MEMORANDUM

TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE • GEORGE P. BUSH • COMMISSIONER

Proposed Coastal Stimulus Funding Tourism Projects

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), Pub. L. No. 117-2 provides support to assist the tourism industry that was negatively impacted by the ongoing COVID – 19 Pandemic. Specifically, Section 9901(c)(1)(A) of the ARPA provides that the State may use such funds as follows:

> (A) to respond to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID–19) or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;" (emphasis supplied)

These following coastal project would provide critical improvements along the Texas coast and have a corresponding positive impact on the tourism, travel, and hospitality industries. The total ARPA request is an estimated $105.6 million.

1. **Rollover Pier Construction**

   This project is expected to cost up to $15 million.

   The General Land Office (GLO) has been working with Galveston County on the closure of Rollover Pass and the construction of a bayside park and a gulf park and pier on Bolivar Peninsula. Rollover pass was a very popular fishing destination. The pass has been closed and the purpose of the construction of the parks and pier is to replace that lost fishing and tourism. Coastal Erosion Planning & Response Act (CEPRA) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding will be used for the bayside park and other amenities, but the surface damage account is planned to be used for the construction of the pier. Surface damage funding could be used for other projects that benefit state owned submerged lands instead of the construction of this pier. The design and engineering for the pier is at 90 percent completion and an application for the permit construction has been submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). It is expected that design, engineering and permitting could be completed by the end of the year.

2. **West Galveston Beach Nourishment**

   It is projected that construction portion of this project will cost $40 million.

   The City of Galveston has made an application this CEPRA cycle for the engineering and design for beach nourishment along a stretch of beach on the Western End of Galveston Island in Galveston County. This engineering and design would be an extension of a previous approved and funded project for beach nourishment on West Galveston that the GLO will be conducting with the Galveston Park Board. Since the engineering and design will be funded through CEPRA and the City, this funding would be for the actual construction of the project. These projects are needed because there is extensive erosion along West Galveston and homes and critical infrastructure are threatened. In addition, tropical storms last summer exacerbated

the erosion and put these structures at further risk. This project is already permitted and there is a sand source for this project from the South Jetty area, so once the engineering is complete construction of the project could begin. This project is a priority for the City and is desperately needed.

3. **Newcomb's Point Shoreline Stabilization**

   The project is expected to cost $2.7 million. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and conservation partners would seek additional funding for construction.

   This project is located on the Eastern side of Copano Bay in Aransas County. The project area is an area that is rapidly eroding and has been significantly impacted by Hurricane Harvey and most recently Hurricane Hanna. Efforts need to begin immediately to save the area before the shoreline and marsh are completely lost. The shoreline includes approximately 0.3 mile owned by the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP), approximately 0.4 mile which is part of Goose Island State Park owned by TPWD, and another 1.8 miles of which TPWD owns partial undivided interest for a total of approximately 2.5 miles.

   Successful implementation of this project would result in the selection of a design and engineering of a living shoreline or structure which would protect the shoreline and approximately 280 acres of marsh.

4. **Packery Channel Living Shoreline**

   This project is expected to cost $2.5 million.

   This project in Nueces County would include constructing a living shoreline using a revetment matting design along the natural slope of the shoreline at the Packery Channel Nature Park, extending the 'No Wake Zone' to protect ecologically sensitive habitats and building an elevated boardwalk for public access. A key element of the project would be to collect monitoring data on how bird populations are responding to the restored habitat. Nueces County would continue to work closely with federal and state biologists to enhance the broader Coastal Bend's natural resources and respond to the needs of the migratory bird populations that use the site. Packery Channel Nature Park has experienced steady shoreline erosion due to the wakes caused by boater traffic and the hardened shoreline immediately to the east. Shoreline erosion and land loss puts roads, community infrastructure, and ecologically sensitive habitats at risk of being affected by severe storms, relative sea level rise, and the decrease of property values. In addition, Padre Island is primarily devoid of woodland areas except for an isolated 45 acres located at the northern end of Padre Island, which includes the project site. These woodlands are vital habitat to numerous species of migratory birds, but are under significant threat from municipal, commercial, and residential development. This project would help expand the woodlands, in addition to continuing control and removal of 4.5 acres of invasive Brazilian Pepper Trees. The project also would create a wetland mosaic habitat at Packery Channel Nature Park that would add ecological value to a region that is being rapidly depleted of healthy wetland ecosystems. Monitoring associated with the proposed project would be used to develop scientifically based guidance for other restoration projects regarding plant survival, site structure and migratory bird use to better design future habitat restoration projects and enhance public access, use, enjoyment, and education.

5. **Bob Hall Pier Reconstruction**

   It is anticipated that the construction of the pier will cost $30 million.

Bob Hall Pier is a large fishing pier owned and operated by Nueces County (County) that was severely damage by Hurricane Hanna last Summer. The County is planning to rebuild the pier and is in the process of designing and engineering a new pier to replace the current damaged pier. The County's plans include expanding the size and durability of the pier and having additional amenities on the pier. Due to those changes in the pier design, the pier will likely need to have extensive permitting review prior to finalizing of engineering and design and then construction.

6. **Bahia Grande Living Shoreline**

This project is expected to cost $5.4 million.

In the period since the reconnection of the Bahia Grande to the Brownsville Ship Channel in Cameron County, the area has transitioned from dust-bowl conditions to an aquatic nursery and intricate habitat. The area has gained a reputation locally as a fantastic site for fishing, bird watching, waterfowl hunting, kayaking, and generally appreciating the unique habitat of the Rio Grande Valley. In 2005, the pilot channel was dug, reintroducing the hydrologic connection between the Bahia Grande and the Laguna Madre via the Brownsville ship channel. This was crucial in the revitalization of the intricate ecosystem that the Bahia Grande supports. While the biological productivity and complexity are vastly improved today compared to what they have been in the past, there is still a need to facilitate further improvements to the natural resources. The current demand for the area is more than the existing facilities can handle, resulting in health and safety concerns surrounding the vehicular and pedestrian traffic associated with regional recreation. The number of visitors to the Bahia Grande is having a negative impact on the area, as those seeking to access the water inundate the designated parking areas and spill onto the roadside, tidal flats, and surrounding vegetation. The recreationists are also without purpose-built access to the aquatic resources, aside from the modest boat ramp. It is a common occurrence to see throngs of public perched on the top of the rip-rap fishing right beside the wade fishermen who climb down the concrete rubble and into the waters. This leads to another opportunity to improve the Bahia Grande, which lies along State Highway 48. To prevent erosion and provide and maintain safe and reliable transit, the concrete riprap was placed between the roadway shoreline and the waters of the Bahia Grande. This "rebar-filled" riprap was sighted as one of the original concerns that the Technical Advisory Committee raised as a reason for this project's inclusion in the Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan. The first phase will focus on the most immediate issues that need to be addressed as identified by the stakeholders. This includes the replacement of the riprap with a living shoreline which can be designed to extend from the existing shoreline at a slope mimicking the naturally occurring Bahia Grande fringe wetlands among other nature-inspired designs. This living shoreline will be planted with native, hydrophytic vegetation possessing attributes shown to increase soil stability.

This implementation of an ecological solution to shoreline stabilization will facilitate greater biodiversity. This would serve as another measure of restoration for the Bahia Grande and could act as a benefit to the aquatic, avian, terrestrial, and benthic communities native there. This increase in biological productivity as a result of a living shoreline can also be paired with a concurrent increase in public access amenities to allow the utilization and enjoyment

of the natural resources. The stakeholders have discussed the construction of an eco-sensitive, raised fishing and bird-viewing boardwalk and platform with accompanying parking. This amenity would serve the needs of the public who clamor to this site daily to fish, bird watch, and partake in non-motorized watersports such as kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding. The additional permeable parking would allow for vehicular and other anthropogenic impacts to be sequestered within designed areas, ultimately allowing more of the wetland to function closer to its natural baseline.

7. **Port Aransas Nature Preserve**

   This project is expected to cost $5 million.

   Port Aransas is ARPA funds for a project to restore elevations within the Port Aransas Nature Preserve that were scoured and lost due to Harvey's surge. This proposed project is adjacent to an ongoing FEMA-funded project that would repair a concrete bulkhead and provide fill needed to restore a portion of the marsh that is at the bulkhead western terminus and at the transition section to a rock revetment that was also damaged due to Hurricane Harvey. This proposed project, while not FEMA eligible, would then extend the restoration upland immediately landward of the FEMA project.

8. **Brazoria County**

   This project is expected to cost $5 million.

   Brazoria County is proposing a project to nourish and repair approximately 4,600 ft of beach and dunes along the Bluewater Highway and beach access road five. The proposed project is located in an eroding beach that was damaged by Hurricane Nicholas. The project would help mitigate potential damages to the highway from further tropical storm surges or extreme tidal events. The project would construct a five-foot-high dune and stabilized with ecofriendly plants. The County is proposing to use granite blocks as the core for the dune, but will need to get approval for this from resource agencies and a softer core structure, like clay or sand, may be required as an alternative to granite.