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## ***CBBEP Builds on Up2U Campaign, Targets Illegal Dumping***

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) was recently awarded a \$406,377 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Trash Free Waters Program for an innovative new program designed to prevent bulk trash from reaching our waterways by targeting illegal dumping in Texas Coastal Bend watersheds. The project, called Up2U PLUS, will remove barriers (e.g., cost, accessibility) that can prevent correct disposal of illegally dumped items by providing disposal dumpsters, cleaning up existing dump sites, and improving community awareness of problems associated with illegal dumping.



**Typical illegal dump site, these items were dumped along Petronila Creek under FM70 and cleaned up by TXDOT.**

Illegal dumping has become a hazardous and costly problem in the Texas Coastal Bend region, particularly in rural areas and smaller communities. Not only unsightly, illegal dump sites pose public health hazards and can have significant negative impacts on the environment. "Dumped materials not only cover plants and feeding areas that wildlife depend on, as they sit exposed to the elements they can release chemicals into the air, ground and water," said Kathryn Tunnell, Communications Manager for the CBBEP. "Removing these harmful materials from our watershed and taking steps to prevent dumping in the future will benefit these communities tremendously and is critical for a Coastal Bend with cleaner water and sediment, healthier habitats, and a more aware and engaged public."



Up2U PLUS is a three-year program that will establish partnerships with 10 rural communities. The program has three key components – 1) to provide resources to those communities for annual cleanups at existing dump sites, 2) to place free dumpsters at 10 locations twice a year for proper disposal of large materials, and 3) deliver an education and outreach campaign targeting awareness and reduction of illegal dumping occurring in coastal watersheds.

The Up2U PLUS implementation team includes a strategic partnership between the CBBEP, Nueces River Authority (NRA), and Coastal Bend Council of Governments (CBCOG). The program will build upon the Up2U Litter Prevention Campaign and its empowering message of personal responsibility. The previous relationships built by the CBCOG with local communities and their experience with anti-litter programs will be integral to the success of the Up2U PLUS program, and NRA’s historic involvement in the Up2U campaign will be critical to the expansion of the program.

“We’re excited to see how the Up2U brand has grown,” said Sky Lewey, with NRA. “We launched this litter prevention campaign 18 years ago on rivers in the upper Nueces Basin where it still thrives and where 120,000 Up2U yellow litter bags are distributed every year. As more people move to and visit our Texas coastal region, it’s important that the message of personal responsibility for litter and trash is carried here too. The Up2U PLUS program will make it easier for people to do the right thing.”

The most common types of illegal dumping involve items that are difficult or expensive to dispose of, such as tires, landscape waste, construction debris, appliances and furniture. Communities need assistance to clean up existing dump sites, but more importantly, they need support to try and prevent the illegal dumping before it happens.

“We are committed to providing assistance where we can and education on proper disposal methods and locations where they can take items in the future,” said Theresa Kocurek, Director of Environmental Planning for the CBGOC. “Being able to provide the Up2U PLUS program to our rural communities and residents means we can help alleviate the burden of “where am I going to take this waste? I can’t afford to travel to a landfill, what now?”

The project kicked off earlier this month and the project team is currently in the process of identifying the rural communities that could most benefit from this program. If you think your community could benefit from an Up2U PLUS partnership, please reach out to [ktunnell@cbbep.org](mailto:ktunnell@cbbep.org).

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) 336-0304 or [ktunnell@cbbep.org](mailto:ktunnell@cbbep.org).

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