



Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc.

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Coastal Bend Water Report Card Is Good!

Corpus Christi, June 25, 2002 --- *We have good news! We have good water!* It's been two years in the making and has become one of the most ambitious, extensive monitoring studies of its kind, partnering local stakeholders which include the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP), United States Environmental Protection Agency, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Texas General Land Office, Center for Coastal Studies TAMU-CC, Nueces River Authority, Port of Corpus Christi Authority, and Port Industries of Corpus Christi. This \$300,000 state-of-the-art monitoring project is the first, large-scale effort using "Ultra-Clean" water quality sampling and analysis methods. The results of the ***Surface Water Quality and Sediment Monitoring Project*** will be presented at a news conference on **Wednesday, June 26th at 10:00 a.m.** at the **Solomon Ortiz International Center**.

In 1999, the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission placed Corpus Christi Bay on the Draft Clean Water Act 303-(d) list due to elevated dissolved copper concentrations. During a quality assurance check of the data, a lab results inconsistency was discovered and Corpus Christi Bay was subsequently removed from the final 1999 Clean Water Act 303-(d) list for copper exceedances. Even though Corpus Christi Bay was removed from the list, local stakeholders expressed concerns over the possibility of elevated metals concentrations within the Coastal Bend Bays system. In an effort to further investigate this water quality issue, the stakeholders developed and implemented the *Surface Water Quality and Sediment Monitoring Project*.

The principle objective of this project has been to conduct an intensive, targeted water quality monitoring study and collect sufficient scientifically valid water quality data to characterize the water quality of the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program project area.

Due to the complexity of this project, it was organized into several phases. The first year concentrated on gathering stakeholder input, historical research, and the development, design, and implementation of the water quality sampling. Monitoring focused on quarterly sampling of 30 stations in Corpus Christi Bay (Segment 2481), Nueces Bay (Segment 2482), Corpus Christi Inner Harbor (Segment 2484), Aransas Bay (Segment 2471), Copano Bay (Segment 2472), and Oso Bay (Segment 2485) for a full year. The first year also consisted of bimonthly monitoring of 6 fixed-location targeted stations. This portion of monitoring was completed in April 2001.

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The monitoring program integrates both the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) probabilistic sampling design, contributed by the EPA Office of Research and Development, and a targeted monitoring plan for monitoring both changes over time and differences in sampling site data. The EMAP sampling design established 30 randomly selected sites per quarter (for a total of 120 random sites) within the study area. The EMAP sites were selected by placement of a hexagonal grid over the study area and sites were selected by a systematic random approach. For the targeted monitoring, six previously established TNRCC monitoring stations were selected by the local stakeholders to be analyzed for the same parameters on a bi-monthly basis.

The second year of this project is a continuation of the same EMAP designed water quality monitoring, but the effort focuses on 30 stations in the Upper Laguna Madre and Baffin Bay. Currently, the second year is being implemented by the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program and the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS).

The goal of the monitoring plan allowed for investigating characteristics of the selected sites to be considered. This was necessary to meet the project objectives of addressing the metals concerns in Corpus Christi Bay, the characterization of water quality in the bays system, and the development of a screening process for future long-term monitoring within the CBBEP project area.

All data and analysis of the two years of intense water quality monitoring will be included in one, final comprehensive report scheduled for release in March 2003. The report, to be completed by CBBEP and CCS, will analyze data based water quality criteria including metals, biological data, changes over time and sampling sites. It will also include possible implications of the conditions of the study area as well as possible recommendations for future studies within the area.

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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