

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 4, 2021

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### **Remainder of Powderhorn Ranch Donated to TPWD** *Pristine coastal tract to become a Texas State Park in the future*

AUSTIN - The entirety of Powderhorn Ranch is now in the hands of the people of Texas. In a land transaction that closed Oct. 27, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation (TPWF) donated the final 1,360 acres to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). In 2018, TPWF donated 14,998 acres of the property to TPWD for Powderhorn Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The remainder of the property that transferred last week will one day become a state park.

“The donation of Powderhorn Ranch is a promise kept,” said Mike Greene, Chairman of the TPWF Board of Trustees. “This historic investment was made possible by an exceptional public-private partnership and exemplifies how landscape-scale conservation can be achieved in Texas and beyond.”

The acquisition of the 17,351-acre Powderhorn Ranch in Calhoun County forever conserves a spectacular piece of property that is one of the largest remaining tracts of unspoiled coastal prairie in the state. The purchase was made possible by a coalition of conservation partners and donors led by TPWF.

“This transformational project conserves irreplaceable wildlife habitat and brings an exciting new recreational opportunity to the people of Texas,” said Dan Friedkin, Chairman Emeritus of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. “It demonstrates how Texas’s community of conservationists can work hand-in-hand with the state to preserve an extraordinary piece of our natural heritage for generations to come.” Friedkin served as chairman of TPWF’s \$100 million “Keeping it Wild: The Campaign for Texas,” which included funding for Powderhorn. Friedkin made the lead gift for the campaign, which was the largest individual gift in TPWF’s history.

Conservation organizations and TPWD have had their eye on Powderhorn for many years. In 2014, significant funding became available from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, which resulted from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and TPWF committed to raise \$15 million to complete funding for the project. In addition to the \$37.7 million purchase price, TPWF raised funds for initial habitat restoration and an endowment to fund long-term maintenance, which brought the total project cost to nearly \$50 million. The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy provided interim financing, and The Nature Conservancy holds a conservation easement that will forever protect the property. With numerous partners and donors coming to the table, the decades-long goal of conserving Powderhorn Ranch became a reality.

"Powderhorn Ranch conserves pristine wildlife habitat in an area of Texas that is facing increasing development pressure," said TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith. "The investment in this property forever protects a remarkable diversity of species and habitat and connects a patchwork of protected lands from the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to Mad Island Wildlife Management Area and the recently expanded Matagorda Peninsula Coastal Management Area that are vital to the resilience of a healthy Gulf Coast ecosystem."

Powderhorn Ranch conserves in perpetuity unspoiled coastal land with forests of coastal live oak and intact wetlands. The property also includes thousands of acres of freshwater wetlands and salt marshes that offer vital fish and wildlife habitat, provide natural filtering to improve water quality and shield people and property from storm surges and sea level rise. Powderhorn Ranch encompasses more than 11 miles of tidal bayfront on Matagorda Bay, which is home to hundreds of species of birds and animals, including the endangered whooping crane.

Since the 2014 acquisition, TPWF has stewarded the property to prepare for the donation to the state. Thousands of acres of running live oak have been cleared, revitalizing Powderhorn's native prairie. Three new solar wells were installed, providing permanent water sources for terrestrial wildlife, wading birds and waterfowl and creating the transitional wetlands necessary for a complete coastal ecosystem. In addition, TPWF constructed buildings now being used by WMA staff, built miles of fence, and also oversaw the restoration of the historic camp house on

the property, including replacing an aging cistern with a new rainwater collection system. In the future, the camp house will become a state park interpretive center, with the rainwater collection system serving as a demonstration of sustainable water management and conservation practices.

Before the property was transferred, TPWF worked with numerous partners to facilitate access for recreational opportunities such as birding, hunting, camping, and fishing. Since 2019, Powderhorn WMA has provided scheduled access for conservation education, research, birding, and public hunting. While there is no timeline yet for development of the state park, it typically takes many years for a master plan to be developed and for state funding to be identified for park development.

“We’re thrilled to mark this milestone of donating the final Powderhorn acreage to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department,” said TPWF Executive Director Susan Houston. “We are deeply grateful to the many generous donors and partners who made this historic conservation acquisition possible.”

*Since 1991, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation has leveraged public funds with private philanthropy to advance Texas’ proud outdoor traditions and conserve our state’s wildlife, habitat, recreational areas, and natural resources. Since its inception, TPWF has raised more than \$215 million to help ensure that all Texans, today and in the future, can enjoy the wild things and wild places of Texas.*

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