



May 2017

Volunteers Put Finishing Touches on Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration Project



The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) has just wrapped up the final phase of the Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration Project! This last phase, funded by the Texas General Land Office's Coastal Management Program, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and Citgo, included an observation deck, interpretive signage, and series of volunteer planting events that offered the community a chance to leave their mark on the project, and that they did.

Volunteers from community planting event held during National Estuaries Week.

By the numbers the volunteer effort was a wild success! In one year 240 volunteers contributed 720 hours, and planted 10,000 *Spartina* plugs on over 4 acres of the 160 acre marsh restoration site. CBBEP partnered with the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation to host the volunteer planting events, which were open to the public. "It was inspirational to see so many young volunteers getting involved in the plantings, and really great seeing them having fun while doing it. This type of effort gives volunteers a sense of ownership of the bays and estuaries, which is key to help sustain these important places for future generations," said Jace Tunnell, President of the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation.

Nueces Bay Marsh was once a thriving bay ecosystem and essential habitat for juvenile fish, shrimp and crabs, as well as feeding grounds for bigger fish and birds. However, in the late 1940s, causeway construction and related dredging resulted in the loss of about 180 acres of marsh, followed by an additional 160 acres lost to erosion and subsidence. To restore the loss of marsh, CBBEP began planning in 2005, and since then multiple funding partners contributed to the multi-million dollar restoration effort, which included creating marsh terraces, intertidal marsh complex, and berms to protect the project site and infrastructure.



Volunteers from Moody High School.





Volunteer from Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi.

This final phase, which improved public access and invited the public to become a part of the project, was for the community. "The bays and estuaries belong to us all to enjoy, protect, and preserve," said Rosario Martinez, Project Manager for the CBBEP, "so it really is fitting that the community put the finishing touches on this project, they should be very proud of what they accomplished," Rosario said.

We are already seeing the ecosystem benefits of the project. The *Spartina* planted by the volunteers is doing a great job of holding the marsh terraces in place, and there is significant wildlife utilization of the area, including from both highly migratory species like the Long-billed curlew, as well as our colonial nesting waterbirds like Black skimmers and egrets. CBBEP's Coastal Bird

Program counted a whopping 4,121 nesting pairs of colonial waterbirds nesting in the created marsh last season. We don't have a tally for this year just yet, but so far things are looking great!

We'd love for you to stop by and check out the site, and the interpretive signs, which provide information about the marsh restoration project and restoring essential fish habitat, marsh communities, and the benefits to the surrounding infrastructure from the functions and values the marsh provides. Directions to the site are below.

From Corpus Christi: Travel north on US181 towards Portland, exit Moore Ave. and U-turn to head south on US181 back towards Corpus Christi, travelling south on US181 take the Indian Point exit, driveway and parking for the public access site is on the right.

From Portland: Travel south on US181 towards Corpus Christi, take the Indian Point exit, driveway and parking for the public access site is on the right.



Interpretive Sign and Observation Deck.



Photos: CBBEP File.

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.

For more information about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, contact Kathryn Tunnell at (361)336-0304 or ktunnell@cbbep.org.

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