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Benny Shack Island Restoration Complete

Port Mansfield, TX – In the shallow waters of the Lower Laguna Madre, just south of Port Mansfield, Benny's Shack once stood in a chain of thriving rookery islands, an essential refuge for colonial waterbirds along the Texas coast. These islands, often little more than narrow stretches of sand and shell, play an outsized role in the coastal ecosystem. By providing isolated, predator-free nesting grounds, they allow generations of birds to successfully reproduce in an otherwise challenging environment of decreasing available habitat.



Across the coast, these vital habitats have been slipping away to years of relentless wave action, storm surge, and coastal erosion that have steadily worn-down rookery islands, reducing their size, elevation, and suitability for nesting. As these islands disappear, so too do the opportunities for birds to breed successfully and sustain steady population numbers. The result is a growing concern among biologists and conservationists, as the loss of nesting habitat contributes to population declines in many species of shorebirds and waterbirds that depend on these complex systems.

At Benny's Shack, this story was playing out in real time. The island had been shrinking, its edges worn away by wave energy, its elevation lowered to the point where nesting success was increasingly at risk. Recognizing both the ecological importance of the site and the urgency of the situation, program partners undertook a restoration effort to reverse these trends.

The completed project focused on stabilizing and rebuilding the southern island through the construction of a protective breakwater system. This structure now acts as a buffer against wave energy, protecting the valuable rookery island from impacts of coastal erosion. Behind the breakwater, fill material was added to rebuild elevation and expand the island, restoring the physical characteristics needed to support nesting birds.





The effort was the result of years of collaboration and careful planning. Engineering and permitting were led by HDR Engineering, while funding support from the Texas General Land Office's Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act Program and the Environmental Protection Agency helped bring the project to life. Together, these partners worked to ensure that the restoration would provide lasting ecological benefits and withstand the harsh conditions of the south Texas coast.

Today, Benny's Shack stands stronger, larger, and more resilient than before. More importantly, it once again provides critical nesting habitat in a region where such space is becoming increasingly limited. In the face of ongoing habitat loss and environmental change, projects

like this represent a meaningful step toward stabilizing waterbird populations and preserving the distinct ecological characteristics of the Texas coast. By rebuilding Benny's Shack, we are not only restoring an island but also reinforcing a vital link in the life cycle of the birds that depend on it.



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 Texas Coastal Bend. For more information about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, contact Quinn Hendrick,

361-336-0305 or qhendrick@cbbep.org.

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