

# Texas Playa Conservation Initiative



## The Project

The goal of the Texas Playa Conservation Initiative is to restore playas throughout the Panhandle to provide wetland habitat for wildlife and improve the quality and quantity of groundwater recharge through playas for the ranchers, family farms and local communities who live here. The restoration work, which will focus on filling pits and trenches in playas surrounded by grassland, will begin in Castro and Floyd counties in 2016. If you'd like to put your playa to work providing clean water for you and the wildlife, we can help.

## The Partners

This is a multi-partner effort by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, Ducks Unlimited, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Tech University, The Nature Conservancy and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

## What's So Important About Playas

Healthy, functioning playas provide important habitat for ducks, geese and other wildlife, and are areas of focused recharge to the Ogallala Aquifer. Research shows recharge rates in playa basins are 10 to 100 times higher than under other areas and groundwater recharge may exceed three inches per year in unaltered playas. Additionally, water reaching the Aquifer through playas is of higher quality than that going through upland soils. Grass buffers around playas prevent sediments, which may have pesticides and other contaminants attached, from entering the playa. As water moves through the clay floor of the playa, a second 'cleaning' process occurs as the soils

beneath the playa remove nitrogen and other dissolved contaminants. But more than 70 percent of playas have been altered through tilling, pitting or filling.

## Filling Pits

Pits can easily be removed. In most cases, the spoil pile from the original excavation is present and used to refill the pit. After the pit has been filled, rainwater and runoff can reach the large cracks in a dry playa floor – which is essential for recharge to occur – rather than collecting in the pit. The shallow water that spreads across the playa also allows plants and insects to flourish, which in turn provides important food and habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife.

## Healthy Playas

- are areas of focused groundwater recharge;
- filter and clean water going into the Aquifer;
- attract wildlife; and
- make the landscape more interesting.

## More Information

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