



October 2020

3rd Annual Packery Flats Clean Up Removes 200 Bags of Trash!

by Kathryn Tunnell

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program’s (CBBEP) 3rd Annual Packery Flats Clean Up was a huge success, removing 200 bags of trash and harmful debris from intertidal and marsh areas, as well as along 2 miles of Highway 361! The event held October 3rd attracted 78 volunteers of all ages who contributed 234 hours of time to remove the trash from these critical habitats. CBBEP hosts this cleanup annually to celebrate National Estuaries Week, which is a nationwide celebration of our bays and estuaries and the many benefits they provide to local communities.



Volunteer picking up trash along Highway 361 and the Packery Flats Coastal Habitat.

Packery Flats is well known for its recreational access to both Packery Channel and our intertidal and estuarine habitats, but unfortunately a great deal of trash gets left behind. To compound things this year, we also had two significant storm tides that brought trash and debris into the higher parts of the marsh, as well as some material that had been dumped.

“The source of the trash is definitely unsettling,” said Kathryn Tunnell, Communications Manager at CBBEP. “But public access is actually a very important component of protecting our coastal habitats. We want people out there experiencing our bays and estuaries, those experiences build foundations and will plant the seeds of environmental stewardship. These are the folks that will be protecting our environment in the future.”



Coastal Bend Bays Foundation



To that end, the cleanup this year was unique in that it not only celebrated National Estuaries Week, but it was also the first official cleanup for CBBEP's new Up2U Litter Prevention Campaign. The Up2U Litter Prevention Campaign is a 5-year project funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, Trash Free Waters Program that seeks to cultivate sustainable behavior-change in the Coastal Bend with regard to the handling of trash and litter. The project will include distribution of Up2U litter bags, education and outreach, and community cleanups such as this one.

"We are just so thankful for the folks that came out here today, deciding to take things into their own hands and make a difference" said Kathryn Tunnell, Communications Manager at CBBEP. "Their efforts will go a long way in making sure these critical habitats remain healthy for not only the fish and wildlife, but for everyone to enjoy, and really that's the spirit of the Up2U campaign – it's Up2U."

If you have never visited Packery Flats Coastal Habitat, you've got to check it out! You will get a taste of almost every coastal barrier island habitat type, from uplands and high marsh, down through the mangroves and smooth cordgrass, and into the tidal flats and submerged seagrass meadows. These areas are used extensively by a variety of shorebirds, wading birds, and other wildlife. In 1996 the 1,000 acre area was preserved in honor of the late Mollie Beattie, the first woman director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and in 2001 it was included in the area federally designated by USFWS as critical habitat for the Piping Plover.



CBBEP Volunteer Melissa Barnes consolidating collected trash.

Packery Flats Coastal Habitat is managed by the General Land Office with the assistance of several other agencies and non-profit groups, including the CBBEP, Coastal Bend Bays Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Texas Parks and Wildlife. You can join the effort to preserve the Packery Flats Coastal Habitat by leaving only footprints and respecting the surrounding habitat and wildlife. Thanks to the Packery Flats Clean Up, a cleaner, safer Packery Flats is waiting for you!

Funding for this event was made possible by a grant from the CITGO Caring for our Coast initiative. To learn more about the efforts of the CBBEP 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 2020.

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