
STRATEGIC CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT OF
GULF COAST LANDSCAPES

**KATY PRAIRIE
CONSERVANCY
USE CASE STUDY**

December 2021

KATY PRAIRIE CONSERVANCY

Conservation Geography: Texas
Primary Stakeholder: Elisa Donovan

The Katy Prairie Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping sustain a resilient Texas by preserving coastal prairies, wetlands, farms, and ranches to benefit people and wildlife forever. The organization has several ongoing efforts focused on protecting the imperiled coastal prairie ecosystem through landscape level conservation and restoration of tallgrass prairie and wetlands. These efforts preserve habitat for coastal prairie-dependent species, such as grassland birds and waterfowl, and also provide community benefits such as flood mitigation, local agriculture, and access to recreation. To date, the Katy Prairie Conservancy has conserved over 24,000 acres of the Texas coastal prairie in its nine-county focus region to the west and south of Houston, Texas. The Katy Prairie Conservancy also offers public programming and activities to engage people of all ages in the prairie splendors and to educate the community on the benefits of preserving the coastal prairie ecosystem.










Use Case Study Purpose:
Prioritizing lands for planning a strategic conservation portfolio.

The Katy Prairie Conservancy met several of the Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscape's (SCA's) Use Case Study selection criteria (see below), and was unique in representing conservation efforts in Texas. The main stakeholders for this effort included **Elisa Donovan**, Vice President and General Counsel for the Katy Prairie Conservancy (the main point of contact), **Wesley Newman**, Conservation Director for the Katy Prairie Conservancy, and **Michael Lange**, Founder of Texas Conservation Partners, LLC (i.e., the Katy Prairie Team).

The SCA Team (hereafter we) launched this Use Case Study with an initial scoping call in August 2020. In addition to the main purpose highlighted above, the Katy Prairie Team were also hoping to use the Conservation Prioritization Tool to assist with their **USDA NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program proposal** they intended to submit in November 2020.

Use Case Study Selection Criteria

-  focuses on the acquisition or easement of land (land conservation; not restoration)
-  exhibits a transferable issue that could be experienced by other areas in the region
-  represents an application scale that fits into the hexagonal framework of the SCA project
-  represents a diversity of agency type / mission
-  fits within the existing RESTORE Council goal framework
-  focuses in an area that complements the geographic diversity of the SCA region
-  has planning or funding decisions going to be made within the SCA project timeline



In the first working session, we worked with the Katy Prairie Team primarily in the **Conservation Prioritization Tool** reviewing their areas of interest to explain measures and the reporting details. The discussions centered around a few individual data measures that did not appear to have the nuanced detail to best support their efforts. To employ a co-production process approach, **we used their stakeholder feedback to improve our efforts**, including the modification of our original biodiversity measure to reduce ambiguity and the incorporation an additional data measure with greater detail regarding diversity. Having a Use Case Study in Texas was also beneficial to show that regional data is not necessarily equally informative across the Gulf. This finding highlighted additional areas for improvement that we will consider moving forward with future tool versions.

In the second working session, we dug into the other tools to review their capabilities and functionalities and capture feedback. The Katy Prairie Team appreciated how they could review the data measures individually in the **Conservation Visualization Tool** because it provided greater understanding than attempting to digest all the information at the same time. By working one by one through the measures, the Katy Prairie Team was able to share their local knowledge in regard to the results, which allowed for valuable ground truthing of these measures in Texas landscapes. The Katy Prairie Team appreciated the information collected in **Conservation Planning Inventory Tool**, though they believed there may be some missing plans, indicating another opportunity for improvement.





Recently, we have continued our collaboration with members of the Katy Prairie Team through another Use Case Study, the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation. Additionally, to expand upon these conservation partnership efforts in Texas, we expressed our support of and partnership in the Katy Prairie Conservancy's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program proposal, titled "**Texas Coastal Prairie Initiative.**"

This proposal was selected for funding and will support the Katy Prairie Conservancy's efforts to address significant threats of development pressure and land fragmentation by preserving lands for water quality, plant diversity, and wildlife habitat on the Texas Coastal Prairie. We intend to **continue supporting the Katy Prairie Conservancy's efforts by ensuring applicability of the SCA Tool Suite to Texas landscapes.**



This specific Use Case Study is currently considered complete, though we intend to continue collaborating with the Katy Prairie Team on the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation Use Case Study and on their Texas Coastal Prairie Initiative program, and we will update them as we make tool improvements that are relevant for their efforts.

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