna, history, and significant
sources of fresh water that flow into the Colorado River. The conservation easement protects over seven
miles of beautiful shoreline along this stretch of the Colorado River.

The Nature Conservancy of Texas: The Pietila Ranch, Culberson County, 6,469 acres
This beautiful ranch is adjacent to the scenic McKittrick Canyon in Guadalupe Mountains National Park
using funding from the NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Texas Farm and
Ranch Lands Conservation Program (TFRLCP). It is a rich desert landscape with habitat consisting of high
desert grasslands, as well as the springs and headwaters for McKittrick Creek.

<u>The Conservation Fund:</u> Jefferson County tracts, Chambers and Jefferson Counties, 556 acres The Conservation Fund acquired three tracts of coastal marsh, totaling 556 acres, all within the acquisition boundary of the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on the Upper Texas Coast. This stunning coastal landscape is visible from the SH124 bridge heading into High Island.

<u>Guadalupe Blanco River Trust</u>: Dreamcatcher Ranch, Hays County, 211 acres

The Dreamcatcher Ranch is considered a federal Grassland of Special Significance, providing habitat for diverse wildlife and groundwater recharge for the sensitive Edwards Aquifer. GBRT worked with several partner organizations, state and federal agencies, to conserve this pristine grassland ranch with a conservation easement, culminating decades of mindful stewardship and a family's diligent efforts to restore the San Marcos River headwaters.

USDA Invites Comment on Environmental Quality Incentives Program Rule

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) <u>Natural Resources Conservation Service</u> (NRCS) seeks public comments on its interim rule through Feb. 18 for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program provides financial and technical assistance to help Ag producers plan and implement conservation practices on working lands.

The rule – now available on the Federal Register – takes effect upon publication and includes changes to the program prescribed by the 2018 Farm Bill. Submit comments through <u>regulations.gov</u> under Docket ID NRCS-2019-0020.

Changes to EQIP include:

- Creating incentive contracts and payments for incentive practices to better support locally led conservation needs.
- Requiring NRCS to offer an advance payment option for historically underserved producers.
- Raising the payment cap for producers participating in the Organic Initiative to \$140,000 for contracts entered between fiscal 2019 through 2023.
- Expanding the Conservation Innovation Grant program, which is funded through EQIP, to include opportunities for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials and Soil Health Demonstration Trials.

The 2018 Farm Bill created incentive contracts, which address up to three priority resource concerns within targeted watersheds and other high priority landscapes. While typical EQIP contracts last five years, these contracts last five to 10 years. The Farm Bill also enabled increased payments for priority practices, through which NRCS can designate up to 10 practices in each state to receive the higher rates.

For more information on how to sign up for EQIP visit nrcs.usda.gov or contact your local NRCS field office.

USDA Invites Input on Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Rule.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) seeks public comments on its interim rule for the <u>Agricultural Conservation Easement Program</u> (ACEP). ACEP is USDA's premier conservation easement program, helping landowners protect working agricultural lands and wetlands. The rule – now available on the Federal Register – takes effect on publication and includes changes to the program prescribed by the 2018 Farm Bill.

Changes to ACEP for agricultural land easements include:

- Authorizing assistance to partners who pursue "Buy-Protect-Sell" transactions.
- Requiring a conservation plan for highly erodible land that will be protected by an agricultural land easement.
- Increasing flexibility for partners to meet cost-share matching requirements.

Changes to ACEP for wetland reserve easements include:

- Identifying water quality as a program purpose for enrollment of wetland reserve easements.
- Expanding wetland types eligible for restoration and management under wetland reserve easements.

NRCS invites comments on this interim rule through March 6 on the Federal Register. Electronic comments must be submitted through <u>regulations.gov</u> under Docket ID NRCS-2019-0006.

NRCS is investing more than \$300 million in conservation easements for fiscal 2020. NRCS state offices will announce signup periods for ACEP in the coming weeks. Applying for ACEP: ACEP aids landowners and eligible entities with conserving, restoring and protecting wetlands, productive agricultural lands and grasslands. NRCS accepts ACEP applications year-round, but applications are ranked and funded by enrollment periods that are set locally. For more information on how to sign up for ACEP, visit your state website at nrcs.usda.gov or contact your local NRCS field office.

Job Opportunities

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Longleaf Alliance announces two job opportunities: Development and Media Manager and Technical Assistance and Training Specialist.

Development and Media Manager. Under the direction of the Development Director, the Development & Media Manager will have a focus on media correspondence, special events, individual and corporate donors, and grant research, writing and reporting. Read the full announcement.

Technical Assistance and Training Specialist. The Technical Assistance and Training Specialist plays a key role in representing The Alliance to our external audiences and delivering technical assistance and training in many forms to best support these key functions across the range of longleaf restoration. The efforts include, but are not limited to, training through The Alliance's signature Longleaf Academies, workshops, field days, and webinars, and through direct technical assistance to landowners and managers to provide the best information available to meet their needs and their objectives for longleaf restoration. Find out more.

Weeks Bay Foundation seeks Land Coordinator.

Weeks Bay Foundation, a nationally accredited land trust, is looking to hire a new Land Coordinator. The Land Coordinator reports to the Executive Director and is responsible for overseeing all land protection projects, monitoring, and restoration efforts for land projects.



Funding Opportunities

North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Standard Grants deadline is February 21, 2020.

The Standard Grants Program is a competitive, matching grants program that supports public-private partnerships carrying out projects in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. These projects must involve long-term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated uplands habitats. In Mexico, projects may also include technical training, environmental education and outreach, organizational infrastructure development, and sustainable-use studies. Visit the NAWCA webpage to read the full announcement.

The Longleaf Stewardship Fund is requesting proposals for projects to expand and enhance the longleaf pine ecosystem.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to expand and enhance longleaf pine ecosystem restoration and management across longleaf pine's historical range, as well as the restoration and enhancement of bottomland hardwood forests within priority focal areas. The Longleaf Stewardship Fund is a landmark public-private partnership. February 6th is the deadline to apply.

Funding priorities for this program include:

- Restoring the longleaf pine ecosystem through collaborative and result-oriented actions that help advance the goals of the Range-Wide Conservation Plan for Longleaf Pine;
- Maintaining, enhancing and expanding productive understory habitat of the longleaf pine ecosystem;
- · Aiding federal agencies in achieving their mission-oriented objectives;
- Supporting the recovery of iconic species through habitat enhancements;
- Strengthening the capacity of local organizations to establish, advance or lead local longleaf pine ecosystem restoration efforts; and
- Expanding the number of landowners engaged in longleaf pine restoration and maintenance on private lands, and supporting working forests by demonstrating their environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

Click here to read the full announcement.

NFWF and Wells Fargo announce Resilient Communities program request for proposals.

Wells Fargo and NFWF have partnered to create the Resilient Communities program. This \$3 million per year program aims to help communities in the United States and territories, prepare, strengthen and bounce back more quickly after a disaster. Through preparedness and by taking advantage of natural and nature-based features like wetlands, resilient shorelines, urban tree canopies, natural forests and healthy upstream watersheds, communities can accrue quality of life benefits today. In addition, these projects enhance fish and wildlife resources and avoid or reduce risk to life, and costly and devastating impacts from events such as sea-level risk, floods, droughts, fires and more.

In 2020, Wells Fargo and NFWF will invest approximately \$3 million total in these three categories: Category 1: Adaptation through conservation projects. Grants in this category support highly impactful and visible conservation projects.

Category 2: Community capacity building and demonstration projects. Grants in this category help multiple communities understand, organize and take action to address risks and opportunities through preparedness and adaptation.

Category 3: Adaptation focused on affordable housing and small businesses. Grants in this category support projects that advance scalable, nature-based resilience solutions benefiting affordable housing and/or small businesses in communities vulnerable to impacts from natural disasters.

Partners for Places is accepting proposals for matching grants to support the planning and implementing of urban sustainability and green stormwater infrastructure projects.

Partners for Places accepts proposals for the creation of a community-focused sustainability, climate action, adaptation/resilience, equity, water or comprehensive plan that specifically addresses sustainability; or urban sustainability and/or green stormwater infrastructure. (Please closely review the Proposal and Award Guidance document before preparing your proposal.) All proposals are scored based on the extent to which they include meaningful involvement of priority audiences/stakeholders in program development and implementation.

The application deadline for Round 16 is January 31, 2020. A selection committee comprised of foundation representatives and urban sustainability directors will make grant selection decisions on behalf of the program, with awards to be announced in May 2020. Find out more...

USDA Accepting Proposals for Conservation Collaboration Grants

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest \$35 million in grants to enhance outreach to the nation's farmers and ranchers for the delivery and adoption of conservation measures. Proposals are due February 7, 2020, for projects that target agricultural producers in multiple states, including Tribal, socially disadvantaged, limited-resource or beginning farmers and ranchers as well as veteran farmers or ranchers.

NRCS is accepting proposals in two different categories:

- Outreach to Assist Historically Underserved Groups Increase the delivery of conservation
 assistance to historically underserved farmers and ranchers through a combination of program
 outreach and technical assistance in managing natural resources. Historically underserved
 producers include Tribal, socially disadvantaged, limited-resource or beginning farmers and
 ranchers and those who are veteran farmers or ranchers. These projects can receive \$250,000 to
 \$1 million.
- Collaboration on Strategic Natural Resource Issues Projects that provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers for the transfer of technology and development of natural resource tools. These projects can receive \$500,000 to \$2 million.

Visit NRCS for more information.

2020 Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program Challenge has opened.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has announced that it is accepting pre-proposals for the 2020 Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program Challenge. The Request for Pre-Proposals and the downloadable PDF pre-proposal form are available on the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities' webpage or by contacting Peter@usendowment.org. The deadline for pre-proposal submission is 8 p.m. EST, Friday, January 24, 2020. Up to \$15 million is available for one or multiple awards. Final awards are planned to be announced in June or July of 2020.

The REPI Challenge, established in 2012, is a competitive process to seek projects that accelerate land conservation and military mission protection through innovative partnerships and shared financing.

The 2020 REPI Challenge may provide up to \$15 million in FY20 funding for land conservation or management activities that limit incompatible development in the vicinity of DoD installations and ranges, maintain or improve military installation resilience, or relieve current or anticipated environmental restrictions in support of key capabilities identified in the National Defense Strategy. Additional consideration will be given to those projects that leverage multiple authorities to accomplish project goals. Selected projects will support the rebuilding of military readiness by protecting investments toward strategic power projection platforms deemed vital to the Department's establishment of an unmatched innovation base.

Partners are strongly encouraged to coordinate closely with local installation or range staff to verify the presence of key National Defense Strategy capabilities prior to proposal development. Visit the <u>U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities</u> website for more information.

NFWF Issues Request for Proposals for 2020 Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Wildlife Habitat Council, in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, FedEx, Southern Company, and BNSF Railway are pleased to solicit applications for the 2020 Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration program. The program seeks to help communities develop the capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations, with a focus on improving water quality, watersheds, and the species and habitats they support.

Projects eligible for grants include a variety of ecological improvements along with targeted community outreach, education, and stewardship. Ecological improvements may include one or more of the following: wetland, riparian, forest and coastal habitat restoration; wildlife conservation, community tree canopy enhancement, water quality monitoring and green infrastructure best management practices for managing runoff. Projects should increase access to the benefits of nature, reduce the impact of environmental hazards, and engage local communities, particularly underserved communities, in project planning, outreach and implementation.

Proposals are due January 30, 2010. For additional information on program priorities, project metrics, and eligibility criteria, visit the <u>National Fish and Wildlife Foundation website</u>.

NOAA opens Environmental Literacy grant funding opportunity related to community resilience.

The goal of this funding opportunity is to build environmental literacy of K-12 students and the public so they are knowledgeable of the ways in which their community can become more resilient to extreme weather and/or other environmental hazards, and become involved in achieving that resilience.

Projects should build the collective environmental literacy necessary for communities to become more resilient to the extreme weather and other environmental hazards they face in the short- and long-term. Building sufficient environmental literacy in a community means that these communities are composed of individuals who are supported by formal and informal education that develop their knowledge, skills, and confidence to: (1) reason about the ways that human and natural systems interact globally and where they live, including the acknowledgement of disproportionately distributed vulnerabilities; (2) participate in scientific and/or civic processes; and (3) consider scientific uncertainty, cultural knowledge, and diverse community values in decision making. The deadline is March 26, 2020. Read the full announcement here.

Upcoming Events

The 2020 Public Environmental Law Conference (PIEC) at the University of Florida will be held February 6 - 8, 2020 in Gainesville, Florida.

The theme of this year's conference is *The Rights of Nature: Defending our Biosphere*. The conference will be held at the Levin College of Law. Find out more...

2020 REPI (Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program) stakeholders workshop scheduled for February 19 - 20 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

On February 19 and 20, 2020, the Compatible Lands Foundation (CLF) is hosting a REPI Stakeholders Workshop for an in-depth look at the Department of Defense's buffer partnership program - the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program. The workshop also enables REPI stakeholders an opportunity to provide direct feedback to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the military Services on how REPI implementation can be enhanced or improved. Join congressional leadership, land trust professionals and senior leadership from each of the military services, as well as industry experts and representatives from other federal agencies, for this two-day event! Visit the event website for more information.

Registration is now open for the 2020 Women in Conservation Leadership Summit!

March 16-19, 2020, the National Wildlife Federation will host the third Women in Conservation Leadership (WCL) Summit on ancestral Sioux, Ute, Cheyenne and Apache lands at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs, CO. The WCL Summit will provide a space to build and strengthen leadership skills in order to elevate women's voices in the conservation movement as well as tackle challenges and issues unique to women in the workplace. The Summit is open to all women who work in or are connected to conservation.

This year's theme is Weaving Change: Connecting Women for Action. <u>Click here for the draft Summit agenda.</u>

The public is invited to a project update meeting for the Turkey Creek conservation project in Gulfport, Mississippi, which is funded by NFWF's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund.

The meeting will be held on January 28, 2020 at 5:00 pm. Find out more about habitat restoration and conservation efforts in the Turkey Creek neighborhood in Gulfport, MS. Click <u>here</u> for details.

Registration is now open for the 2020 Texas Land Conservation Conference.

The 2020 Texas Land Conservation Conference will be held Wednesday, February 26-28, 2020 at the Hilton Austin Airport in Austin, Texas. TLCC is the preeminent statewide meeting for anyone working in the field of land and water conservation, private landowners interested in conserving their land, government, business and NGO agency partners, and any person interested in learning more about these important issues in Texas. Click here for registration, sponsorship, and exhibit information.

Registration is now open for the 2020 Southeast Land Conservation Conference. will be held March 18 - 20, 2020 in Chattanooga, TN.

The Land Trust Alliance is excited to invite participants back to beautiful Chattanooga, Tennessee for the 2020 Southeast Land Conservation Conference at the historic Read House Hotel. The conference will be held March 18 - 20, 2020. It's the perfect chance to look beyond your everyday work, expand your thinking, learn something new and connect with colleagues from the region. Registration will open in January. Registration is now open. Find out more...

The Annual Meeting of the Association of Southeastern Biologists will be held in Jacksonville, Florida March 25 - 28, 2020.

Visit the conference website for information on the agenda, registration, exhibit opportunities and more.

Land Trust Alliance issues call for presentations for Rally 2020.

The Alliance is inviting conservation colleagues to submit proposals to serve as faculty at Rally 2020. If you have knowledge, advice or experiences you'd like to share as an instructor at Rally, submit a proposal today. For the second year, the Alliance is challenging presenters to consider incorporating into their sessions two cross-cutting themes that are critical to the future of land conservation: Inclusion and Climate Change. All proposals are due February 18, 2020. Submit a proposal.

Subscribe to this newsletter

Donate to the Gulf Partnership's Gulf Coast Project Assistance Fund (PAF).

The Project Assistance Fund is a matching grant program for Gulf Partnership member organizations. Over the past 5 years, our partner organizations have used these small matching grants to leverage big conservation dollars. The program was funded by the Knobloch Family Foundation and administered by the Galveston Bay Foundation. The Gulf Partnership is seeking to raise funds to continue this matching grant program with support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities.

Gulf Coast Project Assistance Fund

- Due Diligence funds utilized \$ 386,152
- Conservation dollars leveraged \$ 53,670,152
- Acres protected 27,813

DONATE TO THE GULF COAST PROJECT ASSISTANCE FUND

The Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation is a coalition of more than two dozen land conservation organizations whose shared mission is to increase the pace, quality and permanence of voluntary land and water conservation in the Gulf of Mexico region. The Gulf Partnership is led by an Executive Committee comprised of leaders from our partner organizations. The Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain serves as our fiscal agent. Visit our website to learn more. For more information regarding any item in this newsletter, contact Julia Weaver at 228-219-2279 or julia.weaver@gulfpartnership.org.

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Stay Connected!







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