

# Lake Creek Bottomlands—A Vital Montgomery County Asset

Montgomery County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state partly due to its proximity to the city of Houston and partly due to its natural amenities supporting outdoor recreation. The 161,508 acre Sam Houston National Forest beginning in the northern part of the county, the 21,000 acre Lake Conroe in the north central and the 1,725 acres in Jones State Forest in the south are key attractions in the county along with the numerous wooded developments and acreage communities. However, it also contains some of the most pristine streams and associated bottomland hardwood forests in the Houston area. Although little known, it also contains the western extent of many of the habitats contained in the Big Thicket National Preserve.

The rapid development of the county is placing extreme pressure on the existing greenspace which in turn is placing pressure on water quality, wildlife habitat and flood control. The maps in Figure 1 were taken from the Houston Galveston Area Council website and demonstrate the outlook that the county will be completely developed by 2035.

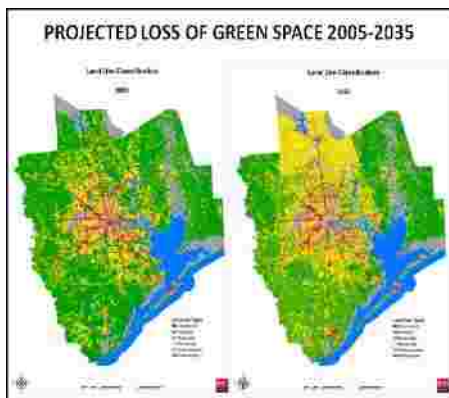


Figure 1

The increased runoff and non point source pollutants associated with this magnitude of change will have a significant effect on the flooding and the availability of quality water for recreational and household use and will place increasing pressure on current recreational areas if this development is handled poorly. However, there are areas of the county that should not be developed, due to high risk of flooding, yet have high value for outdoor recreation, water quality preservation and flood control. These are the flood plains highlighted on the map in Figure 2.



Figure 2

Assuming a logical approach to developing the county, the floodplains offer an opportunity to develop additional green space in bottomlands that shouldn't be developed, while allowing development to continue in most of the intervening uplands.

Although it may not have been our original developer's plan, Montgomery Trace and associated developments (area outlined in red) are ideally situated to take advantage of both a hilly terrain and some of the more pristine intervening bottomlands along Lake Creek and its Mound Creek and Fish Creek tributaries (Figure 3). Montgomery Trace owns 224 acre of potential floodplain parkland along Lake Creek



Figure 3

and the Mound and Fish Creek tributaries within the red area. In addition we have access to an additional 489 acres of natural area along Lake Creek that includes the western extent of many of the habitats and wildlife of the Big Thicket National Preserve. These properties together with ownership of over 160 acres of additional reserves containing lakes, parks and natural areas give Montgomery Trace and several of the area developments a unique position to act as an anchor for a different type of development philosophy; one that emphasizes how natural amenities can improve property values, recreational opportunities and services such as flood control and water quality and quantity improvements.

The E. 1488 Association has recognized the value of this approach for the long term health of the county and area communities and is evaluating the possibility of developing a Lake Creek Greenway similar to what is being developed along Spring Creek. The Montgomery Trace and Woodforest preserves could act to anchor such a greenway. A notional map of the floodplain area that might be included in

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such a project is highlighted in  
Figure 4.



Figure 4

Those of us who intend to remain in Montgomery County should seriously think about what we want to leave the next generation. The historical approach is unsustainable and would leave us with limited recrea-

tional areas, increased flooding and water pollution. Given the pace of development we don't have much time to begin identifying and preserving those areas with the greatest recreational and environmental services value. A number of experts have already identified the Lake Creek bottomland as a resource that should be preserved and would be a tremendous asset to the businesses and communities in the area. There is little doubt of the value of a Greenbelt.

It is clear that the success of such a project will depend on more than expert opinions. It will require the involvement and support of the business and development communities as well as the affected property own-

ers, the county and possibly state governments and the local residents. The current economic climate will require some innovative approaches to the acquisition of land and/or easements that are beneficial to both the land owners and those who would use such an amenity. We are at the beginning of what is likely to be a long process and will need the help and support of a large cross section of our residents and businesses. Anyone interested in more information or in helping with the evaluation and promotion process should contact Glenn Buckley at [grbuckley419.comcast.net](mailto:grbuckley419.comcast.net).

Submitted by Glenn Buckley