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Partnerships Strengthen Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration

Photo: Lanmon Aerial Photography of completed marsh construction.



Partnerships continue to strengthen the Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration project as the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) prepares to begin another round of enhancements at the 160-acre site near the Nueces Bay Causeway between Corpus Christi and Portland. This latest effort, funded by NOAA and the Texas General Land Office’s Coastal Management Program, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Environmental Protection Agency, will incorporate volunteer marsh plantings and public access improvements, including an observation deck and interpretive signage.

The Nueces Bay Marsh was once a thriving bay ecosystem and essential habitat for juvenile fish, shrimp and crabs, as well as feeding grounds for bigger fish and birds. However, in the late 1940s, causeway construction and related dredging resulted in the loss of about 180 acres of marsh. Since then, studies show an additional 160 marsh acres have been lost due to erosion and subsidence. To restore the loss of marsh, CBBEP began planning in 2005, and since then there have been multiple funding partners that have contributed to this restoration effort. “A project of this scale would not be possible without the support of our funding partners,” said Rosario Martinez, Senior Project Manager with the CBBEP, “and we are excited to be moving into the final phase of our restoration effort.”

To date three major construction phases of the marsh have been completed. The first phase created terraces and an outer berm. The second phase created additional marsh complex in the middle, and the third phase consisted of the outermost berm, placed with a rock revetment, to protect the project site and infrastructure.

Constructing the marsh involved dredging bay sediments to form mounds, or terraces, at elevations suitable to grow smooth cordgrass, *Spartina alterniflora*. Smooth cordgrass marshes are typically inundated at high tide and remain partially wet at low tide.

This next and final phase of the project will put the finishing touches on previous efforts, as well as build foundations in stewardship by inviting the public to get involved with volunteer plantings.

Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration Funding

Funding Source	Funding Amount
Coastal Conservation Association	\$24,000
GLO Coastal Impact Assistance Program	\$2,339,000
GLO Coastal Management Program	\$1,066,798
GLO Coastal Erosion Planning Response Act	\$475,000
Environmental Protection Agency	\$97,097
Hollomon Price Foundation	\$20,000
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	\$799,925
USFWS Coastal Program	\$50,000
USFWS American Recovery and Reinvestment Act	\$455,000
Total	\$5,326,820



An observation deck and educational signs will complete the project by providing public access and information about the marsh restoration project and restoring essential fish habitat, marsh communities, and the benefits to the surrounding infrastructure from the functions and values the marsh provides. Once this phase is complete, the CBBEP will monitor the marsh ecosystem and Nueces Bay for the continued enjoyment of both people and wildlife.



Previous volunteer planting effort.



Outer berm after planting.



Bird utilization of created terrace.



Photos: CBBEP File unless otherwise indicated.

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)885-6202 or ktunnell@cbbep.org.

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