



Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Inc.

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May 18, 2010

To: Leo Trevino
Ray Allen

From: Dustin Cravey

RE: FY 2011 Proposal: Protecting Important Texas Shorebird Habitats
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Funding

The Habitat and Living Resources Implementation Team (HLRT) has considered a proposal titled "Protecting Important Texas Shorebird Habitats Using Piping Plovers as an Indicator Species", and will be recommending the project for funding during FY 2011 and FY 2012. The project was considered last year, but was not funded due to staff concerns regarding the level of detail and deliverables. The current scope includes staff-guided revisions geared towards the development of a usable management tool as one of the project's deliverables.

This two-year project will require a QAPP, will integrate multiple fields of study (on-the-ground bird surveys and habitat assessments, banding and telemetry, GIS), and will require close coordination with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (such as for conducting the Piping Plover census and obtaining permits for banding). The project's \$200,000 budget and two-year timeline were developed with these tasks in mind.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife (USFWS) has offered to contribute \$90,000 towards the implementation of the project – which would bring CBBEP's needed contribution to \$110,000 over FY 2011 and FY 2012 (\$55,000 per year). USFWS needs to commit their funds by the end of this month.

Accordingly, I am requesting that the Board of Directors considers authorizing CBBEP to accept USFWS funds for this project, which will necessitate a CBBEP contribution – pending approval by the Coordination Team and Bays Council – of \$55,000 during FY 2011 and \$55,000 during FY 2012.

Protecting Important Texas Shorebird Habitats: Using Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) as an Indicator Species

Objectives

- 1) For two study areas (the southern Mustang Island/northern North Padre Island area, and Galveston Bay habitats in close proximity to Bolivar Flats), determine piping plover movements among beach and bayside habitats. In particular, identification of roosting habitats will be important, as well as movements by piping plovers as foraging habitat on either beach or bay sides becomes unavailable due to tides or other factors (e.g., disturbance). Identify sites used by marked plovers (uniquely banded and/or radioed individuals). Record observations of all other shorebirds using the same areas simultaneously.
- 2) Evaluate habitat quality (i.e., type, amount and caloric content of food resources) at sites used by marked birds for foraging
- 3) Facilitate the 2011 International Wintering Piping Plover census in the Texas Coastal Bend
- 4) Compile baseline data on piping plover numbers in areas where development, especially permanent structures, has occurred.
- 5) Develop a GIS product for use in elucidating conservation projects (protection via acquisition or management plans, restoration, enhancement, etc)

Deliverables

The project will result in a map of all habitats used by plovers as determined by telemetry results, band sightings, and survey counts. Other shorebird use will also be reported in numbers of individuals of each species found when plovers are located on a site. These will also be shown on the map. Threats, both observed and projected, to each site will be summarized and recommendations made to ameliorate these threats. In addition to the map, a report containing specific management information necessary for protecting piping plovers in these two bay systems, and at least one submitted scientific manuscript, will be produced.

Estimated Timeline (based on obtaining CBNEP funds in October 2010)

October-November 2010	Write QAPP, apply for permits for radio-marking etc.
December 2010	Recruit, train volunteers for International PIPL census; schedule survey days and arrange for transportation (i.e., airboats etc.)
January 2011	QAPP finalized/approved, international Piping Plover census conducted
Feb 2011	Compile/map international PIPL census data;
Feb 2011-May 2011	Occasional surveys of "hotspots" noted in PIPL survey to look for color-banded birds; refine areal limits of radio-telemetry survey
May 2011-August 2011	Compilation of existing piping plover data related to permanent beach developments.
September-early November 2011	Prepare for radio-telemetry & habitat quality evaluations; capture and fit birds with radios in mid/late October-early November
November 2011-March 2012	Conduct radio telemetry surveys and habitat quality evaluations
April 2012-July 2012	Compile GIS layers and write report
August 2012	Submit maps and report; complete peer-reviewed manuscript

Total Budget: \$200,000

USFWS: \$90,000+

CBBEP: \$110,000 (\$55,000/year for two years)