



January 2016

Nueces Delta Preserve Tops 10,000 acres



Location of Nueces Delta Preserve, Google Earth Imagery

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) recently closed on the purchase of a 1,970 acre parcel of land in the Nueces River Delta, the final piece in a multi-year effort to acquire the entire 4,737 acres of what once was the Dos Rios Division of Wyatt Ranches. The acquisition of the ranch property nearly doubles the size of the Nueces Delta Preserve and creates more than 10,000 acres of contiguous conserved estuarine habitat for endangered and threatened wildlife species, protecting the fresh water flowing into Nueces and Corpus Christi Bays, and expanding environmental educational opportunities offered by CBBEP.

Through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process, the State of Texas Natural Resource Trustees (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas General Land Office) provided \$2.435 million for the purchase of this last parcel from The Conservation Fund, who has been holding the ranch property since 2013 while the CBBEP secured monies for its permanent protection. The State Trustees awarded the money to the CBBEP for acquisition and conservation of habitat as compensation to the public for injuries to natural resources in the Corpus Christi Ship Channel, Corpus Christi Bay, and Nueces Bay resulting from releases of hazardous substances from the Encycle/Texas, Inc. (formerly ASARCO, LLC) facility.

“The acquisition of Dos Rios Division of Wyatt Ranches has been a priority for the CBBEP since the first tract of land in the Nueces River Delta was acquired almost 12 years ago,” said Jake Herring, Director of Land Conservation for CBBEP. The first two parcels of the ranch property were purchased with \$3 million from a separate NRDA award and private funds from M&G Chemicals. “This last piece is significant in that it brings all our previous efforts together, and we are grateful for the support provided by the Natural Resource Trustees in helping realize our conservation goals in the Nueces River Delta.”



Birds utilizing habitat at Nueces Delta Preserve, Credit: Charlie Speakerman



Located east of the Interstate 37 and Highway 77 junction, the property features a diverse mosaic of highly productive coastal marshlands, wetlands, open water, upland prairie and bay shorelines. Providing a safe haven for fish and wildlife, the delta harbors many bird species, as well as serves as a rookery and stopover site in the Central Flyway for migratory birds, and breeding and nursery grounds for numerous aquatic species.



Students at the Nueces Delta Preserve, Credit: CBBEP File

The newly protected land will nearly double the outdoor learning space provided to the CBBEP's environmental education program, Delta Discovery, which provides unique field-based, scientific experiences to students in grades K-12. The programs classroom curriculum and on-site activities introduce students and teachers in the Coastal Bend region to issues affecting the bays and estuaries as well as the local ecology of the Nueces River Delta. In 2015, over 8,000 students took part in the program designed to advance active wetland conservation and environmental stewardship.

The purchase will allow the CBBEP and resource agency partners to manage and monitor the freshwater inflows to the Nueces and Corpus Christi Bays more efficiently, which improves water quality and preserves the essential and critical habitats of the Nueces River Delta. While management and restoration efforts at the Nueces Delta Preserve have been ongoing since 2003, CBBEP will now begin working with resource entities to develop a comprehensive management plan for the more than 10,000 acres to focus on protecting and restoring terrestrial and estuarine system habitats, as well as provide opportunities for research and education. To learn more about the Nueces Delta Preserve visit www.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.

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This report published in January 2016.

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