



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, GALVESTON DISTRICT
2000 FORT POINT ROAD
GALVESTON, TEXAS, 77550

CESWG-RD-P

25 JUN 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Pre-2015 Regulatory Regime
Approved Jurisdictional Determination in Light of *Sackett v. EPA*, 143 S. Ct. 1322
(2023),¹ SWG-2024-00029

BACKGROUND. An Approved Jurisdictional Determination (AJD) is a Corps document stating the presence or absence of waters of the United States on a parcel or a written statement and map identifying the limits of waters of the United States on a parcel. AJDs are clearly designated appealable actions and will include a basis of JD with the document.² AJDs are case-specific and are typically made in response to a request. AJDs are valid for a period of five years unless new information warrants revision of the determination before the expiration date or a District Engineer has identified, after public notice and comment, that specific geographic areas with rapidly changing environmental conditions merit re-verification on a more frequent basis.³ For the purposes of this AJD, we have relied on section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (RHA),⁴ the Clean Water Act (CWA) implementing regulations published by the Department of the Army in 1986 and amended in 1993 (references 2.a. and 2.b. respectively), the 2008 *Rapanos-Carabell* guidance (reference 2.c.), and other applicable guidance, relevant case law and longstanding practice, (collectively the pre-2015 regulatory regime), and the *Sackett* decision (reference 2.d.) in evaluating jurisdiction.

This Memorandum for Record (MFR) constitutes the basis of jurisdiction for a Corps AJD as defined in 33 CFR §331.2. The features addressed in this AJD were evaluated consistent with the definition of "waters of the United States" found in the pre-2015 regulatory regime and consistent with the Supreme Court's decision in *Sackett*. This AJD did not rely on the 2023 "Revised Definition of 'Waters of the United States,'" as amended on 8 September 2023 (Amended 2023 Rule) because, as of the date of this decision, the Amended 2023 Rule is not applicable in Texas due to litigation.

1. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS.

¹ While the Supreme Court's decision in *Sackett* had no effect on some categories of waters covered under the CWA, and no effect on any waters covered under RHA, all categories are included in this Memorandum for Record for efficiency.

² 33 CFR 331.2.

³ Regulatory Guidance Letter 05-02.

⁴ USACE has authority under both Section 9 and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 but for convenience, in this MFR, jurisdiction under RHA will be referred to as Section 10.

- a. Provide a list of each individual feature within the review area and the jurisdictional status of each one (i.e., identify whether each feature is/is not a water of the United States and/or a navigable water of the United States).
 - i. PS-1, Halls Bayou (P118-00-00), RPW, Section 404 jurisdictional, 69.55 LF, 29.8970, -95.4086.
 - ii. P118-27-01, DD-1, upland drainage ditch, non-jurisdiction, 119 LF, 29.8754, -95.4086.
 - iii. P118-28-00, DD-2, upland drainage ditch, non-jurisdiction, 80 LF, 29.8902, -95.4086.

2. REFERENCES.

- a. Final Rule for Regulatory Programs of the Corps of Engineers, 51 FR 41206 (November 13, 1986).
- b. Clean Water Act Regulatory Programs, 58 FR 45008 (August 25, 1993).
- c. U.S. EPA & U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Clean Water Act Jurisdiction Following the U.S. Supreme Court's Decision in *Rapanos v. United States & Carabell v. United States* (December 2, 2008)
- d. *Sackett v. EPA*, 598 U.S. ___, 143 S. Ct. 1322 (2023)
- e. 2008 Rapanos guidance: "In addition, ditches (including roadside ditches) excavated wholly in and draining only uplands and that do not carry a relatively permanent flow of water are generally not waters of the United States because they are not tributaries, or they do not have a significant nexus to downstream traditional navigable waters."
- f. 2003 SWANCC guidance.
- g. 1980s preamble language (including regarding waters and features that are generally non-jurisdictional) (51 FR 41217 (November 13, 1986) and 53 FR 20765 (June 6, 1988)).
- h. 24 July 2020 Memo, "Joint Memorandum to the Field Between the U.S. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Concerning Exempt Construction or Maintenance of Irrigation

Ditches and Exempt Maintenance of Drainage Ditches Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act”.

3. REVIEW AREA. Project area for the reconstruction of Sweetwater Lane is on Sweetwater Lane, from West Mount Road to West Canino Road in Harris County, Texas. The review area is approximately 8,700 linear feet (1.65 miles) in length. Approximate center is 29.8902, -95.4086, Houston, Harris County, Texas. No known previous AJDs have been conducted within this tract. Site map attached.
4. NEAREST TRADITIONAL NAVIGABLE WATER (TNW), INTERSTATE WATER, OR THE TERRITORIAL SEAS TO WHICH THE AQUATIC RESOURCE IS CONNECTED. Greens Bayou is TNW include in SWG navigable waters list.
5. FLOWPATH FROM THE SUBJECT AQUATIC RESOURCES TO A TNW, INTERSTATE WATER, OR THE TERRITORIAL SEAS. Halls Bayou, an RPW that flows southeast directly into Greens Bayou, an TNW. Halls Bayou is a 3rd order stream at the point closest to the review area and ends at its confluence with Greens Bayou, a 3rd order TNW. Greens Bayou flows into Buffalo Bayou (TNW) south of the U.S. 90 Highway Bridge crossing. Buffalo Bayou flows east into the San Jacinto River (TNW) which flows south into Galveston Bay, then into the Gulf of Mexico.
6. SECTION 10 JURISDICTIONAL WATERS⁵: Describe aquatic resources or other features within the review area determined to be jurisdictional in accordance with Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. Include the size of each aquatic resource or other feature within the review area and how it was determined to be jurisdictional in accordance with Section 10.⁶ N/A
7. SECTION 404 JURISDICTIONAL WATERS: Describe the aquatic resources within the review area that were found to meet the definition of waters of the United States in accordance with the pre-2015 regulatory regime and consistent with the Supreme Court’s decision in *Sackett*. List each aquatic resource separately, by name, consistent with the naming convention used in section 1, above. Include a rationale for each aquatic resource, supporting that the aquatic resource meets the relevant category of “waters of the United States” in the pre-2015 regulatory regime. The

⁵ 33 CFR 329.9(a) A waterbody which was navigable in its natural or improved state, or which was susceptible of reasonable improvement (as discussed in § 329.8(b) of this part) retains its character as “navigable in law” even though it is not presently used for commerce, or is presently incapable of such use because of changed conditions or the presence of obstructions.

⁶ This MFR is not to be used to make a report of findings to support a determination that the water is a navigable water of the United States. The district must follow the procedures outlined in 33 CFR part 329.14 to make a determination that water is a navigable water of the United States subject to Section 10 of the RHA.

rationale should also include a written description of, or reference to a map in the administrative record that shows, the lateral limits of jurisdiction for each aquatic resource, including how that limit was determined, and incorporate relevant references used. Include the size of each aquatic resource in acres or linear feet and attach and reference related figures as needed.

- a. TNWs (a)(1): N/A
- b. Interstate Waters (a)(2): N/A
- c. Other Waters (a)(3): N/A
- d. Impoundments (a)(4): N/A
- e. Tributaries (a)(5): Halls Bayou (P118-00-00), Perennial Stream, Jurisdictional, Section 404, 69.55 LF. This reach has perennial flow based on historical and current USGS Topographic maps and aerial photography.
- f. The territorial seas (a)(6): N/A
- g. Adjacent wetlands (a)(7): NA

8. NON-JURISDICTIONAL AQUATIC RESOURCES AND FEATURES

- a. Describe aquatic resources and other features within the review area identified as “generally non-jurisdictional” in the preamble to the 1986 regulations (referred to as “preamble waters”).⁷ Include size of the aquatic resource or feature within the review area and describe how it was determined to be non-jurisdictional under the CWA as a preamble water. N/A
- b. Describe aquatic resources and features within the review area identified as “generally not jurisdictional” in the *Rapanos* guidance. Include size of the aquatic resource or feature within the review area and describe how it was determined to be non-jurisdictional under the CWA based on the criteria listed in the guidance.

Based on desk review, P118-27-01 (DD-1) 119 LF, and P118-28-00 (DD-2) 85 LF are non-jurisdictional upland stormwater ditches. They are upland cut drainage ditches displaying an ephemeral flow regime. They do not extend the OHWM of Halls Bayou. They do not relocate or replace a tributary or other water of the U.S. Based on 2008 Rapanos Guidance, ditches (including roadside

⁷ 51 FR 41217, November 13, 1986.

ditches) excavated wholly in and draining only uplands and that do not carry a relatively permanent flow of water are generally not waters of the United States because they are not tributaries, or they do not have a significant nexus to downstream traditional navigable waters.

- c. Describe aquatic resources and features identified within the review area as waste treatment systems, including treatment ponds or lagoons designed to meet the requirements of CWA. Include the size of the waste treatment system within the review area and describe how it was determined to be a waste treatment system. N/A
 - d. Describe aquatic resources and features within the review area determined to be prior converted cropland in accordance with the 1993 regulations (reference 2.b.). Include the size of the aquatic resource or feature within the review area and describe how it was determined to be prior converted cropland. N/A
 - e. Describe aquatic resources (i.e., lakes and ponds) within the review area, which do not have a nexus to interstate or foreign commerce, and prior to the January 2001 Supreme Court decision in “*SWANCC*,” would have been jurisdictional based solely on the “Migratory Bird Rule.” Include the size of the aquatic resource or feature, and how it was determined to be an “isolated water” in accordance with *SWANCC*. N/A
 - f. Describe aquatic resources and features within the review area that were determined to be non-jurisdictional because they do not meet one or more categories of waters of the United States under the pre-2015 regulatory regime consistent with the Supreme Court’s decision in *Sackett* (e.g., tributaries that are non-relatively permanent waters; non-tidal wetlands that do not have a continuous surface connection to a jurisdictional water). N/A
9. DATA SOURCES. List sources of data/information used in making determination. Include titles and dates of sources used and ensure that information referenced is available in the administrative record.
- a. Office evaluation(s) were conducted on 10 JAN 24, 15 MAR 24, and 05 JUN 24
 - b. Wetland Delineation Report: Raba Kistner, *Waters of the U.S. Delineation Sweetwater Lane from West Mount Houston to West Camino Road*, HCED Precinct 2 - UPIN 23102MF2US01, 30 NOV 23, 16 MAY 24, and 20 JUN 24.
 - c. ERIS. Historical Aerial Photographs. 1938, 1953, 1957, 1966, 1983, and 2022.

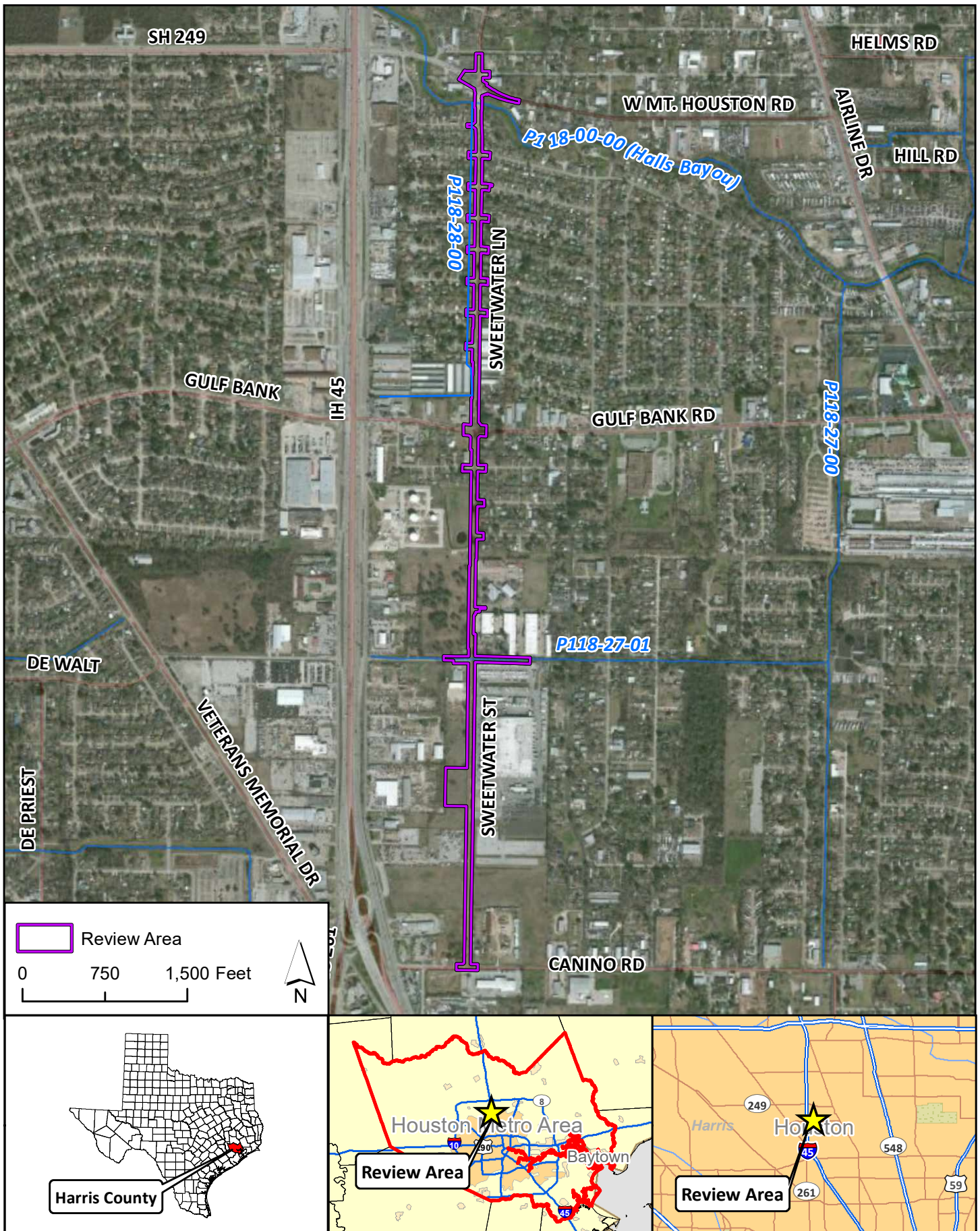
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- d. ERIS. Historical Topographic Maps, USGS 7.5-Minute Series, Aldine and Houston Heights, Texas dated 1967, 1982, 1995, 2016, and 2019.
- e. Southern Regional Climate Center. 2023. Houston Intercontinental AP, Houston, Texas: Monthly Normals for Temperature and Rainfall. <https://www.srcc.tamu.edu> (Accessed July 11, 2023).
- f. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). 2005. Regulatory Guidance Letter No. 05-05: Ordinary High Water Mark Identification.
- g. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2019. Web Soil Survey.
- h. <http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx> (Accessed July 24, 2023).

10. OTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION. N/A

11. NOTE: The structure and format of this MFR were developed in coordination with the EPA and Department of the Army. The MFR's structure and format may be subject to future modification or may be rescinded as needed to implement additional guidance from the agencies; however, the approved jurisdictional determination described herein is a final agency action.

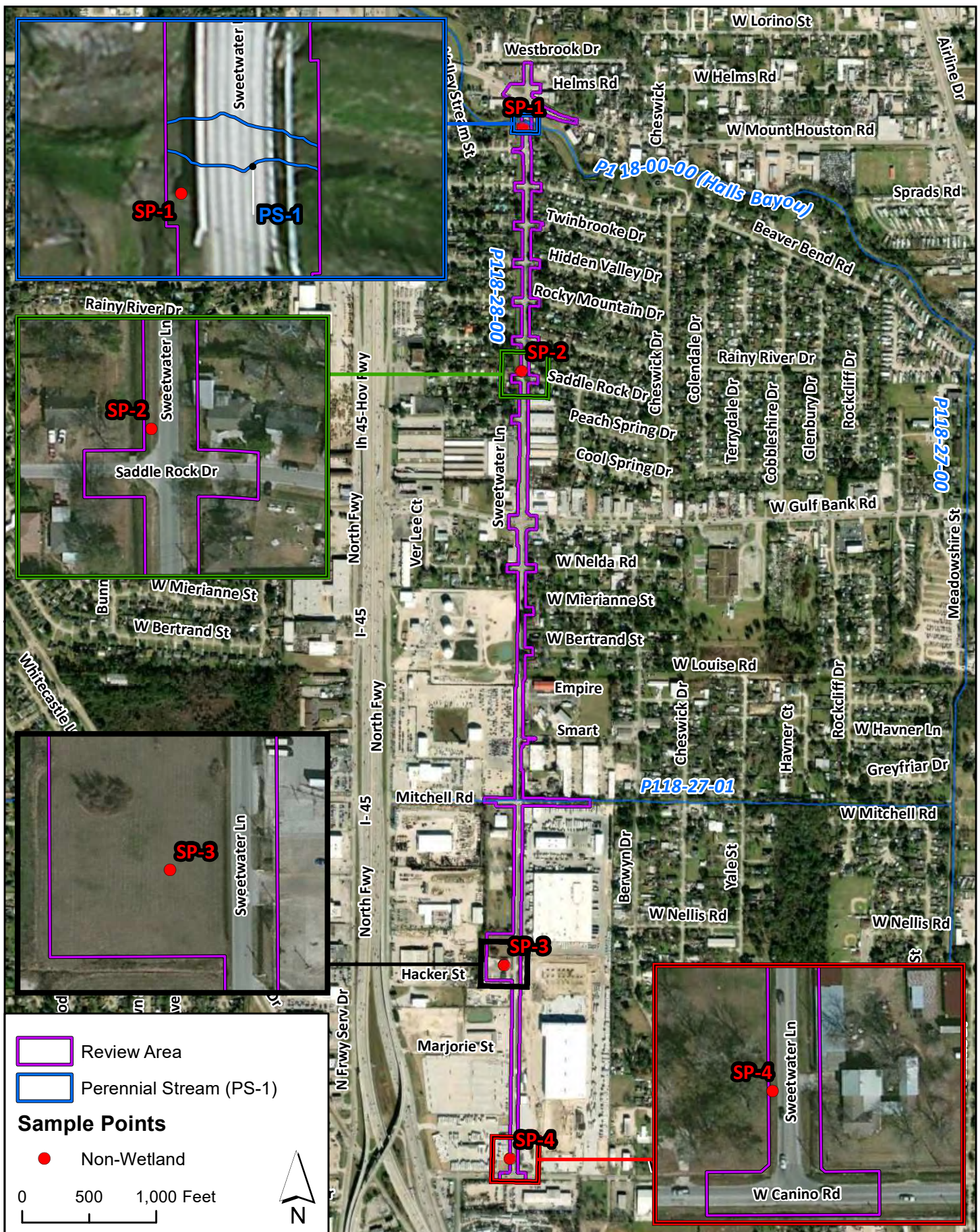


SOURCE: Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, IGN, and the GIS User Community

PROJECT LOCATION

Sweetwater Lane Project
 HCD UPIN 23102MF2US01
 Houston, Harris County, Texas
 RKI Project No. ASF23-051-00

FIGURE



POTENTIAL WATERS OF THE U.S.

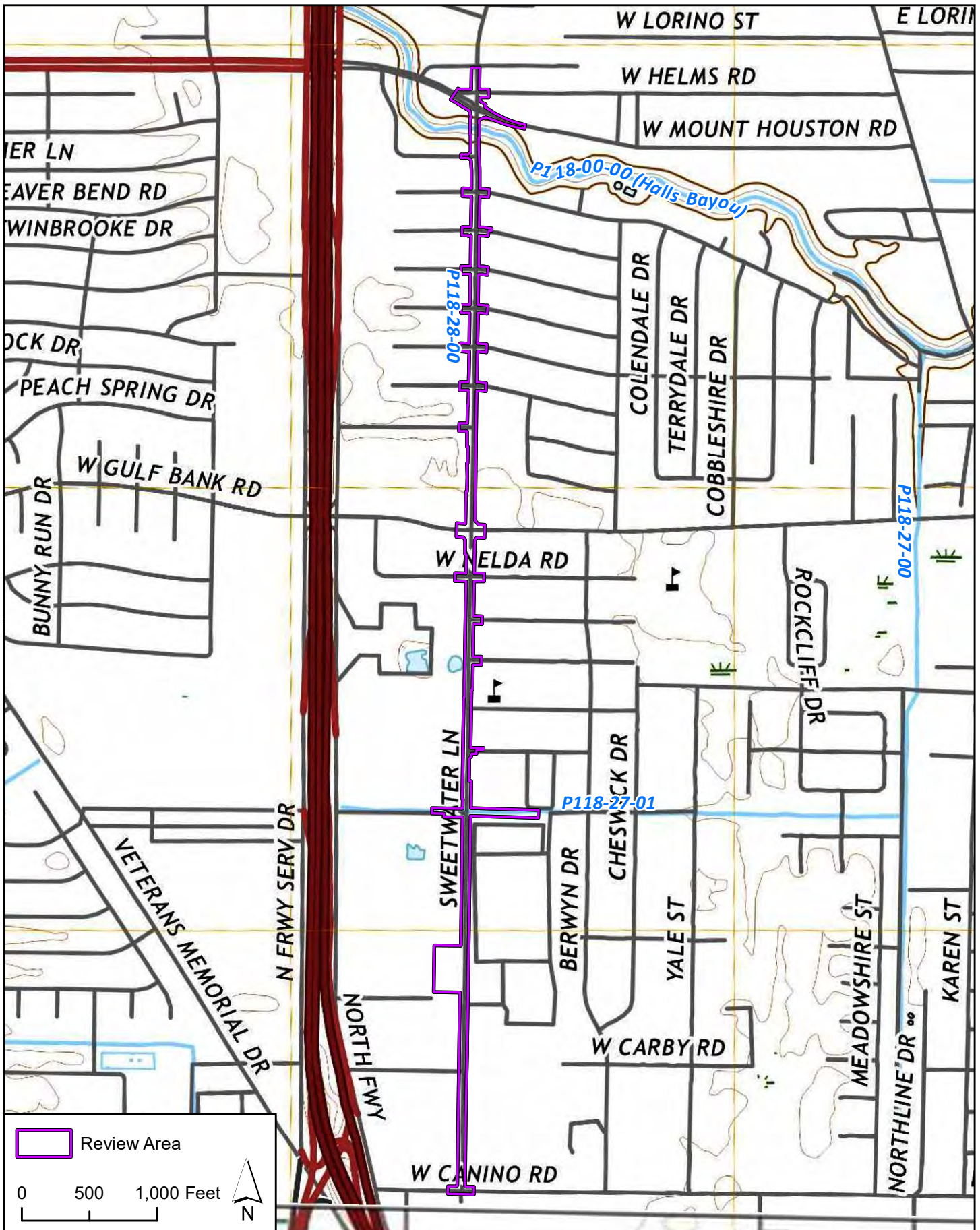
Sweetwater Lane Project

HCED UPIN 23102MF2US01

Houston, Harris County, Texas

RKI Project No. ASF23-051-00

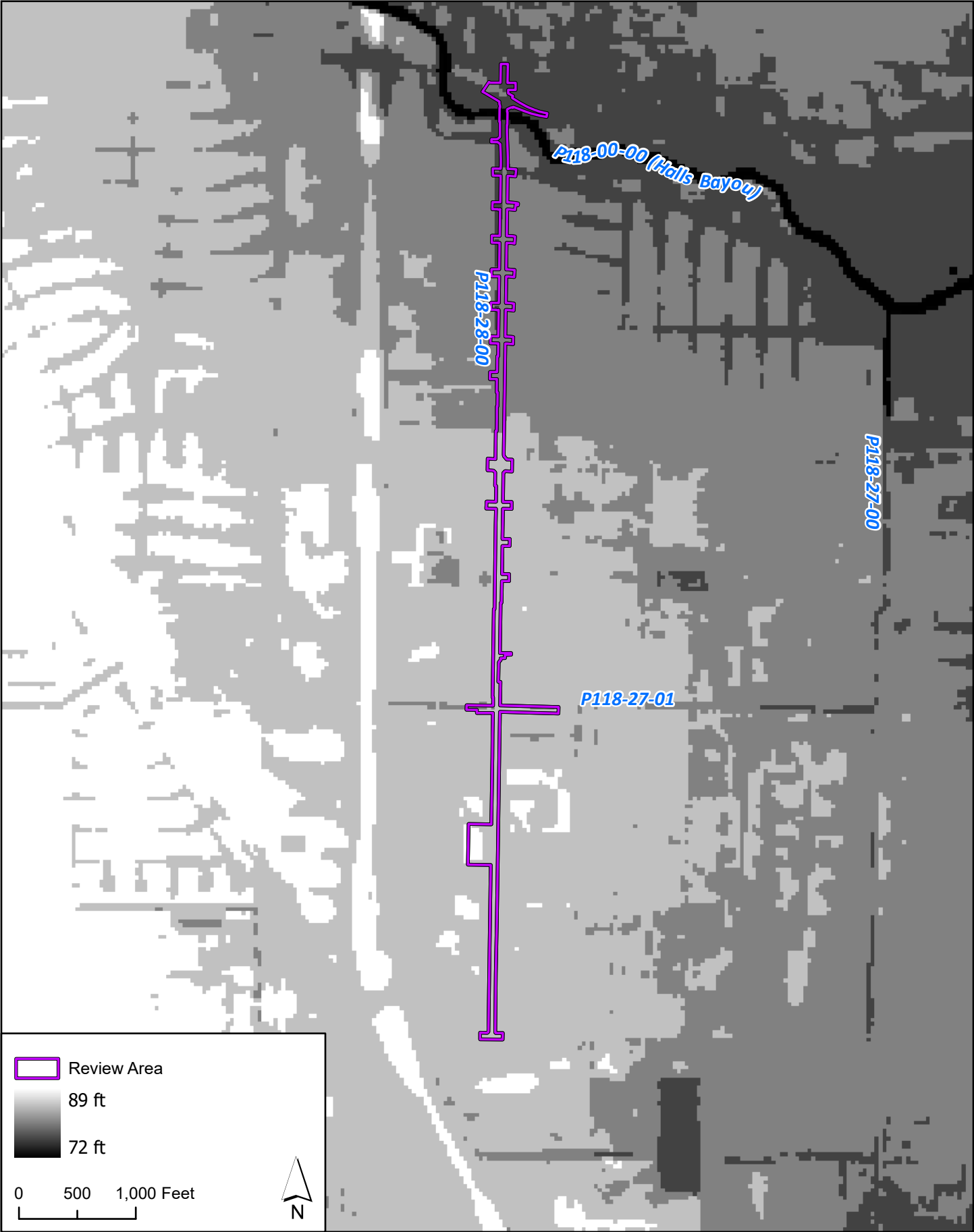
FIGURE



SOURCE:
1) USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map: Aldine TX, Quadrangle (2022)

USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP **FIGURE**

Sweetwater Lane Project
HCED UPIN 23102MF2US01
Houston, Harris County, Texas
RKI Project No. ASF23-051-00



SOURCE:
1.) USGS 10-Minute Digital Elevation Models (2012)

DIGITAL ELEVATION MODEL **FIGURE**

Sweetwater Lane Project
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