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Houston Parks & Recreation Department and Texas Coastal Exchange Unite to Address Climate Change

HOUSTON (March 10, 2022) - The Houston Parks & Recreation Department (HPARD) and the Texas Coastal Exchange (TCX) today announced the signing of an agreement for the Parks Department to plant trees funded by a grant from TCX. The agreement will award nature-based carbon dioxide removal and storage credits to Houston-based industrial waste services provider Sprint Waste Services LP. It's believed to be the first of its kind in the Houston region and a small first step in developing creative concepts to address the international problem of climate change.

Under the agreement, the Parks Department agrees to plant 525 trees that will generate a total of 1,250 tons of carbon dioxide removal and storage over the 25-year term of the deal. TCX developed the methodology for establishing the value of the carbon storage of trees planted from data published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The 525 trees will be a mix of native species (red maple, sugarberry, sweet gum, loblolly pine, laurel oak and live oak) with an expected lifespan of more than 50 years.

The carbon credits will benefit Sprint Waste, which made a donation to TCX to create nature-based carbon dioxide removal and storage credits. TCX will pay for the trees to be planted and maintained by the Houston Parks & Recreation Department, with 20% of the trees being set aside as a buffer to offset tree loss over the term of the project. The Department is reimbursed for planting trees, while Sprint Waste receives carbon credits to apply against its carbon footprint.

"This project is a great example of how we are simultaneously advancing the City's climate action and resilience goals outlined in the Houston Climate Action Plan and in Resilient Houston," stated Mayor Sylvester Turner. "The private sector investing in nature-based solutions helps our city in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time restoring, protecting and enhancing our urban greenspaces, and improving the quality of life of Houstonians."

Kenneth Allen, Director, Houston Parks & Recreation Department, said, "This agreement with TCX is a win for the Houston Parks & Recreation Department. We have the ability to improve and diversify our native forests while also providing carbon credits to companies interested in voluntarily offsetting emissions."



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“From the TCX perspective, we are working to find new and creative ways to create nature-based carbon credits supported by individuals and companies such as Sprint Waste,” said TCX President Jim Blackburn. “It is easy to imagine a future where we all support and benefit from reforestation and grassland restoration throughout the Houston region, Texas and the United States. Planting trees and restoring ecological systems will be part of the economy of the future as we unite to reverse the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.”

Joe Swinbank, co-owner and partner at Sprint Waste, said collaborative programs that leverage the value of nature-based solutions are smart models for the future as business and industry consider ways to address emissions-reduction and other climate change challenges. “Carbon capture and storage solutions can play a leading role in helping companies across the Gulf Coast address their environmental, safety and governance (ESG) and sustainability goals. We consider this parks proposal one of the more interesting ways of removing and storing carbon into the future.”

According to Kelli Ondracek, Natural Resources Manager, Houston Parks & Recreation Department, “These trees will be planted in various parks identified based on reforestation need and where the chance of disturbance or destruction is minimal. We are excited about this partnership opportunity and will continue to work throughout the city on reforestation efforts that will help to mitigate the impacts of climate change.” The parks to receive tree plantings include Gragg, King Estates, Schnur, Beverly Hills and Glenshire.

“Our climate problem is immense, yet the solutions are many,” added Blackburn. “It is really nice when a climate solution also turns out to help provide better parks for the citizens of Houston, particularly in Hispanic and African American communities that are often underserved. We were able to achieve that goal with this project.”

Sprint Waste President and CEO Dave Nelson agreed. “We’re so pleased this agreement will beautify these Houston parks and provide long-term ecosystems benefits for these underserved neighborhoods,” he said. “As we all learn more about the many advantages of nature-based carbon solutions, and how everyone involved can win by working together, we hope more companies will join us in participating in carbon-credit programs like this one.”

About Texas Coastal Exchange

Texas Coastal Exchange (TCX), a 501(c)(3) organization, was formed in 2018 from research at the Severe Storm Prediction, Education and Evacuation from Disaster (SSPEED) Center at Rice University. TCX works with corporations, foundations, churches and civic organizations regarding large-scale, carbon-capture projects along the Texas coast. For more information, please visit www.texascoastalexchange.org.