

Proposed Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area

Benefits of Designation

Coastal wetlands. Photo © Bob Howen.

The proposed Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area (LSCNRA) aims to enhance Texas-led stewardship and conservation, protect private property rights and local businesses, develop a coastal economic sector compatible with periodic flooding, and expand and promote nature and heritage tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities.

A study of potential economic impacts for a four-county coastal region finds that, by its 10th year of operation, the proposed Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area could add \$140 million in local business revenue annually from increased recreation and heritage tourism. Realizing the significant benefits and stature of voluntarily engaging with the National Park Service (NPS) through the LSCNRA would offer the region's communities economic advantages while retaining local governance and individual landowner control.

To identify likely advantages, this study evaluated national recreation areas and other NPS sites, as well as other regional recreation, tourism, and heritage "trails" and areas.

Local Benefits of Creating a National Recreation Area

1 National Park Service visitor appeal

NPS affiliation would offer exposure to large numbers of domestic and international visitors.

At seven NPS sites similar to the proposed Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area, visitation grew 565 percent during the first ten years of operation.

2 More visitors, more revenue

Regional collaboration and a shared identity for tourism development and marketing could attract more visitors, boosting sales at local businesses, attendance at events, and tax revenues for local and state governments.

Collaborative marketing along the Crooked Road music heritage trail in Virginia doubled lodging sales in the first four years. Music events grew five percent per year, and the region's share of Virginia tourism expanded by two percent.

3 Quality of life for residents

A national recreation area can help preserve what people value most about their communities.

Residents believe the Lake Country scenic byway in Minnesota contributes to their quality of life by supporting natural areas, cultural and historic sites, and recreation opportunities.

4 Voluntary coordination among land managers

Programming, facilities construction and maintenance, signage, and resource protection can all benefit from coordination.

At Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, operating agreements allow goods and services to move easily between partners to address recreation area needs.

5 Financial leverage and access to funding

The diverse, landscape-scale partnership could position the region to compete successfully for nonprofit, corporate, federal, and other funding and resources that traditionally have not been available to this region or the partners. National Park System units are typically supported by strong friends groups that help raise money, recruit volunteers, and conduct special programs.

6 Enhanced coastal resilience

A national recreation area could promote long-term coastal resiliency by enhancing the value of low-lying coastal areas for recreation and expanding a regional economic sector that can recover quickly after storms.

How the Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area Would Work

More than two dozen public and private owners of some 250,000 acres have indicated that they want to voluntarily participate in the LSCNRA public-private partnership, which has been designed with strong local governance and respect for private property rights.

- A local partnership would include private landowners, local, state, and federal government agencies, and nonprofit organizations.
- Participating landowners retain full ownership and control of their land. Participation is voluntary and at will. Partner organizations could participate in various ways, consistent with their missions and resources.
- A locally developed plan would guide the national recreation area and any agreements with associated sites.
- The drafted legislation is customized for Texas values and independence, while realizing the significant benefits of voluntarily engaging with a NPS unit.
- The National Park Service may own only the specific parcels of land identified in the authorizing legislation, and may acquire those parcels only by donation, exchange, or purchase with donated funds from willing sellers.
- The diverse, landscape-scale partnership could position the region to compete successfully for funding and resources that traditionally have been unavailable to this region or to the individual partner organizations and agencies.
- The National Park Service can play a coordinating role and contribute expertise in areas such as education, interpretation, science, visitor services, recreation management, and planning.
- The private nonprofit Lone Star Coastal Alliance has already begun raising private funds to support the proposed LSCNRA and associated sites.



Fishing off Bolivar Peninsula. A national recreation area could help coordinate and improve coastal access for recreation. Photo: © Bob Howen.

What is a National Recreation Area?

- A unit of the National Park System that highlights areas of significant outdoor recreation, natural, heritage, and cultural resource potential.
- A branding of significant and high-quality experiences to domestic and international visitors.
- An opportunity to coordinate visitor services, tourism marketing, land management, and natural disaster response among voluntarily participating partners.
- A NPS designation, responsive to local concerns, that protects property rights, allows for local control, and may involve some limited park service land ownership. In the proposed LSCNRA, the park service may only acquire and manage specified parcels that must be acquired on a voluntary basis through donation or exchange, or with donated funds.

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