



## Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc.

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# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## *A Coastal Bend First – Island Habitat Restored To 5 Acres*

Corpus Christi, March 6, 2002 --- The Nueces Bay Island Habitat Restoration Project is a unique operation bringing together the Texas General Land Office and the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP) to restore an island that almost ceased to exist. The \$1.5 million construction project took four months to complete and has ended just in time for the bird nesting season. Biologists believe this island will become a much needed bird sanctuary attracting different species of colonial waterbirds to nest on 5 acres of restored habitat. Officials from the Texas General Land Office, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program will commemorate the restored rookery (bird nesting) island on **Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. at Whites Point in Nueces Bay.**

The purpose of this project is to both restore lost island habitat and protect existing rookery islands. Over the last 100 years, many of the islands in Nueces Bay have suffered from severe erosion due to waves, currents, and storm events. In addition to the erosion, extensive shell dredging occurred as late as the 1970's which includes an estimated 24 million cubic yards of shell removed from Nueces Bay. In 1980 there were more than twenty-four islands in Nueces Bay available for nesting colonial waterbirds. Since 1980, the loss of hard reef habitats and the erosion of the islands greatly reduced the available habitat for nesting birds and marine life.

Rookery islands in Nueces Bay have supported nesting birds such as Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets, Caspian Terns, and Black Skimmers. The newly restored 5-acre island will hopefully provide much needed *undisturbed* bare-ground habitat. This nesting habitat supports Least Terns and Black Skimmers. These two species are experiencing sharp declines according to the annual Texas Colonial Waterbird Census. In 2003, biologists are looking to manage the island by planting shrub sprigs and mesquite trees to attract wading birds like Reddish Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, and Great Blue Herons. This will be an educational opportunity to document the island's vegetational development and the associated waterbirds diversity.

The Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program is a local non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring bays and estuaries of the Texas Coastal Bend. The CBBEP supports and develops management solutions with a focus on public health issues, altered freshwater inflow into bays and estuaries, condition of living resources, loss of wetlands and estuarine habitats, degradation of water quality, altered estuarine circulation, and bay debris.

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