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Powderhorn Ranch Becomes Largest Conservation Land Purchase in Texas History

Donations used for Landmark \$37.7 Million Acquisition

HOUSTON - August 21, 2014 - A multi-partner coalition including the Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) Foundation today announced the purchase of the 17,351-acre Powderhorn Ranch along the Texas coast in Calhoun County. The acquisition will conserve a spectacular piece of property that is one of the largest remaining tracts of unspoiled coastal prairie in the state. At \$37.7 million it is the largest dollar amount ever raised for a conservation land purchase in the state and represents a new partnership model of achieving conservation goals in an era of rapidly rising land prices. In years to come, Powderhorn Ranch is expected to become a state park and wildlife management area.

Safeguarding this natural treasure has been contemplated for more than 30 years by several conservation organizations and wildlife agencies including The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Along with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), these organizations are playing a critical role in the acquisition and long-term conservation of this property. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation is spearheading the fundraising for the \$50 million project, which includes the purchase of the property, habitat restoration and management, as well as a long-term endowment.

"This transformational project will conserve irreplaceable wildlife habitat and will bring the people of Texas an exciting new recreational opportunity," said Dan Friedkin, Chairman Emeritus of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission. "This historic investment is only possible because of this extraordinary public/private partnership and is a bold example of how landscape scale conservation projects can be achieved in Texas and beyond." Friedkin also serves as chairman of the Foundation's "Keeping it Wild: The Campaign for Texas" which includes funding for Powderhorn.

The real estate transaction has been more than two years in the making. Powderhorn Ranch was previously owned by Cumberland & Western Resources, LLC, whose primary investors are conservation-minded citizens who sold the property below its market value to ensure its permanent safekeeping.



NFWF



“The acquisition of Powderhorn Ranch will help define the next generation of conservation in Texas” said TPW Commission Chairman Dan Allen Hughes, Jr., “ We are most grateful to the owners for affording us both the time to put this project together, as well as a discount on the purchase price in order to facilitate this transaction. The seller’s commitment to a conservation outcome was instrumental in seeing this through to a successful culmination.”

A significant portion of the funding for the project is being provided by NFWF’s Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, which was created with dollars paid by BP and Transocean in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. NFWF has committed \$34.5 million over the next three years, making this the biggest land acquisition in the nation so far using BP spill restoration dollars.

“The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is proud to be part of this remarkable conservation effort along the Texas Gulf Coast. The size and diversity of species and habitat found on the Powderhorn Ranch make it an integral project in the overall recovery process of the Gulf from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill,” said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. “The combined effort of so many groups exemplifies the tremendous cooperative effort necessary to protect and restore wildlife and habitat.”

The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy of Texas are each providing \$10 million in interim funding so the Powderhorn Ranch can be purchased in 2014. The two organizations will be reimbursed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, who will hold title on the property by the end of 2016, and will ultimately turn it over to TPWD. The project exemplifies a new model of funding conservation projects in Texas and is a demonstration of both public and private entities working together for the long-term benefit of Texas and its citizens.

“The unspoiled and irreplaceable Powderhorn Ranch is now a significant property for all Texans, and a protected national treasure,” said The Conservation Fund’s CEO, Larry Selzer. “A unique and innovative collaboration among public and private organizations has preserved a critical coastal landscape of epic size and scale for generations to come.”

The acquisition will protect in perpetuity unspoiled coastal land with forests of coastal live oak and intact wetlands. This range of habitats is perfect for public hunting, fishing, hiking, paddling and bird watching. These nature tourism activities currently bring hundreds of millions of dollars to the Texas coast. The property also includes thousands of acres of freshwater wetlands and salt

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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. From the 1950s to the early 1990s Texas lost more than 200,000 acres of coastal wetlands. The Powderhorn acquisition helps combat this trend, protecting local economies, people and property as well as wildlife. The ranch includes more than eleven miles of tidal bay front on Matagorda Bay and provides habitat for hundreds of species of birds and animals, including the endangered whooping crane. The Nature Conservancy will hold a permanent conservation easement on the property and will provide habitat management for the first two years through a contract with the TPW Foundation.

“The Gulf of Mexico is the hardest working body of water in the country, but it desperately needs nourishment. We have steadily stripped away its natural defenses, endangering wildlife, nature and the millions of residents who live in coastal communities,” said Laura Huffman, Texas state director for The Nature Conservancy. “This investment in Powderhorn Ranch protects the best of the last coastal prairies left in Texas and stitches together a network of protected lands that are vital to the resilience and health of the Gulf Coast.”

The TPW Foundation has raised \$43 million toward the \$50 million project so far, including the NFWF commitment. Earlier this month, the Knobloch Family Foundation made a generous \$2 million contribution to support the acquisition.

“We are honored to help Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation purchase Powderhorn Ranch and safeguard this important piece of coastal land,” said Carl W. Knobloch, Jr., President of the Knobloch Family Foundation. “We share the Foundation’s steadfast commitment to conserving America’s ecologically critical open lands so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.”

Additional contributions are welcome and interested donors can contact Anne Brown at the TPW Foundation for more information at 214-364-5362 or abrown@tpwf.org.

Media link to press kit, videos, and photos: www.tpwd.texas.gov/powderhornnews

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About the Partners

Founded in 1991, **Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation** is the non-profit funding partner of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The mission is to provide private support to help the Department manage and conserve the state wildlife, habitat, recreations areas and cultural resources. Since its inception, that Foundation has raised more than \$90 million to help ensure that all Texans, today and in the future, can enjoy the wild things and wild places of Texas. Its current campaign, *Keeping It Wild*, aims to raise more than \$100 million in private funds for transformational projects that advance the state's proud traditions of conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation. Learn more at www.tpwf.org. Media contact: Laurey Peat, Laurey Peat + Associates, (214) 871-8787, lpeat@lpapr.com

The **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** (NFWF) protects and restores our nation's wildlife and habitats. Chartered by Congress in 1984, the Foundation directs public conservation dollars to pressing environmental needs and matches those investments with private contributions. As one of the largest conservation funders in the world, NFWF supports hundreds of science-based, results-oriented projects that bring new solutions to the country's biggest conservation challenges. Across the U.S., NFWF funds projects to save imperiled species, promote healthy coasts, forests and grasslands, and guarantee water for wildlife and people. With federal, state and local agencies and corporate partners, NFWF finds common ground between the public and private sectors to achieve positive conservation results. Learn more at www.nfwf.org. Media contact: Cheryl Irwin, (202) 857-0166, cheryl.irwin@nfwf.org

At **The Conservation Fund**, we combine a passion for conservation with an entrepreneurial spirit to protect your favorite places before they become just a memory. A hallmark of our work is our deep, unwavering understanding that for conservation solutions to last, they need to make economic sense. Top-ranked, we have protected more than seven million acres nationwide including more than 193,000 acres of beloved natural lands across Texas, like at Big Thicket National Preserve, Fort Davis National Historic Site, San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, and along the Neches River and the Gulf Coast. www.conservationfund.org Media contact: Ann Simonelli, (703) 908-5809, asimonelli@conservationfund.org

The mission of **The Nature Conservancy** is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. To date, the Conservancy and its more than 1 million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 119 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers worldwide and the operation of more than 100 marine projects globally. In the Lone Star State, The Nature Conservancy owns more than 30 nature preserves and conservation properties and assists private landowners to conserve their land through more than 100 voluntary land-preservation agreements. With public and private partners, we have permanently conserved nearly one million acres across Texas. Visit The Nature Conservancy in Texas on the Web at www.nature.org/texas Media contact: Vanessa Martin, (512) 623-7249, vmartin@tnc.org

The **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** mission balances outdoor recreation and sustainable use of resources with conservation and management of natural and cultural resources. The department operates 95 Texas state parks, natural areas and historic sites, 46 wildlife management areas, three saltwater fish hatcheries and five freshwater hatcheries. TPWD game wardens and wildlife and fisheries biologists work in every Texas county, enforcing laws and encouraging management to conserve fish and wildlife. The agency has 11 internal divisions: Wildlife, Coastal Fisheries, Inland Fisheries, Law Enforcement, Legal, State Parks, Infrastructure, Communications, Administrative Resources, Human Resources and Information Technology. For more information, see the TPWD website (www.tpwd.state.tx.us) Media contact: Tom Harvey, (512) 389-4453, tom.harvey@tpwd.texas.gov