



July 2017

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program Receives Gulf Guardian Award!



The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) was just awarded a Gulf Guardian Award from the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program for their Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration Project! Gulf Guardian Awards recognize and honor businesses, community groups, individuals and organizations that are taking extraordinary steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive.

CBBEP's Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration Project restored 160 acre of critical habitat in Nueces Bay and is no stranger to the community of the Coastal Bend. For years anyone traveling Highway 181 between Portland and Corpus Christi could be caught pondering...what are they doing out there?

They were building this!



Aerial view of completed marsh restoration site. Photo: Lanmon Aerial Photography

Once a thriving bay ecosystem and essential habitat for juvenile fish, shrimp and crabs, as well as feeding grounds for bigger fish and birds, causeway construction and related dredging resulted in the loss of about 180 acres of marsh, followed by an additional 160 acres lost to erosion and subsidence.

CBBEP began planning in 2005, and since then multiple funding partners contributed to the \$5.3 million dollar restoration effort, which included creating marsh terraces, intertidal marsh complex, and berms to protect the project site and infrastructure, as well as public access improvements and community planting events.

The community planting events drew volunteers from around the Coastal Bend, all wanting to leave their mark. Community volunteers contributed 720 hours, and planted 10,000 *Spartina* plugs on over 4 acres of the 160 acre marsh restoration site.



Volunteer planting event participants before being shuttled out to marsh to plant *Spartina*.

The site is looking great and the *Spartina* planted by the volunteers is doing a terrific job of holding the marsh terraces in place. There is significant wildlife utilization of the area, including from both highly migratory species like the Long-billed curlew, as well as our colonial nesting waterbirds like Black skimmers and egrets. This year CBBEP's Coastal Bird Program recorded 3,175 nesting pairs of birds at the restoration site!

The project is a great success story. "We are honored to have received this award from the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program for the Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration Project, " said Rosario Martinez, Project Manager for the CBBEP, "It has been a long journey through all the phases of the project and we are excited to now be at a point where the marsh can be utilized by fish and wildlife and enjoyed by the public," Rosario said.



Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration Project Manager Rosario Martinez (right), pictured with RAe Mooney, on the outer berm of the marsh restoration site.

Thank you to the community, volunteers, and the many funding partners that made this project possible: Coastal Bend Bays Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association of Texas, Texas General Land Office, Environmental Protection Agency, Holloman Price Foundation, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Citgo.

Photos: CBBEP File unless otherwise noted.

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.

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