



Agenda Item: Presentation of the Houston Galveston Area Council Parks and Natural Areas Award in Programming

Background: Last year, the Operations Team developed and implemented a lecture series that highlighted women with careers in coastal science. This program aligns with the Park Board’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusions initiatives as well as its mission to be environmental stewards. The purpose of the programming was to bring to light disparity of women working in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) fields, and how they overcame barriers to find success in their field. The hope is that these talks would inspire other women to pursue careers in the STEAM industries.

Participants in the lecture series included:

- Dr. Sarah Piwetz from the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network
- Kari Howard from the Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Rescue
- Kristen Vale with the American Bird Conservancy
- Haille Leija from the Galveston Bay Foundation
- Kelly Drinnen with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Lucy Flores with the Texas General Land Office’s Texas Beach Watch.

The series caught the attention of the Houston Galveston Area Council, or HGAC. As part of the organization’s Parks and Natural Areas Awards, the series was the winner in the programming category. The awards recognize outstanding practices across the Houston-Galveston region and the winning projects serve as models for the rest of the region to consider.

Park Board staff, three of the speakers from the 2022 series and one speaker for the 2023 series were present to receive the award. Women in Coastal Science will resume this spring with all new speakers.

