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## Celanese Awards \$150,000 for Baffin Bay Study



CBBEP, TAMU-CC, Celanese, and Kleberg County representatives at check presentation. Photo: TAMU-CC

Celanese has stepped up again with another \$150,000, three year commitment, for water quality monitoring in Baffin Bay! This is the second grant made by Celanese for a total of \$300,000 over a six-year period toward marine research and water quality in the Baffin Bay ecosystem.

Baffin Bay is a well known recreational and commercial fishing hot spot, producing trophy trout and driving the economy in this isolated region of South Texas. However, in 2012-2013, at a time with exceptionally large black drum populations, the bay was plagued with water quality problems that set off a series of unfortunate events including a brown tide bloom and *Mulinia* clam die off, the primary food source for black drum. With starving drum populations, unmarketable commercial catches, and the ecosystem in a tailspin, the community came together and decided that something needed to be done.

With early financial support from the Kleberg County, Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), Saltwater-fisheries Enhancement Association (SEA), and Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP), the Baffin Bay Study Group was formed to support interests in resolving Baffin Bay water quality and biological productivity concerns. In 2014 Celanese made its initial \$150,000 commitment to help the group figure out what was going on by supporting a volunteer based water quality monitoring program.

“Celanese has a long history of community involvement and interest in the protection of our natural resources. We are pleased to continue to support the important work being done on Baffin Bay,” said Brian Connelly, site director for Celanese’s Bishop facility, which manufactures specialty chemicals engineered materials.

That initial Celanese donation really solidified the community led effort and supported a partnership with Dr. Michael Wetz at Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC), who with the assistance of the volunteers had been leading monthly sampling and lab analysis since the group was formed. The study has discovered that concentrations of dissolved organic nitrogen in Baffin Bay are 3-fold higher on average



Volunteers with TAMU-CC preparing water samples. Photo: TAMU-CC

than in other bay systems of the Texas coast (Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Lavaca-Colorado).

“With Celanese’s support we have reached a major milestone by completing four years of water quality sampling on Baffin Bay. This additional support that Celanese is providing will help us take the Study to the next level,” said Dr. Michael Wetz, Associate Professor of Marine Biology at TAMU-CC.

Additional Baffin Bay studies funded by CBBEP and conducted by TAMU-CC and Harte Research Institute (HRI) include sediment core sampling to determine historical water quality, acoustic work to track the movement of black drum populations, benthic sampling to analyze food availability, as well as gut content analysis to establish drum feeding preferences. All of these studies, in conjunction with the volunteer water quality monitoring, have led to a greater understanding of what is happening in Baffin Bay, and set us up for taking the next step.

“We now have a lot of new information that will help guide research, management and restoration efforts moving us forward. The community involvement, including Celanese’s generous support, has been incredible,” said Rae Mooney, project manager at CBBEP.

Over the next three years, the group plans to engage community, industry and next-generation stewards in watershed restoration efforts, develop a long-term watershed protection plan, and continue water quality sampling to assess the impact of restoration activities.

To learn about all the Baffin Bay Study Group partners, view presentations, and more visit <http://www.cbbep.org/baffin-bay/>.



TAMU-CC with benthic core sample. Photo: CBBEP



Attaching acoustic fish tags to black drum. Photo: HRI

The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring bays and estuaries in the 12-county region of the Texas Coastal Bend. CBBEP is partially funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For more information about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, contact Kathryn Tunnell at (361)336-0304 or [ktunnell@cbbep.org](mailto:ktunnell@cbbep.org).

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