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Researchers Present Work at 14th Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting

PORT ARANSAS, TEXAS – Since 2011, the Texas Bays and Estuaries Meeting has provided a platform for researchers to gather in the same room, present their current works, and network with peers across a wide variety of environmental research focuses. With a particularly clear and crisp morning providing a welcome hiatus from the wet and windy patterns of coastal Texas in the spring, published scholars, industry professionals, and student researchers converged on the campus of the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, in Port Aransas, Texas.



Texas populations are notably swelling and water supplies dwindling, raising concerns of future water availability and catapulting lake levels and coastal erosion into common conversations. With personal experience with flooding impacts, Caimee Schoenbaechler, Manager of the Coastal Science Department at Texas Water Development Board started the two-day meeting sharing her work on the data collection, modeling methods, and analysis of coastal water resources. Her opening remarks set the tone for the first session of presentation, focusing on sediment processes and hydrodynamics along the coast, namely how Texas bay systems along the upper coast are being flushed of water and sediment with freshwater inflows after Hurricane Harvey rearranged vast amounts of sediment with its flood waters. CBBEP Senior Project Manager, Rosario Martinez, then connected the dots between the sediment and habitat sessions with her discussion of a bay system closer to home and the rookery island restoration projects that have increased nesting habitat for a variety of waterbirds in and around Nueces Bay.

As the oral presentation sessions shifted from habitats and ecosystems to policy and communication and wound to a close with a historical look back at Texas oil industry's impact on the environment over the past 150 years, students from across the state were busy showcasing their work at their poster displays. What better way to close out the day of research heavy discussion than a social hour on the UTMSI lawn as the Texas sun falls across the bay.

The final day of the 2024 TBEM started off swimmingly with the first Fish and Fisheries session, looking at the impact of temperature on Sheepshead minnow's metabolism and characterizing the pace-of-life differences in Gulf Coast fish species.

With time running out and the list of next-to-presenters growing shorter, the room perked up to the tune of water quality and chemistry research and vertebrate science. Though a wide variety of topics were discussed over the two-day conference, the connection between the different research topics grew increasingly salient. These ecosystems and habitats are complex systems that contain many variables, and each area of research offers insights to the broader scope of coastal functions.



3 of 6 Student Award Winners with CBBEP and UTMSI representatives.

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 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 Quinn Hendrick, 361-336-0305 or qhendrick@cbbep.org.

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