

# Nash Prairie

A COASTAL PRAIRIE HAVEN



Above: Native grass of the Tallgrass Prairie bends in the wind. © Kendal Larson; Below: Coneflowers can also be found on Nash Prairie. © Lisa Spangler

Less than two hundred years ago, the coastal tallgrass prairie stretched from Lafayette, Louisiana to south of Corpus Christi, Texas, covering millions of acres. Today, less than one percent remains, and of that, barely a fraction has never been plowed.

Nash Prairie lies amid the Columbia Bottomlands, a four-county expanse of wetlands, bayous and floodplains on the mid Texas coast. The tract's small size—it totals just a shade more than 400 acres—belies its significance: Nash Prairie is the largest parcel of intact tallgrass coastal prairie left in Texas and Louisiana. It is a perfect snapshot of the past, of a bygone time before millions of acres of fertile prairie were converted for agricultural and residential use. Those threats remain today; development pressures from nearby Houston are reaching the Columbia Bottomlands, creating the critical need to save Nash Prairie now.

Located 70 miles southwest of Houston in the Brazos River watershed, Nash Prairie was once a productive hay meadow for the historic KNG Ranch that produced abundant, high-quality hay used as forage for ranch horses and during winter, as supplemental feed for cattle.

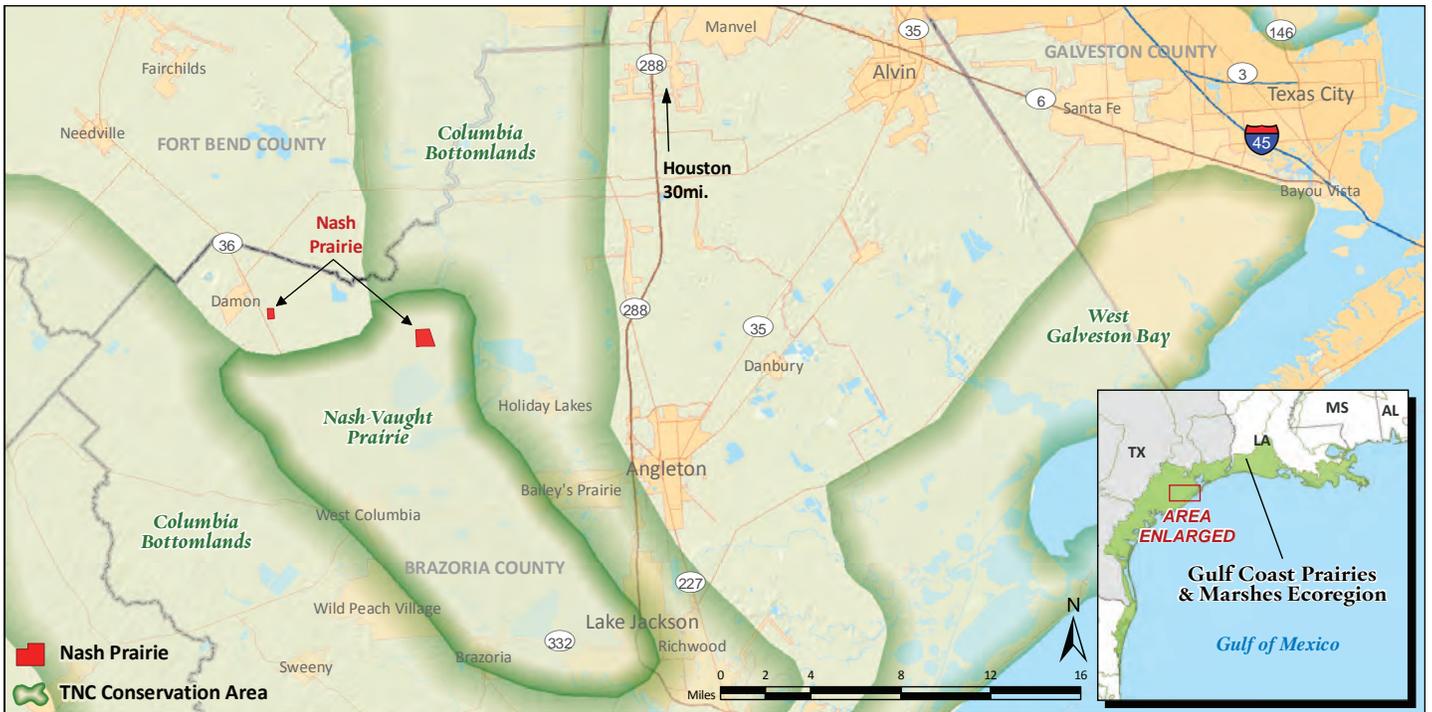
That production spared the meadow from plowing, leaving it intact and unchanged by man. The land rolls gently, topped with silvery-tipped switchgrass and golden bursts of Indiangrass.

Nash Prairie is a botanical treasure trove. More than 300 plant species have been documented on the site, including rare species—coastal gayfeather, rain-lily and meadow-rue—with names as beautiful as their blossoms. This small parcel of land provides habitat for 120 species of birds, including grassland species which are in serious continental decline.

Nash Prairie contributes to watershed functions of the Brazos River, minimizing runoff and reducing erosion. As it winds its way to the Gulf of Mexico, the Brazos benefits from intact natural systems like those at Nash Prairie. As such, protecting these remaining intact grasslands and other bottomland forests is critical to local and regional communities that rely on the river and the life it supports.



## Nash Prairie Acquisition – Brazoria County, TX



## financials

### Fee Title Purchase

409 acres of native coastal prairie

### Estimated Project Costs

\$1.8 million

- Purchase – \$ 1,415,040
- Fees, start-up improvements and endowment – \$384,960

### Project Partners

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- St. Mary's Episcopal Church, West Columbia, TX
- Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
- Houston Wilderness
- Houston Endowment
- NRG Texas
- Texas General Land Office
- North American Wetland Conservation Council

For decades, Nash Prairie has been the site of study and research by conservationists and students. Under The Nature Conservancy's protection, we will continue to host visitors, using existing staff from nearby preserves to manage and provide controlled access to the preserve.

It is urgent that we immediately purchase and protect Nash Prairie—the most important coastal prairie remaining in Texas—before our option expires and this rare opportunity passes.



Left to right: Grass seeds, which can be harvested at Nash Prairie and used to replant native prairie throughout Coastal Texas (© Kendal Larson). The property is home to 300 documented plant species and 120 bird species, including the hoary pea (© Lisa Spangler) and the Swainson's Hawk (© Kendal Larson).