



October 2017

Habitats Recover Nicely After Nueces Delta Preserve Prescribed Burn



Timing is everything when it comes to prescribed fires, not only for conducting the burn, but also the response and recovery of the environment. Nine days before Hurricane Harvey came ashore in the Coastal Bend, the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) and The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) had planned to ignite a 1,600 acre burn of coastal prairie habitat at the Nueces Delta Preserve. At that time Harvey wasn't even on our radar, just a tropical wave moving west across the Atlantic Ocean at around 17 mph, and not expected to turn into much.

The CBBEP had hoped that a late summer burn would benefit from fall rains, so with everything in place and conditions just right, on August 15th the TNC burn crew and CBBEP program staff initiated the burn.

As it turned out, we wouldn't have to wait for those fall rains. On August 25th Hurricane Harvey came ashore dumping several inches of rain at the Nueces Delta Preserve. It wasn't the catastrophic deluge that was predicted, but it was the right amount at the right time.

"Fire costs less and can do more to improve habitat than almost any other land management practice," said Jake Herring, Director of Land Conservation for the CBBEP. "The unexpected rain from Harvey definitely sped up time timeline for us to start seeing those improvements." Just one month after the burn, new growth has taken over and the plant and animal communities that rely on periodic fire are benefitting greatly.

Fire is a natural part of the landscape that is not only used to remove old growth and stimulate new growth, but it also helps control invasive woody vegetation such as huisache and mesquite, returns nutrients to the soil, and will restore habitats for grassland and migratory bird species.





Prescribed burns are a commonly used land management practice that are done under specific weather and soil conditions, and a part of the management plan for the Nueces Delta Preserve. The 10,500 acre Nueces Delta Preserve protects a variety of coastal habitats and serves as a base for CBBEP's Delta Discovery education program, which offers field experiences and workshops to teachers and students through scheduled site visits. In addition to these education activities, Nueces Delta Preserve is the site of several research stations and conservation projects. To learn more about the Nueces Delta Preserve visit www.cbbep.org.

This prescribe fire was funded by CITGO Caring for Our Coast, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and CBBEP.



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 September 2017.

www.cbbep.org

www.nuecesdeltapreserve.org

www.facebook.com/CBBEP

<https://www.facebook.com/NuecesDeltaPreserve>