



TEXAS

From Galveston's coastline and the Piney Woods of East Texas to the deserts of Big Bend National Park and the rocky landscapes of Hill Country, Texas's iconic places highlight the state's unique historical heritage and its raw natural beauty. Time and again, in big cities and rural areas, Texans have shown their support for conserving the state's land and water resources. Since 1991, residents across Texas have voted on 116 local and state ballot measures to fund conservation, and voters have endorsed conservation 91% of the time—providing over \$2 billion in local and state funding for parks and conservation.¹

Conservation supports Texas farms, fisheries, ranches, forests—and the communities that depend on them. Conservation helps protect the land, water, soil, coastal wetland, and pollinator resources that are crucial to the state's \$26 billion agricultural economy and \$4 billion fishery economy.²

- While Texas boasts 142 million acres of privately-owned farms, ranches, and forestlands, these lands—and the ways of life they support—are at risk. In just 15 years between 1997 and 2012, Texas lost 1.1 million acres of working lands to non-agricultural use, an area nearly the size of Delaware.⁴



Texas bluebonnets blooming in Marble Falls, Texas.

- Publicly-funded voluntary conservation easements can play a big role in helping farmers and ranchers protect agricultural lands and livelihoods. Texas has approximately one million acres protected by conservation easements—many of which help keep working farms and ranches in production and families on the land.⁵ Texas farmers also leveraged over \$3.6 billion in conservation program funding from the USDA between 1995 and 2017.⁶
- Together, commercial and recreational fisheries support jobs for 38,000 Texans.⁷ Coastal wetland conservation and restoration support the health of Texas's high-value shrimp fisheries and oyster fisheries, which many Texas families have relied on for generations.⁸

Conservation protects resources for hunting, fishing, and wildlife-based recreation. Hunting and fishing are so important to Texans that in 2015 they enshrined the rights to hunt and fish in the state's constitution.⁹

- Over 1.1 million people hunt, over 2.2 million people fish, and nearly 4.4 million participate in wildlife watching in Texas each year. Together these activities generate nearly \$5.2 billion in annual spending in the state.¹⁰

Conservation powers Texas's economy— attracting workers and employers, supporting vibrant communities, and drawing visitors from around the world. Texas is known internationally for its beautiful coasts and rural landscapes. Increasingly, Texas cities are also known for their innovative public green spaces—like Houston's Buffalo Bayou—which provide both important community spaces and green infrastructure.

- Texas's local parks and recreation agencies generate over \$7.7 billion in economic activity each year and support over 60,000 jobs.¹¹ State parks generate nearly \$900 million in sales and \$240 million in personal income each year and support 6,800 jobs.¹² And the state's national parks host 5.9 million people per year, generate over \$428 million in economic activity, and support over 4,300 jobs.¹³
- Conservation provides the infrastructure for Texas's growing outdoor industry. Outdoor recreation in Texas directly supports 411,000 jobs—more than the oil and gas industry (212,000). It also generates \$52.6 billion in consumer spending, \$15.8 billion in wages and salaries, and \$3.5 billion in state and local tax revenue.¹⁴

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Land and water conservation avoids costs for cities and utilities and saves communities money.

- Conserving and restoring wetlands, salt marshes, and mangroves is one of the most cost-effective ways to protect coastal areas and reduce the impacts of storms and flooding.¹⁵ Research shows that major floods have caused an average of \$4.3 billion in damage per event since 1980.¹⁶ Hurricane Harvey, which hit Texas in 2017 and dropped 60 inches of rain in some areas, caused an estimated \$125 billion in damage—much of it from flooding.¹⁷ Scientists estimate that U.S. coastal wetlands provide \$23.2 billion in storm protection services each year.¹⁸
- Protected watersheds can provide as much as a 10-fold savings in treating drinking water,¹⁹ and nationwide forests provide \$6.8 billion dollars in air pollution removal each year.²⁰ Studies have calculated that for every \$1 invested in conservation \$4 to \$11 is returned in natural goods and services like clean water.²¹
- The protection of the Edwards Aquifer is a major success story for conservation partnerships in Texas. The aquifer covers 4,350 square miles beneath 12 counties. It provides drinking water for almost two million Central Texans—and supports agriculture, industry, and recreation. Since the early 1990s local communities have invested nearly \$1 billion in protecting water quality and protecting green space in areas that are crucial to maintaining the aquifer.²²

Protecting green space increases community health.

- **A huge amount of scientific research now links access to close-to-home parks and green space with improved physical and mental health.**²³ One large-scale study showed that living within 0.6 miles of green space is linked to lower rates of 15 major diseases, including heart disease (15% lower), diabetes (20% lower), and depression (25% lower).²⁴ Cardiovascular disease affects 5.6% of Texans;²⁵ diabetes affects 10.9%,²⁶ and depression affects 11% of seniors.²⁷ Right now, cardiovascular disease costs the U.S. economy \$330 billion per year, diabetes costs \$327 billion, and depression costs \$210 billion. Spending time in nature can also reduce symptoms of attention-deficit disorder, which affects 10.1% of Texas children.²⁸

The Land and Water Conservation Fund in Texas

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has invested over \$577 million in Texas's parks and open spaces.²⁹ The LWCF's State Assistance Program has supported over 1,000 local projects, including community parks across the state.³⁰



Scenic view of Powderhorn Ranch, Texas.

15. Beck and Crozet, "Coastal Wetlands and Flood Damage Reduction"; Beck and Partnership (WAVES), "Managing Coasts with Natural Solutions"; Beck, "How to Build Global Coastal Resilience"; Narayan et al., "The Effectiveness, Costs and Coastal Protection Benefits of Natural and Nature-Based Defences."; 16. NOAA, "Billion-Dollar Disasters: Calculating the Costs | Billion-Dollar Disasters: Calculating the Costs | Did You Know? | Monitoring References | National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI)."; 17. NOAA, "Hurricane Costs."; 18. Costanza et al., "The Value of Coastal Wetlands for Hurricane Protection."; 19. The Trust for Public Land, "The Economic Benefits and Fiscal Impact of Parks and Open Space in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York."; 20. Nowak et al., "Tree and Forest Effects on Air Quality and Human Health in the United States."; 21. The Trust for Public Land, "The Economic Benefits of Great Outdoors Colorado and the Conservation Trust Fund: Fact Sheet"; The Trust for Public Land, "Vermont's Return on Investment in Land Conservation"; The Trust for Public Land, "Return on the Investment from the Land & Water Conservation Fund."; 22. The Nature Conservancy, "Edwards Aquifer Protection Program (Water Funds Toolbox)"; "Edwards Aquifer Protection"; San Antonio Water System, "SAWS: Sensitive Land Acquisition Program."; 23. Kuo, "How Might Contact with Nature Promote Human Health?"; Twohig-Bennett and Jones, "The Health Benefits of the Great Outdoors."; 24. Maas et al., "Morbidity Is Related to a Green Living Environment."; 25. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Percent of Adults with Cardiovascular Disease."; 26. CDC, "U.S. Diabetes Surveillance System."; 27. United Health Foundation, "America's Health Rankings."; 28. CDC, "State-Based Prevalence Data of Parent Reported ADHD Diagnosis by a Health Care Provider."; 29. LWCF Coalition, "SaveLWCF: Land and Water Conservation Fund State Spotlights."; 30. National Recreation and Park Association, "Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance Program: State Fact Sheets."