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Packery Flats Winter Cleanup Removes 350 Bags of Trash!

by Kathryn Tunnell

Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program’s (CBBEP) Packery Flats Winter Clean Up was a huge success, removing 350 bags of trash and harmful debris from intertidal and marsh areas, as well as along 2 miles of Highway 361! The event held February 5th attracted 207 volunteers of all ages who contributed an astounding 621 hours of their time to remove trash from these critical habitats.



Volunteers help consolidate trash collected along the 2 miles stretch of Highway 361.

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, as well as trash that comes from Highway 361. To address this issue, CBBEP began hosting the Packery Flats Cleanup in 2017 with a grant received from the CITGO Caring for our Coast Initiative. CITGO has continued to provide annual grant funding for the event, normally held in the fall, and this year they



Coastal Bend Bays Foundation



increased their funding to allow for an additional winter cleanup. For the event CBBEP teams up with the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation's Adopt-A-Beach event and expands the cleanup to cover a larger area, removing trash and harmful debris from the Packery Channel bridge to the Island In the Son Methodist Church. Cleaning the roadside and marsh helps protect the fish and wildlife that utilize the 1,000-acre Packery Flats Coastal Habitat on Mustang Island, including the endangered Piping Plover that nests here.



Volunteers collect trash from near the Packery Channel bridge.

“We were completely blown away by how many volunteers braved the near freezing temperatures to come out and pick up trash,” said Kathryn Tunnell Tunnell, Communications Manager at CBBEP. “This is the most volunteers we have had since starting the Packery Flats Cleanup four and a half years ago, and by far the most trash collected.” Volunteers included Troop 949 from North Padre Island, Flour Bluff ISD, TAMU-CC Islander Green Team, HDR Inc., UTMSI, South Texas Master Naturalists, as well as many other families and citizens. It was truly a great turnout!

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.

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 Department. 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!

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 February 2022.