



**BAYOU CITY**  
**WATERKEEPER®**



Photo: Dan Thibodeaux



**2019**

**IMPACT REPORT**





# ***A Letter from Your Waterkeeper***

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2019 was a defining year for the Lower Galveston Bay Watershed. We celebrated important wins across our region, while recognizing the need to continue holding our decision-makers and polluters accountable. At the heart of our mission, we are working to shift the policies and practices of our region towards science-based, future-oriented, equitable solutions that work with – not against – nature. Thanks to supporters like you, we're stronger than ever.

With your incredible support, we've fought for clean water throughout the watershed, protected coastal wetlands, and encouraged resiliency efforts around the region. And we're making an impact: achieving important policy resolutions, winning important cases to protect our waterways, and defending the principles of sound science and equity that support all our communities.

These efforts are moving us towards a more equitable, healthy, and climate-resilient region. Because of you, there is hope that future generations will be able to fish, swim, and play in our backyard bayous, rivers, and streams. And despite these uncertain times, together we'll continue the work of furthering transformational, systemic change.

Thank you for joining us in the fight.

Jordan Macha  
Executive Director & Waterkeeper

# OUR MISSION

Bayou City Waterkeeper aims to protect and restore the integrity of our bayous, rivers, streams, and the bays through advocacy, education, and action.



# OUR VISION

To be an effective and sustainable organization focused on making the Lower Galveston Bay watershed a productive and healthy ecosystem that serves our communities' natural, economic, and recreational needs for generations to come. We utilize law and science in our commitment to a clean and healthy watershed, making our waterways fishable, swimmable, and drinkable for all.

# 2019

## YOUR IMPACT

SUPPORTED THE PROTECTION OF  
**200,000+**  
ACRES OF WETLANDS AROUND THE REGION



**1,100**  
GRASSROOT LETTERS TO DECISION-MAKERS

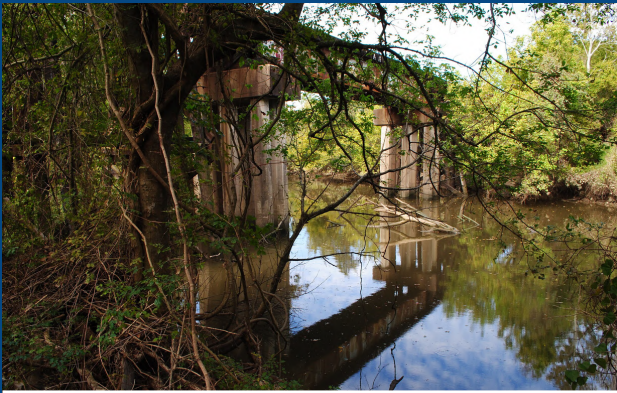


**3,400**  
SUPPORTERS

\*600% growth since 2017!

**49**  
COALITION PARTNERS



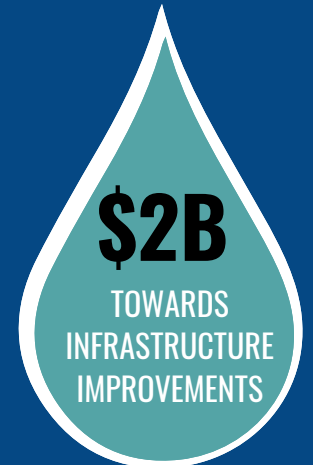


# CLEAN WATER

In 2019, we tackled a major source of water pollution across the lower Galveston Bay watershed: the City of Houston's aging sewer system. Our investigation revealed that the City spilled more than 15 million gallons of untreated sewage into our bays, creeks, and parks from 2013-2018 - not including Hurricane Harvey. After Houston repeatedly pushed off major repairs, we filed a citizen suit under the federal Clean Water Act.

As a direct result of our efforts, in July 2019, **Houston's City Council voted to adopt a \$2 billion settlement agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Texas.** This marks the beginning of a 15-year process to systematically address water pollution and overhaul failing infrastructure across the entire city. While there are still questions to be answered, **this is an important victory for clean water.**

Moving forward, we will push the City to future-proof its sewer systems, build green infrastructure, resolve residential sewer back-ups, and commit to robust public engagement. By investing the \$2 billion under the consent decree wisely, Houston may give all residents clean and safe water for generations to come.



Since the inception of the "Ike Dike", Bayou City Waterkeeper has encouraged the Army Corps of Engineers to consider nature-based projects as viable storm surge and flood protection. In 2019, our voice - joined by thousands of coastal residents - was finally heard: **a nature-based approach was designed and adopted by the Army Corps to reduce storm surge impacts on Galveston Island and Bolivar Peninsula.**



Moving away from a hardened levee structure, the Army Corps has announced plans for a natural dune system along the beachfront meant to buffer surge waters from hurricanes and intense storms. This is not only a huge win for communities across the Upper Texas Coast, but also for the wildlife and ecosystem that relies on our barrier islands and coastal habitats.

While there are still big questions related to the economic and environmental feasibility of the coastal barrier as a whole, the inclusion of nature-based designs marks a significant shift within the Army Corps. Working with - and reinforcing - natural systems can provide a cost-effective, feasible alternative that will protect people from the effects of storm surge, while also safeguarding the natural areas we love around Galveston Bay.

# NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

**55**  
MILES OF  
PRESERVED SHORELINE

As a founding member of the Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience, we worked closely with the Harris County Commissioners' Court to pass the **Harris Thrives Resolution**. Passed two years after Harvey, and a year after voters approved a \$2.5 billion flood bond, the Harris Thrives Resolution creates the framework to address flooding concerns and impacts across Harris County - starting with the communities who have suffered the most.

Through this resolution, Harris County Flood Control District will:

- Prioritize projects in communities suffering the most human impacts;
- Emphasize nature-based solutions, like restoring our coastal prairie wetlands, planting native plants and grasses, and introducing green infrastructure throughout the county;
- Approach projects holistically by coordinating across departments and jurisdictions; and
- Identify additional resources to maximize its flood-reduction efforts across the County.

Approval of the Harris Thrives Resolution marks an important shift for our region: Harris County is embracing transformative practices and acquiring the tools it needs, as well as the political backing, to address long-standing inequities in our most vulnerable communities, and improve the health of our watershed. We were honored to have been part of this effort and will continue to support the County, and municipalities across our region, to embrace solutions for all our residents.



# RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



# Our Commitment to Equity, Inclusion, and Justice



The communities living in the Lower Galveston Bay watershed are among the most diverse in the nation. We see strength in the differences in background and perspective this diversity represents. As we work toward cleaner water across our watershed, we are strongest when we work together.



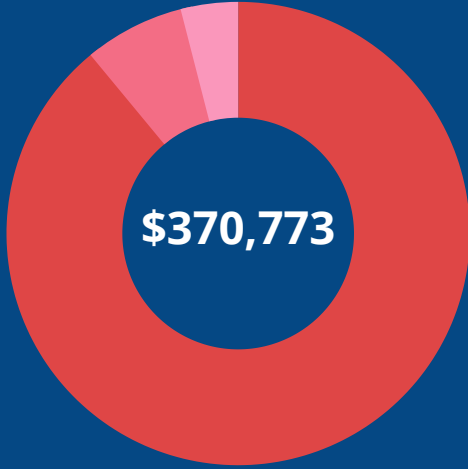
Our bayous, creeks, and bays unite us. But poor planning - and, in some cases, racist policies - over the last century means some communities experience more water pollution and flooding than others. Irrespective of zip code, residents across our watershed deserve to experience nature and have access to clean water and a safe environment. By rooting out injustice at the source, we can benefit surrounding communities with cleaner water and create more just frameworks for generations to come.



Within our organization, we strive to support and cultivate leadership from all communities in our work. In an ongoing effort, we are integrating our commitment to diversity and inclusion into our program strategies, outreach, recruiting, governance, and overall culture.

**Read our organizational commitment here:**  
[bayoucitywaterkeeper.org/who-we-are/](http://bayoucitywaterkeeper.org/who-we-are/)

# Contributed Revenue



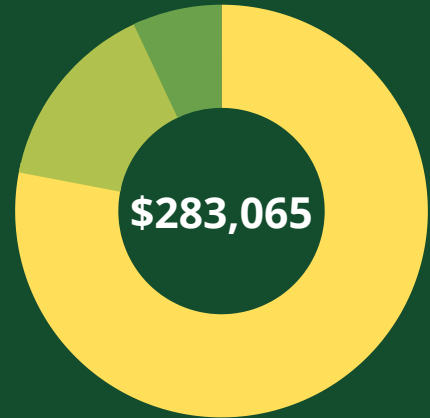
**FOUNDATIONS** 89%  
**INDIVIDUALS** 7%  
**EVENTS** 4%

## With Support From

Garver Family Foundation  
GlobalGiving  
Jacob & Terese Hershey Foundation  
Houston Endowment  
OKRA Charity Saloon  
Patagonia  
Rebuild Texas



**PROGRAM SERVICES** 78%  
**GENERAL** 15%  
**FUNDRAISING** 7%



# Expenditures

# STAFF



**Jordan Macha**

Executive Director & Waterkeeper



**Kristen Schlemmer**

Legal Director

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Sharron Stewart**

Board Chair

**David Popken**

Vice Chair & Treasurer

**Jorge Bustamante**

Secretary

**Joe Liggio**

**Rachel Powers**

**Jennifer Powis**

## Advisory Board

Dr. John Jacob | Martin Hamilton | Vaness Hamilton

**WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT  
SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU!**

THANK  
YOU



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WATERKEEPER®**

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