

Executive Summary



Greens Bayou Paddle Trail Strategic Plan

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Vision

To be a recognized model paddle trail providing a variety of quality recreational experiences to paddlers with diverse skills, abilities and time availabilities.

Mission

Greens Bayou Paddle Trail partners are dedicated to improving public access to Greens Bayou on a reach up to 28 miles long, bounded by US 45 and IH10, serving as stewards of the waterway and access sites, and promoting its recreational use.

Strategic Plan Process

Greens Bayou Paddle Trail Advisory Committee

The Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition ("The Coalition") kicked off the Paddle Trail planning effort in January 2013 with a broad group of invitees including paddling interests, potential governmental partners, and Reach Committee representatives. After attendees learned about the bayou's conditions and state and federal designation programs for paddle trails/water trails, the National Park Service ("NPS") initiated a process to create a vision, mission, and goals for the 27.5 mile corridor. Out of the initial group of stakeholders the Greens Bayou Paddle Trail Advisory Committee was formed to develop the strategic plan through advising, adoption of vision-mission-goals, field work, subcommittee participation, and development of a "how-to" guide for implementing the plan.

Field Assessment and Launch Site Recommendations

With input from the advisory committee, NPS developed a field assessment process to collect information on the bayou conditions in each of seven segments. In July 2013 volunteers in canoes and kayaks explored the bayou. Using a cell phone application that recorded photos and geolocation points, volunteers documented potential put in/take out sites, stopover sites, scenic points of interest, obstacles, and large debris.

In November 2013, the second field assessment was conducted of six potential launch sites, primarily located in existing parks or on property under Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) jurisdiction. The Technical Subcommittee visited these sites to collect information on characteristics that could be used to determine best launch sites: ease of access slope, available parking areas, distance from parking to

water's edge, and more. The ownership of each site was determined.

After compiling the field data, The Coalition presented the findings to the Advisory Committee in February 2014. The multiple evaluations produced ten proposed launch sites. The Advisory Committee agreed on criteria to prioritize sites, attempted to prioritize them, and then agreed to recommend all sites equally to encourage the variety of partners that might implement launch sites in their area.

How-To Manual

The Coalition, NPS, and the Advisory Committee agreed that a "how-to" manual for implementing paddle trail segments and launch sites would be helpful to the committee volunteers and partners over the time it could take for complete implementation. To that end, three subcommittees – Recreation, Stewardship, and Promotion/ Education/Designation – began to develop the protocol and document it in a shared on-line manual. This protocol document will guide the work of the permanent Paddle Trail Committee upon approval of the strategic plan.

Community Meetings

In June 2014, The Coalition, NPS, and the Paddle Trail Advisory Committee held four community meetings to offer opportunities for the public to review the recommended 27.5-mile paddle trail with ten launch sites. Meetings were held in the North, East and South Reaches of the watershed. Though attendance was lower than anticipated, the paddle trail concept was well received by those who attended.



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Recreation Goals

Major and Minor Trailheads

The Strategic Plan for Greens Bayou Paddle Trail recommends variously spaced trailheads along the 27.5-mile stretch of the bayou from the Greenspoint District area to almost IH10. The entire length can be paddled but the challenge is to find suitable access points where paddlers can easily carry their boats in and out of the water. The plan contains 10 recommended trailheads, located as close as 1 mile apart to 5.5 miles apart. The spacing meets the needs of a variety of paddlers.

Major trailheads are distinguished by the size of the proposed parking area (15 - 20 vehicles) vs. 5-10 for minor trailheads. It is desirable for both major and minor trailheads to accommodate boat trailers with either a turn-around or special trailer parking or both. All trailheads are proposed to have restrooms, trailhead kiosks, and shaded picnic tables.

The access from the parking to the water's edge will vary from site to site based on the distance to the water and the steepness of the bank. The 5 trailheads proposed in the upper reaches of Greens Bayou are characterized by banks whose slopes were engineered for flood conveyance. For these trailheads, the boat launch access route will be grass or wooden steps set into the bank slope with articulated

concrete at the shoreline. They are not proposed to be designed for mobility impaired access due to their steepness.

The 5 trailheads into the lower reaches of the bayou are targeted to have some degree of easy access design to accommodate the mobility impaired paddler. From Mount Houston Road downstream, the bayou is characterized by vegetated banks and less steep slopes than the channelized portion. Some interim launch site development may not at first accommodate those with mobility issues but the intent is to make the lower 5 sites accessibly designed as funding is obtained to do so.

Signage

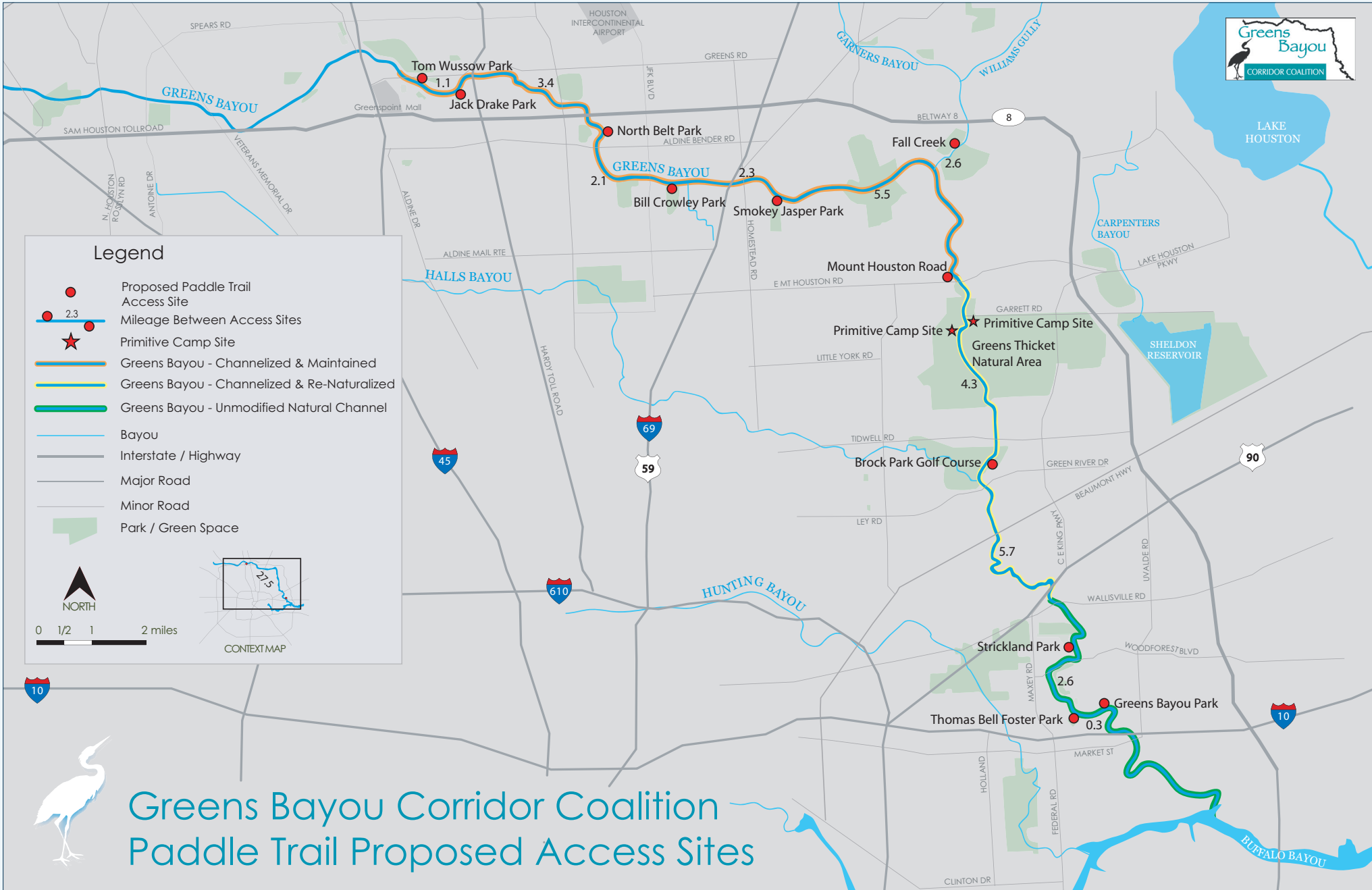
As trailheads/launches become improved enough to promote their use to the public, it will be important to have a wayfinding system to help paddlers find the trailheads. A wayfinding system refers to the placement of signs both on roadways and from the water. On key roadways in the vicinity of the bayou, signs need to be placed where they direct paddlers to launch sites, especially those hard-to-find launch sites accessed through neighborhood streets. Trailhead kiosks will include maps of the paddling segment that begins there, along with information about the anticipated experience: length, time, points of interest, wildlife, and typical conditions. Lastly,



paddle trail planners want to place distance signs where they can be seen by paddlers on the bayou, including placing them on the sides of road bridges. Where possible, signs are needed to indicate upcoming take-out places that are difficult to see from a boat.

Stopover Sites

Primitive overnight camping spots are recommended on existing public land to provide an experience for paddlers desiring to make a two-day trip. Sites will not be accessible from roads so only those who carry their own camping gear in their boats will be using them. A minimum of two sites is desired: one that can accommodate groups like scouts or "meet-ups" with level areas for 10-12 tents and one designed for up to 4 tents. The campsites will need to be reserved through an on-line reservation system where users will pay a small fee. Proposed amenities at the campsite areas include waterless toilets, fire rings, and signs – one about packing out trash and phone number to report problems with the site and one that can be seen from the bayou to help paddlers find the designated sites.



Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition Paddle Trail Proposed Access Sites

Thank you to White Oak Studio for creating our Paddle Trail Map.

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Stewardship Goals

Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition seeks partnerships to implement all of its projects. Developing, managing, and maintaining the various proposed trailhead sites will be cooperative arrangements. The Coalition will likely have formal agreements with a governmental or non-profit entity to manage trailheads. Volunteers will play a large role in patrolling the sites, documenting maintenance needs, and participating in remedies.

Volunteers have already documented some obstacles in the shallow parts of the bayou that will need to be removed or have openings created for boats to pass through. As an urban waterway, Greens Bayou suffers from debris and even large objects that may have been deposited by floodwaters. In-stream and bank clean-ups and obstacle removal will become part of a developed protocol for maintaining both trailheads and segments of the paddling trails. Other proposed stewardship actions involve water quality testing and removal of invasive species.

Promotion, Education & Designation Goals

Promoting Greens Bayou as a paddle trail will serve several purposes. It will increase recreation and nature tourism opportunities for residents and visitors while raising awareness of the Greens Bayou watershed. Having more paddlers on the bayou will encourage responsible use and long-term sustainability of the watershed and waterway. It can even inspire support for continued preservation and conservation of natural spaces in Houston and Harris County, especially along the bayous.



To meet these goals, partners will develop a variety of materials – printed and electronic – to distribute to target audiences in places where paddlers will be encouraged to try out Greens Bayou. Trip planning information will let potential paddlers know what to expect from the experience along with times,

distances, places to access the bayou, safety information, and paddling ethics. Additionally, events and programs will be developed, such as ribbon cutting celebrations of new launch sites, youth paddle training, paddling races, and more.

Designation goals involve seeking recognition of multiple segments of the 27.5-mile stretch of Greens Bayou from both Texas Parks and Wildlife's paddle trail program and the National Park Service's water trail program. To be recognized in these programs, access points must be usable and formalized with management partners, and various other best management practices must be in place.





KBR

We are grateful to KBR for their generous support of paddling on Greens Bayou.

Thank you to our fantastic photographers!

Grady Hicks
Charlie Patout
Candice Pauley
Natalie Weist

Advisory Committee Members

The Coalition and NPS collaborated to identify a group of people with interest and commitments to advising on the paddle trail planning process. We are grateful for the following who have served in this capacity.

Bayou Preservation Association: Eric Ruckstuhl, Eyes on the Bayou
Bayou City Adventures: Rico Torres, President; BPA Paddle Trail Chair
City of Houston Parks & Recreation Department: Jay Daniel, Senior Superintendent
East Reach Committee Chair: Jennifer Hundl, EHRA
North Reach Committee Chair: Scott Bean, East Aldine District
Paddle Trail Committee Chair: Rich Gallegos, Costello Engineering
South Reach Committee Chair: Omar Escobar, LJA Engineering
Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition: Jill Boullion, Executive Director
Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition: Candice Pauley, Manager of Volunteer Programs
Greenspoint District: Bart Baker, V.P. of Planning Operations & Infrastructure
Harris County Flood Control District: Glenn Laird, Director, Environmental Services Division
Texas Canoe & Kayak Racing Association: Grady Hicks
Houston Parks Board: Michelle Jordan, Bayou Greenways Project Manager
National Park Service: Kathryn Nichols, Community Planner
REI: Diana Acker, Outdoor Programs & Outreach Market Coordinator
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department: Diana Foss, Urban Biologist

National Park Service

The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS) supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects in communities throughout the nation. After a successful partnership with that program on Greens Bayou Parks and Trails Master Plan, The Coalition sought a second technical assistance grant from NPS for help developing a strategic plan for implementing paddling opportunities on Greens Bayou.



nps.gov/rtca

Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition

Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition (The Coalition) seeks to benefit the economy and enhance the quality of life for the more than 500,000 residents in the Greens Bayou watershed through flood mitigation, parks and trails development, and economic development.

Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition grew out of a joint task force of the Greenspoint District and the North Houston Association as an infrastructure development initiative to benefit the economy and enhance the quality of life in the Greens Bayou watershed in Houston, Harris County, TX. Greens Bayou meanders approximately fifty miles throughout Harris County. The watershed covers about 212 square miles and includes four primary streams: Greens Bayou, Halls Bayou, Garners Bayou, and Reinhardt Bayou. Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition was recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c)(3) organization in December 2007.



Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition
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