



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **New Foundation Launches \$20 Million Texas Land Conservation Fund**

Thanks to a \$20 million commitment from The Horizon Foundation, new funding is now available to support land protection efforts across Texas. The funding will support the voluntary purchase of land for conservation purposes, as well as the purchase of conservation easements, which are voluntary agreements that forever protect the natural and cultural resource values on a specific parcel of land.

“Like many Texans who cherish the natural resources of our state, we are deeply concerned about the continued degradation of vital, fragile ecosystems across Texas, and we realize that far-reaching efforts must be made now to protect and conserve them” said The Horizon Foundation President Rod Sanders. “Our goal is to galvanize the philanthropic community to join our efforts to protect Texas’ land and water resources today, before they’re lost forever.”

The need is huge. Texas is home to over 30 million people and is one of the fastest growing states in the U.S. Seven of the nation’s top 15 fastest-growing cities are in Texas, with population estimates suggesting the state may top 50 million people by 2050. While growth is good for the economy, it puts increasing pressure on open space, wildlife habitat, and water resources.

According to a 2021 report by the American Farmland Trust, Texas farmland is the most threatened in the nation, with over 240,000 acres of open space, farm and ranchland, and wildlife habitat lost annually. According to a 2023 report by Texas A&M’s Natural Resources Institute, 70 percent of Texas river basins have highly diminished stream flows, and the state is expected to face a 6.9-million-acre-foot water deficit within the next 50 years.

Texas is also home to some of the richest biodiversity in North America. From the Chihuahuan desert in West Texas, to the imperiled grassland savannas of North Texas, to the 600-mile-long Gulf coast, Texas is blessed with an incredible variety of species and ecosystems. Texas is home to at least 437 endemic species, including the Texas map turtle, Guadalupe bass and Houston toad. Likewise, over 98 percent of North America's long-distance migratory bird species have been documented in Texas.

Fortunately, several federal and state programs exist to support land protection efforts, including Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) Farm and Ranchland Conservation Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Natural Resources Conservation Services, Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, Forest Legacy, the state and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, and local and municipal bonds.

Together, these funding sources represent tens of millions of dollars annually that can or are appropriated to Texas. However, the majority of these sources require 25-50 percent match funding. Without a dedicated source of private or public funding, much of these funds go unspent. The Horizon Foundation's \$20 million commitment will help fill that gap, providing a welcome lift to the longstanding efforts of Texas' committed conservation community, including Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation.

"This is a transformational gift that will help forever conserve Texas' vital wildlife, open space, and working lands," said Zach Spector, who is Director of Conservation Programs at Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. "These funds will be available to our state's robust land trust community, conservation nonprofits, and other entities working to protect Texas' land and water resources."

For more information and to apply for grants, go to The Horizon Foundation website at <https://thehorizonfdn.org/>.

*The Horizon Foundation is a private charitable foundation committed to ensuring that Texas' iconic landscapes and natural resources remain for future generations.*

*Since 1991, Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation has raised and invested more than \$240 million to advance Texas' proud outdoor traditions and conserve our state's wildlife, habitat, and natural resources.*

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