**Regional Conservation News Release Template - Habitat**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

[Month] [Date], [Year]

Contact:

**[NEWS RELEASE HEADLINE]**

*[News Release Sub-header]*

**[CITY, STATE]** – The Houston-Galveston region is home to abundant native forests, prairies, wetlands, and more than 16,000 miles of bayous, rivers, and coastline. Along with agricultural lands and natural areas in the built environment, these assets contribute significantly to the region’s wildlife habitat. Protecting valuable natural assets is crucial to supporting the region’s biodiversity.

Loss of habitat can upset the delicate balance of the region’s diverse ecosystems, threatening the flora and fauna that contribute to local economies, such as ecotourism. There are three types of habitat loss: 1) *destruction*, or removal of habitat; 2) *fragmentation*, or separation of wildlife from other animals or food sources; and 3) *degradation*, or decreased habitat quality.

Habitats can be preserved, restored, and enhanced through conservation efforts across the region.

*[The two paragraphs below provide examples of regional conservation projects that helped protect wildlife habitat. You can use these as examples to highlight the potential economic benefits of your own conservation project, or you may replace them with information about your own conservation project and use the paragraphs as a guide in how to discuss it.]*

An example of habitat preservation is the Palacios Prairie Wetlands in Matagorda County. The Palacios Prairie Wetlands is a 27-acre upland prairie and costal marsh area in Palacios with around 700 feet of trails, a pier with a kayak launch, and a bird watching tower. The Palacios Prairie Wetlands Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, used Coastal Impact Assistance Program money appropriated to Matagorda County and financial support from the Trull Foundation to build the Palacios Prairie Wetlands. Palacios Prairie Wetlands Inc. owns the property and manages all maintenance. In 2019, 229 unique bird species were observed in Matagorda County during the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This project and other prairie preservation wetlands projects are important to maintaining bird populations and other native species in the region.

Habitat conservation can also occur in urban settings. The MD Anderson Cancer Center Texas Medical Center campus in Houston offers several natural features, including a 2-acre native prairie and wetland restoration with educational signage. Called the MD Anderson Prairie Park, it provides ecological benefits, with native rain gardens, meadows of native prairie grasses, and restored wetlands that contrast with the dense urban surroundings of the Texas Medical Center.

In 2021, the Houston-Galveston Area Council launched the Regional Conservation Initiative aimed at magnifying local conservation efforts and assisting local governments and nonprofits in securing the funding and resources needed to launch their own conservation projects. More information about the initiative, including a conservation funding guide and toolbox, model projects throughout the region, ecosystem service benefits, and mapping tools, is available at [www.h-gac.com/regional-conservation](https://www.h-gac.com/regional-conservation).