

For Immediate Release

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Gulf Coast Green and Texas Coastal Exchange Announce Partnership

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Texas Coastal Exchange (TCX) are pleased to announce a partnership to make the 2020 version of the Gulf Coast Green Conference carbon neutral. This is the first year of what is hoped to be a long-term partnership to store carbon dioxide from the conference and conference attendees in the ecosystems surrounding the Houston area.

The Gulf Coast Green Conference will be conducted July 9th and 10th and will be virtual this year. This year's footprint from the virtual conference is estimated to be about 5 tons of carbon dioxide emissions from electricity used by computers, internet, HVAC, and lighting by attendees.

These emissions will be stored in about three acres of coastal wetlands owned by Scenic Galveston, Inc. This specific tract is part of the John M. O'Quinn I-45 Scenic Estuarial Corridor and was restored by excavation as well as soil placement and planting of smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*). The design and implementation of the restoration project was done by ENTRIX Environmental and landscape designer Lalise Whorton Mason of Houston who is also on the board of Scenic Galveston. The restored wetland is shown in the figure below.



Figure 1. Restored marsh along the John M. O'Quinn Scenic Estuarial Corridor. Photo by Lalise Mason.

TCX has received an anonymous donation to compensate for the cost of storing the 5 tons of carbon dioxide storage generated by this conference. The donation rate for such storage is \$20 per ton, and of this amount, Scenic Galveston will receive \$17 per ton and TCX will retain \$3 per ton. In 2019, Texas Coastal Exchange was able to sequester about 1500 tons of carbon dioxide. So far this year TCX has received donations for in excess of 5,000 tons of carbon dioxide removal and storage. The long-term goal is to develop over two million tons of carbon storage capacity.

Scenic Galveston will use the forthcoming grant from TCX to support their marsh creation activities as part of the Living Shoreline Project that has been developed along Virginia Point just to the east of the IH-45 causeway. This two-mile project includes a varied breakwater for shoreline protection, oyster production and water circulation and includes marsh planting and restoration behind it. This breakwater project, also led by Lalise Mason, was designed by AECOM Engineering, with construction funding from The Texas General Land Office and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Rusty Bienvenue, executive director of AIA Houston, commented on the project, stating "We are excited about this new partnership. This is the type of win/win

project that we have been looking for in order to capture and remove our carbon emissions from putting on Gulf Coast Green. Next year, when we are hopefully in person, our footprint will be larger and our support of TCX and Scenic Galveston will be greater.”

“Scenic Galveston will use this support to expand the acreage of wetlands that are behind our living shoreline project, which is quite exciting in its own right,” stated Ms. Mason of Scenic Galveston. “And we invite anyone who is interested in helping with a marsh planting to contact me or TCX.”

“In addition to removing carbon dioxide and storing it in the soil, our coastal wetlands provide many other important ecological benefits,” said Jim Blackburn, President of TCX. “These wetlands support shrimp and crab production and are nurseries for all types of finfish. We would likely not have much of a coastal fishery in the upper coast without them.”

For further information about attending Gulf Coast Green, contact the AIA at <https://aiahouston.org/v/site-home/Gulf-Coast-Green-2020/35/>. For further information about making a donation to store your carbon footprint, go to <https://www.texascoastalexchange.org/>.

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