# GOMESA FINAL REPORT

Galveston Bay Foundation

Dollar Bay Wetland Creation, Restoration, and Acquisition
GLO Contract No. 21-060-019-C681

**Project Summary**

The Dollar Bay Wetland Creation, Restoration, and Acquisition Project was designed as a Project of Special Merit to protect bay shorelines, create and restore estuarine habitats, and conserve coastal habitats. The proposed acquisition of approximately 100 acres (the Property) of coastal habitat adjacent to Dollar Bay provides perpetual conservation to sensitive coastal habitats under threat of development. The landowner agreed to a bargain sale that resulted in a donation of 50% of the appraised fair market value. Land acquisition one component of a larger conservation effort that will create and restore up to 72 acres of inter-tidal marsh and other estuarine habitats in Dollar Bay, directly adjacent to the 100-acre acquisition. GOMESA (via CMP) funded the land acquisition component of this project under this grant award to ensure the long-term success of the larger conservation project and help to preserve the viability of Dollar Bay as a functional estuarine system.

Photo 1. Coastal prairie within the conserved property boundaries

The Dollar Bay and Moses Lake area is a tidally influenced waterbody on the western shore of Galveston Bay. Historically, much of the perimeter and interior of the project area once consisted of estuarine emergent marsh. However, historical subsidence coupled with shoreline erosion has greatly impacted these areas, converting marsh to open water. The coastal marsh and prairie habitats within the Property have been adversely affected by erosion and a land subsidence. Marsh shorelines have eroded, leaving bluffs that continue to retreat. Much of the estuarine emergent marsh within the immediate area has transitioned to open water habitats due subsidence, inundation, and erosion. The Property is ideally situated to help protect ongoing marsh restoration efforts to address habitat loss.

Identified habitats within the Property have been minimally disturbed and are in good condition. Coastal prairie and estuarine wetlands are the two dominant habitat types. The gulf cordgrass prairie has not been farmed or plowed and contains mima mounds and saline slicks

that may support rare endemic plants. Tidal wetlands found along the shoreline support populations of shorebirds, wading birds, and water birds. Birds (spoonbills, herons, and egrets) nesting in a nearby rookery use the Property's wetland habitats to forage and raise their young. The estuarine wetlands also support commercial and recreational fishery species like red drum, spotted seatrout, Blue crab, white and brown shrimp, and others. Approximately 1.5 miles of the Dollar Bay shoreline was conserved, effectively preventing a permitted development that would allow canals, bulkheads, docks, and piers from being constructed.

The Property was purchased from a real estate developer that held an active USACE permit to construct a residential subdivision and associated infrastructure. The landowner was willing to forfeit construction, or selling the property to another developer, to promote GBF's conservation project. If constructed, the planned development would have hardened the shoreline, filled wetlands, threatened the success of the wetland creation project, and prevented future use of wildlife. A residential development in this area would have contributed to degraded local water and sediment quality and increased boat traffic near sensitive estuarine habitats.

**Results**

GOMESA funds, administered by the Coastal Management Program, were used to purchase the fee simple interest in 106 acres. This property contains roughly 1.5 miles along the southern shoreline of Dollar Bay in Texas City. The property is now known as the Davis Preserve on Dollar Bay and will be perpetually conserved via partnership between Texas City and Galveston Bay Foundation.

Photo 2. Constructed marsh terraces adjacent to conserved land

Task 1: Due Diligence: Rigorous review of diligence was conducted to ensure the subject property met program requirements. Due diligence included legal title review, phase 1 environmental site analysis, category 1A survey, and qualified appraisal. This documentation was reviewed by GBF staff, GBF legal counsel, and provide to GLO for approval prior to closing.

Task 2: Land Acquisition: GBF negotiated a purchase agreement with the seller for a bargain sale of the subject property based on the completed appraisal and survey obtained as due diligence for this project. The landowner sold the property to GBF for less than the appraised value, providing a donation of land value to help this property become conserved. This purchase agreement was executed on October 27, 2020 and the transaction from the seller to GBF was completed on December 14, 2020. Due to CMP rules, GBF was unable to hold title to the property long-term. The City of Texas City was approached as a project partner and agreed to hold title to the subject property. The property was transferred from GBF to the City of Texas City on December 15, 2020. GBF coordinated with the City to establish a conservation easement to provide perpetual protection assurances and a term management agreement with the City that allows for habitat management and restoration activities.

Task 3: Property Management and Restoration: Following acquisition of the subject property, transfer to the City of Texas City, establishment of conservation easement, and execution of the management agreement, GBF was able to undertake approved habitat restoration and property management activities. These activities included chemical control of Chinese tallow, McCartney rose, and other invasive plant species, improvements to access roads.

Task 4: Project Reporting and Monitoring: Monthly progress reports and general updates were provided throughout the course of this project. This final report will be submitted and approved by GLO staff before the grant closeout is conducted.

**Project Area Maps:**


**Dollar Bay Aerial Map**

Project Name: Dollar Bay Habitat Protection Project
Project Location: Galveston County
Date Revised: January 3, 2018

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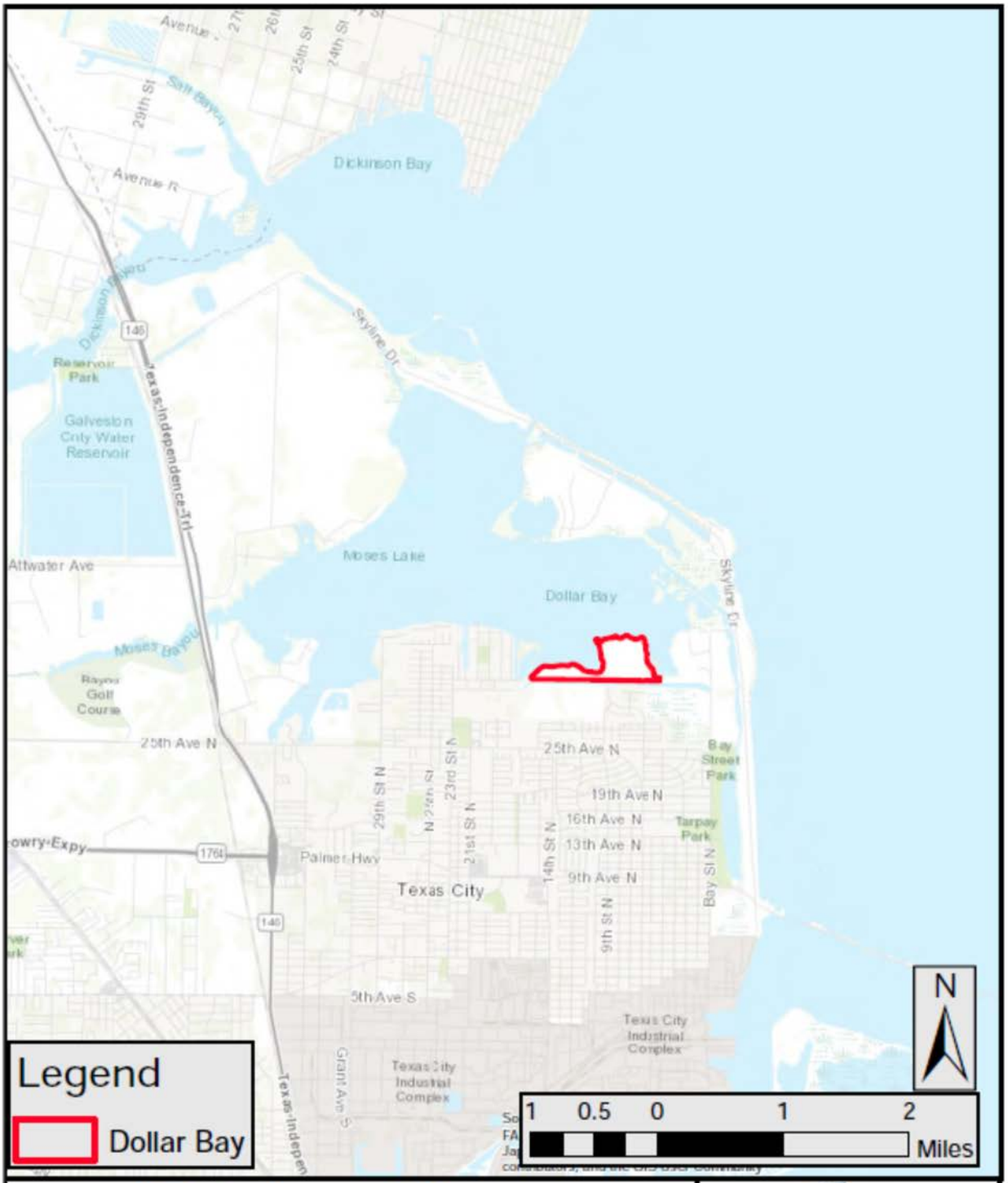


## Dollar Bay Topographic Map

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**Project Photos:**