



The Conservation Fund Launches Texas's Largest Wetlands Mitigation Bank

Pineywoods Mitigation Bank to Restore 19,000 Acres Along the Neches River

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Lufkin, Texas—The Conservation Fund today announced that Texas's largest wetlands mitigation bank is open for business. The Pineywoods Mitigation Bank encompasses more than 19,000 acres along the Neches River, traveling through Angelina, Jasper and Polk counties. The new bank will restore native bottomland hardwood forest and provide a wildlife corridor between Davy Crockett and Angelina national forests.

The Pineywoods Mitigation Bank has been approved to immediately begin selling mitigation credits to public and private developers who must compensate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands across a designated service area. Given its landscape-level scale and conservation value, the bank offers developers a unique opportunity to leave a positive environmental legacy. For conservationists, the bank provides a critical source of conservation capital in the region.

"The Conservation Fund is pleased to offer this important conservation resource to the public and private development community in East Texas," said Andy Jones, Texas director for the Fund. "We look forward to providing this valuable and necessary eco-service on a landscape-level scale, so that companies and government agencies can offset activity that disrupts wetland habitat. We see mitigation banking as an additional tool, like Pineywoods ecotourism and sustainable forestry, that we and our partners can use to help protect East Texas's outdoor legacy."

As part of the mitigation bank's formation, the Texas Land Conservancy holds a conservation easement on the property. "The ecological significance of this site is immense and the impact of this project will have a lasting, positive effect," says Mark Steinbach, director of the conservancy. "We're excited to be part of it."

Private, industrial or government developers whose projects impact wetlands in the Neches River basin and select surrounding watersheds can purchase credits from the Pineywoods Mitigation Bank. The amount of mitigation credits necessary for a development project will be determined by a standardized



assessment, based on calculations of development impact. Consulting firm PBS&J is marketing the credits.

With revenue from mitigation credits, the Pineywoods Mitigation Bank will restore more than 13,000 acres of bottomland forested wetlands and an additional 6,000 acres upland to original condition as a self-sustaining forest indigenous to the Neches River Basin. That effort involves removing exotic and weedy plant species, replanting native trees and performing related restoration work. In addition, the bank will maintain and enhance scrub/shrub wetlands, emergent wetlands and areas of open water on the property.

“I can think of very few privately funded environmental restoration projects of this scale,” says J. Grant Barber, PBS&J project manager, noting the bank is one of the largest in the entire country. “The bar has been raised for mitigation banking and environmental stewardship in Texas. And with the increase in oil and gas exploration in our region, the need for wetland mitigation is growing every day.”

Significant private investment in the bank includes support from, among others, the Houston Endowment, TLL Temple Foundation and the Meadows Foundation.

The Pineywoods Mitigation Bank meets federal and state criteria for mitigation banks, receiving approval after review by an Interagency Review Team that includes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas General Land Office and the Railroad Commission of Texas.

Developers can determine their geographic eligibility for the purchase of mitigation credits with the Pineywoods Mitigation Bank and learn more about the bank by contacting J. Grant Barber of PBS&J (903.509.1552, jgbarber@pbsj.com). Additional information will soon be available online at www.pineywoodsbank.com.

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund is dedicated to protecting America’s land and water legacy. Working on the ground, in communities, the Fund acquires land, finances conservation and trains leaders. Since 1985, the Fund and its partners have protected more than 6 million acres of wildlife habitat, working landscapes, community greenspace and historic sites. Directing 97% of its spending to programs and just 1% to fundraising, the Fund is top-ranked by the American Institute of Philanthropy and Charity Navigator. <http://www.conservationfund.org>