



December 2019

Ground Breaks on Nueces Bay Rookery Islands Restoration Project!

by Kathryn Tunnell

The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) is excited to announce that construction on the Nueces Bay Rookery Islands Restoration Project is underway! This project will protect and restore three critical rookery islands in Nueces Bay and when completed is expected to support hundreds of additional pairs of wading birds and ground nesting birds each year.



Construction begins with placement of the rock breakwater around one of the islands.

Since the 1960s, nesting islands in Nueces Bay have been lost to persistent erosion, hard shell dredging, and storm events. In 2002 a handful of the islands were protected with geotubes, which was a great temporary solution, but the life expectancy of a geotube is approximately 15 years, and time has taken its toll.

Construction began in late November and will continue through mid-February, and includes placing limestone rock around the perimeter of three islands that were previously protected by geotubes. The area will be filled with new material and provide over 2 acres of essential nesting habitat. "Lack of nesting area and suitable vegetation are the primary factors preventing recovery of colonial waterbird species in Nueces Bay" said David Newstead, Director of CBBEP's Coastal Bird Program. "Rebuilding islands that once supported thousands of birds is really exciting, and getting



do it essentially from scratch gives us the opportunity to prescribe and manipulate the soil type, prevent invasive vegetation from establishing, and ensure the best conditions for nesting success.”

Funding for the \$3 million dollar project was provided by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s (NFWF) Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF), General Land Office, Coastal Conservation Association, and Port of Corpus Christi Authority. All GEBF projects are developed in consultation with state and federal resource agencies and designed to remedy harm and reduce the risk of future harm to natural resources that were affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This project was designed taking into consideration relative sea level rise, and current trends in high tides and storms. “These islands were designed for resiliency,” said Rosario Martinez, Senior Project Manager for the CBBEP. “With this type of construction we are reducing the risk of island inundation, and looking forward to many productive nesting seasons.”



Birds eye view of one of the islands to be restored showing failed geotubes and eroded shoreline.

Once the new material is placed, and thanks to additional support from CCA Texas Habitat Today for Fish Tomorrow and CCA’s Building Conservation Trust, the rock breakwaters surrounding the islands will be enhanced below the waterline for oyster recruitment.

Rookery islands are critically important because they provide a safe nesting area for colonial waterbirds, free of predators and human disturbance. Colonial waterbirds such as terns, black skimmers, laughing gulls, herons, egrets, ibises, roseate spoonbills, American avocets, American oystercatchers and black-necked stilts will all benefit from the restoration of these islands. Stay tuned for updates and pictures, great things are on the horizon for Nueces Bay rookeries!

*\$450,000 was provided by the Port of Corpus Christi Authority as part of a mitigation plan that requires the enhancement of one of the islands to compensate for planned channel activities.

For more information about CBBEP projects 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. For more information about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, contact Kathryn Tunnell at (361)336-0311 or ktunnell@cbbep.org. This report published in October 2019.

www.cbbep.org

www.facebook.com/CBBEPCoastalBirds





www.facebook.com/CBBEP

