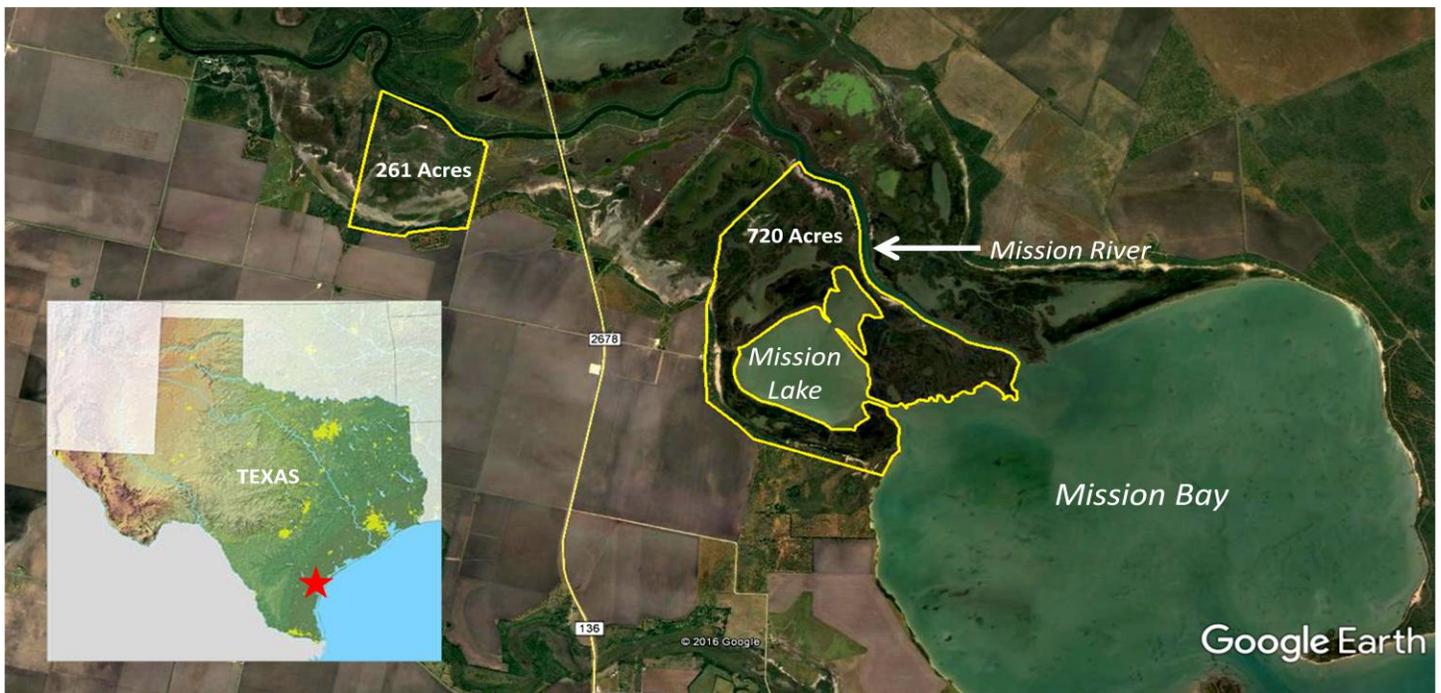




December 2016

CBBEP Purchases Whooping Crane Habitat in Mission River Delta

Whoop Whoop! The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) has just completed the purchase of two properties totaling 981 acres in the Mission River delta for conservation. The acquisition is significant for the protection and recovery of the endangered whooping crane and includes approximately 13,000 linear feet of riparian belt along the Mission River, as well as a buffer around Mission Lake.



The purchase is just in time for the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population of whooping cranes, the only remaining wild population of whooping cranes in the world. This population of only 300 cranes breeds at the Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada, and winters at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, where the birds begin arriving in early November this year.

As the crane flies, the pristine estuarine habitats of the Mission River delta are only about 13-15 miles from their wintering grounds. "The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Whooping Crane International Recovery Team is excited to see this recent habitat acquisition in the Mission Bay area by Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program," said Wade Harrell, U.S. Whooping Crane Coordinator for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. "This



CBBEP Purchases Whooping Crane Habitat in Mission River Delta, Continued.

is an area that we have seen increasing winter use of by whooping cranes as the population continues to expand, and conservation of priority habitat areas is a key strategy in moving the species towards full recovery," Wade said.

The CBBEP began looking for conservation acquisition opportunities in the Mission River delta in 2013, and was awarded funding for the purchases by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, and the Whooping Crane Conservation Association in 2016. "Conservation acquisition in the Mission River delta has been a priority of the CBBEP and its partners for some time," said Jake Herring with the CBBEP "Not only for the protection of habitats that are currently utilized by whooping cranes, but for the conservation of functioning wetlands and estuarine habitats. The Mission River delta is an integral part of the Aransas Bay complex, and protection of the wetlands and estuarine habitats surrounding the Mission River delta not only directly benefits these parcels, but helps support the health and function of the Mission, Copano, and Aransas bay systems" Jake said.



Jake Herring installs land protection signs.

The purchase of these initial properties in the Mission River delta is a great first step towards conserving these lands for generations to come. Land acquisition for protection is one of the most economical methods of conservation, and the Mission River delta properties will be a tremendous addition to the more than 12,000 acres of freshwater marsh, forested wetlands, mudflats, riparian corridors, and native upland habitat the CBBEP has already acquired for conservation management in the Coastal Bend. To learn more about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program and our conservation efforts visit www.cbbep.org.



Views of the Mission River delta properties and habitats.

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.

This report published in December 2016.

www.cbbep.org

www.facebook.com/CBBEP

