

## Ecoregional Assessment: What It Really Means



This CD contains several documents describing the process and illustrating the results of a biodiversity assessment completed by The Nature Conservancy for the Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes Ecoregion. This ecoregional assessment was developed in cooperation with a diverse group of partners—including private organizations, universities, and state and federal agencies. Using the latest science and on-the-ground experience, the planning team compiled and analyzed critical knowledge about the species, natural communities, and ecological systems characteristic of, and unique to, the ecoregion. This information was then used to identify and design a suite of areas that, collectively and with proper management, would ensure the survival of the ecoregion’s biological diversity.

The Nature Conservancy, acting alone and through diverse partnerships, will focus its future conservation efforts in this “portfolio” of areas identified through the planning process. ***These areas do not represent a map of land acquisition priorities.*** Inclusion of any private property within a portfolio area does not necessarily constitute an interest by The Nature Conservancy in acquiring that property. In fact, land acquisition will play a minor role in overall conservation within this ecoregion. Protection of these areas will necessitate a broad array of conservation actions implemented by willing private landowners, public natural resource agencies and private conservation organizations. The inclusion of an area in the portfolio, private or public, also does not indicate that the site currently lacks adequate protection. More importantly, areas not included in this portfolio should not be viewed as unimportant to the maintenance of biodiversity in the ecoregion. These areas function as an important resource for the species, communities, and ecological systems; therefore, their ecological integrity should also be protected. Finally, this portfolio of areas and their boundaries is based on current scientific knowledge and will be refined over time.

It is hoped that these documents will be used by public land managers, land and water conservation organizations, private landowners, and others as a guide in making land use/management decisions and conserving natural diversity within the ecoregion. Individuals who desire specific data sources (GIS files, species information, etc.) used in the planning process are encouraged to contact The Nature Conservancy’s Texas Field Office at [txfoplanning@tnc.org](mailto:txfoplanning@tnc.org).