



## Texas Beach Watch Box

By: Lucy Flores, Texas General Land Office



*Sea Life Center's booth included two turtles who are in rehab.*

Corpus Christi's annual Sea Turtle Festival brought together conservationists, scientists, and community members to celebrate one of the Texas coast's most beloved species. This year, the Texas General Land Office's (GLO) Texas Beach Watch (Beach Watch) program engaged festivalgoers with interactive outreach materials highlighting the importance of clean beaches, healthy waters, and resilient coastal ecosystems.

Hosted by the Texas Sealife Center on October 4th, 2025, the festival served as both a celebration and an educational opportunity for the community. From marine debris and habitat loss to water quality concerns, families, students, and visitors learned about the challenges our coastal environment faces and how local initiatives are working to address them.

At the festival, the Beach Watch team showcased their statewide water quality monitoring program which provides real-time information on bacteria levels to ensure safe recreation. Using signage and informational material, staff explained how monitoring bacteria levels helps protect human communities and public health while at the same time preserving critical marine habitats for wildlife like sea turtles.

Events like the Sea Turtle Festival give the GLO a chance to connect directly with the public. The festival provided a platform for collaboration, bringing together agencies, nonprofits, and volunteers united by a shared mission: ensuring that Texas's coastal treasures, from sandy beaches to nesting sea turtles, remain protected for generations to come.

For more information on the Texas Beach Watch program, visit [www.TexasBeachWatch.com](http://www.TexasBeachWatch.com).



*Lucy Flores and Danielle DeVacque speak with the public on how to access the latest bacteria levels on the coast.*

## Beach and Dune Digest

### Beach Accessibility for All: Mobility Mats and Beach Wheelchairs Providing a Memorable Beach Experience

By: Cara Stewart, Texas General Land Office

Beaches are a major tourist destination for outdoor enthusiasts across Texas. However, not everyone can easily enjoy the sandy coastline and have a pleasurable swimming experience. For those requiring an accessible beach option, fear not! The GLO's Coastal Management Program (CMP) recently purchased additional beach wheelchairs and mobility mats for Cameron County.

In late October, the GLO completed the purchase of five 50-foot mobility mats and eight beach wheelchairs for placement at Cameron County area beaches and access points. This purchase will ensure all pedestrians have equal access to the high tide line in areas where vehicles are prohibited from the beach. This purchase supports GLO's strong partnership with Cameron County and furthers the GLO's mission to ensure that all persons can access the beach, including those with mobility impairments.

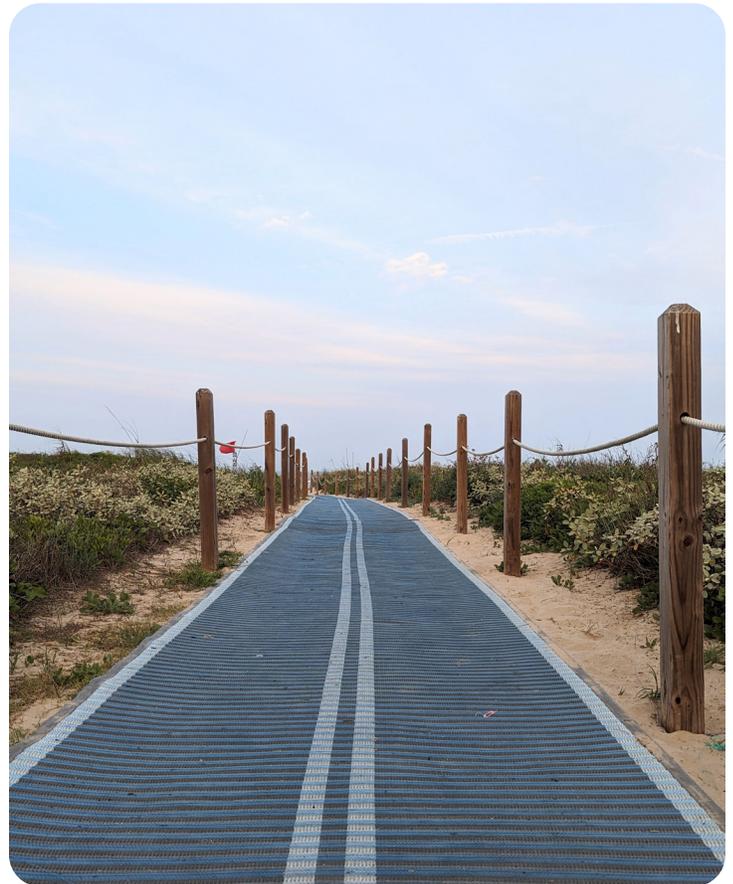
Cameron County local officials had this to say about the mobility mat accessibility:

"This generous donation of Mobi-Chairs and Mobi-Mats embodies the true spirit of inclusivity and partnership. By improving accessibility along our beaches, we're taking an important step toward ensuring that everyone, regardless of mobility, can safely and comfortably enjoy our shoreline. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Texas General Land Office for supporting a more accessible future," stated Cameron County Commissioner Pct. 1, Sofia Benavides.

If you would like to learn more about Texas Beach Accessibility, [read about the Texas Beach Accessibility Guide](#).

Mobility mats and beach wheelchairs can also be found in the following locations or provided by the following entities:

- Villages of Surfside Beach
- City of Jamaica Beach
- City of Port Aransas
- Galveston Park Board of Trustees
- City of Corpus Christi
- Galveston County
- City of South Padre Island
- Nueces County
- City of Galveston
- Town of Quintana



*Mobility mats have been placed on beaches to ensure that all pedestrians have equal access to the water.*

## CMP Success Story

### Assessment of seagrass habitat and stability in Texas coastal waters

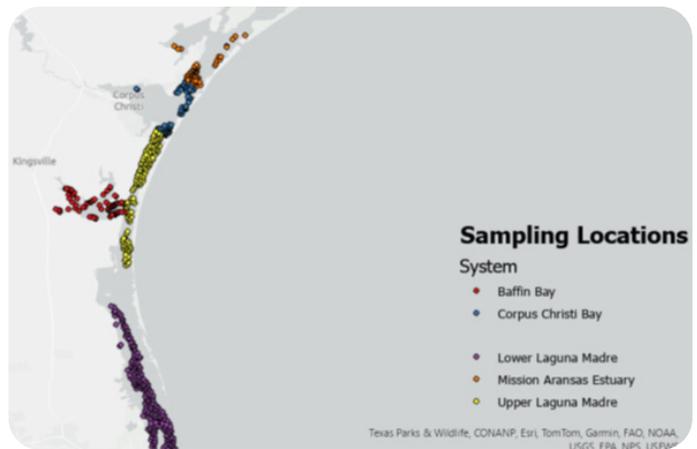
By Meghan Martinez, Texas General Land Office

Seagrasses cover approximately 950 km<sup>2</sup> of seafloor in eight of Texas' major estuarine systems and within 14 coastal counties. Seagrass meadows provide numerous benefits to coastal communities, including protection from erosion through sediment stabilization, wave attenuation that protects coastal habitats, and habitat creation and nursery support for commercial and recreationally important fisheries. The Seagrass Conservation Plan for Texas (1999) identified research gaps and proposed a management program, and in 2011, the University of Texas at Austin's Marine Science Institute (UTMSI), Kenneth Dunton, and fellow research collaborators proposed the implementation of a three-tiered, field-based monitoring program for seagrass in accordance with the Plan. Tier-1 involves aerial mapping every 3-5 years, Tier-2 includes periodic rapid assessment monitoring, and Tier-3 is intensive site-based targeted research.

UTMSI used CMP Cycle 27 Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMEA) funds to (1) ground truth seagrass coverage maps (Tier-1), (2) implement coast-wide field based Tier-2 monitoring program for 677 sites from Port Isabel to Galveston, (3) utilize newly developed acoustic technology to enable remote monitoring of seagrass condition under an experimental Tier-3 effort, (4) improve capabilities for data sharing, and (5) educate the public on the importance of seagrass habitat. With over a decade of available monitoring data, UTMSI was able to begin assessing the long-term health and trends of Texas's seagrass meadows through various case studies across multiple estuarine systems.

UTMSI's TexasSeagrass.org, the official website of the Texas Seagrass Monitoring Program, has served as a source of information for the public, resource managers, and researchers since it was launched in 2011. The platform was recently upgraded and now has updated web pages to highlight the Tier-2 and Tier 3 archived datasets generated during the project, over 60 updated Tier-2 maps, educational resources, and a series of recent publications. Project funding also supported the development of K-12 lesson plans for hands-on experiences for students in the Port Aransas and Flour Bluff Independent School Districts, the UTMSI Summer Science Program, and other public outreach events.

[Learn more about this project](#)



Tier-2 sampling locations (677 sites) were regularly monitored by UTMSI from 2022-2023. UTMSI also provided monitoring support to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) in San Antonio, Matagorda, and Galveston Bays (162 sites).

## Texas Coastal Roundup

### Join us for Coastal Roundup 2026

By Cara Stewart, Texas General Land Office



An exciting event is on the horizon! The GLO is hosting the 2026 Texas Coastal Roundup on April 18th at East Beach (R.A. Apffel Park) in Galveston, Texas. The Roundup is a one-day public event that will take place from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. This event will be held on the same day as the GLO's Adopt-A-Beach Spring Cleanup.

This family-friendly event will feature educational booths and displays from a wide variety of coastal and environmental organizations that allow attendees to learn about all the efforts being made to keep the Texas coast strong! The Roundup will also have face painting, a fish printing station, food trucks, and plenty of free swag!

For more information, or if your organization would like to participate, please contact Cara Stewart at [cara.stewart@glo.texas.gov](mailto:cara.stewart@glo.texas.gov).

## Stories from the Surf

### Angela Sunley, GLO's Coastal Resources Deputy Director

By: Cara Stewart, Texas General Land Office

With over 20 years at the GLO, Angela Sunley has had the privilege of being a part of an ever-growing mission to help keep our Texas coast flourishing. Angela's coastal story starts long before she became Deputy Director of Coastal Resources. Angela graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University with a degree in aquatic biology and a minor in forestry. In 1995, Angela then went to work for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in Galveston, Texas, as a Fish and Wildlife Technician, and then worked in the Seabrook and Dickinson Marine Lab.

In 2005, an opportunity saw her family moving to the Austin area, where her husband began working for the Attorney General's office. Not long after the move, Angela began working for the Texas Water Development Board as an Agricultural Water Conservation Specialist. This would be her last position before joining the Texas General Land Office family in 2006.

When asked what her favorite part of being the Deputy Director was, Angela had this to say:



Natalie Bell (Left) and Angela Sunley (Right) outside of SpaceX in Boca Chica.

“Out of all the agencies that I have had the opportunity to work at, this has been the most awesome team that I have ever been a part of. They are passionate and driven and really want to make a difference for the citizens of Texas. They are very uplifting with each other; they are always complementary about everyone's abilities and roles in the agency.”

You may find Angela scuba diving with her family or on the shore releasing sea turtles back into the ocean with the Commissioner. One thing is for certain: Angela has plenty of coastal adventures still left to experience!



Angela Sunley assisting in the release of baby Sea Turtles on Padre Island National Seashore.



View of the Wood Mansion, photo credit Historical Database David W. March 8, 2022.

## Texas Sites and Coastal Sights

### Wood Mansion: Bent but not Broken

By: Kristin Hames, Texas General Land Office

Perched atop a bluff nestled in the back of Copano Bay, a 150-year-old Italian-style mansion graces the town of Bayside, Texas. The Wood Mansion was constructed by Major John Howland and Nancy Anna Wood, who purchased the property in 1849. John was an apprentice painter, merchant, and veteran of the Texas Revolution. During their lifetime, the Woods became local civic leaders and parents of twelve children. Nancy christened the property “Bonnie View”, and it was a striking sight on the wild oak-motte coastline overlooking the turbulent waters of Copano Bay. The area was rural, with the town of St. Mary’s (now Bayside) founded as a port town in 1857. It was a bustling little community until a storm in 1886 battered the town, causing residents to leave the area. The town remained largely abandoned until the early 1900s, when settlers arrived to farm and ranch.

The mansion was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and is one of the most complete country mansions of the period. In 2017, Hurricane Harvey barreled across Copano Bay with wind speeds in excess of 110 mph. The wind whipped through Bayside, destroying homes, felling trees, and wrenching the Wood Mansion. In the aftermath, the mansion leaned precariously to the side, windows blown out, and gaping holes in the roof. Water damage resulted in an unstable foundation, collapsed fireplaces, ruined electrical systems, and wrecked plumbing.

Residents of Bayside speak fondly of the Woods Mansion, recounting experiences when the home was opened to the public for special events, and they ascended the Victorian staircases to the “widow’s walk”, gazing across the bay and imagining the home in its original splendor. The Bayside Historical Society and Bayside Heritage Society raised funds to board up the mansion and stabilize the overall structure, but significant work is still needed to restore the mansion. Both societies are dedicated to reviving this jewel of the community, and efforts continue to restore this Registered Texas Historic Landmark.

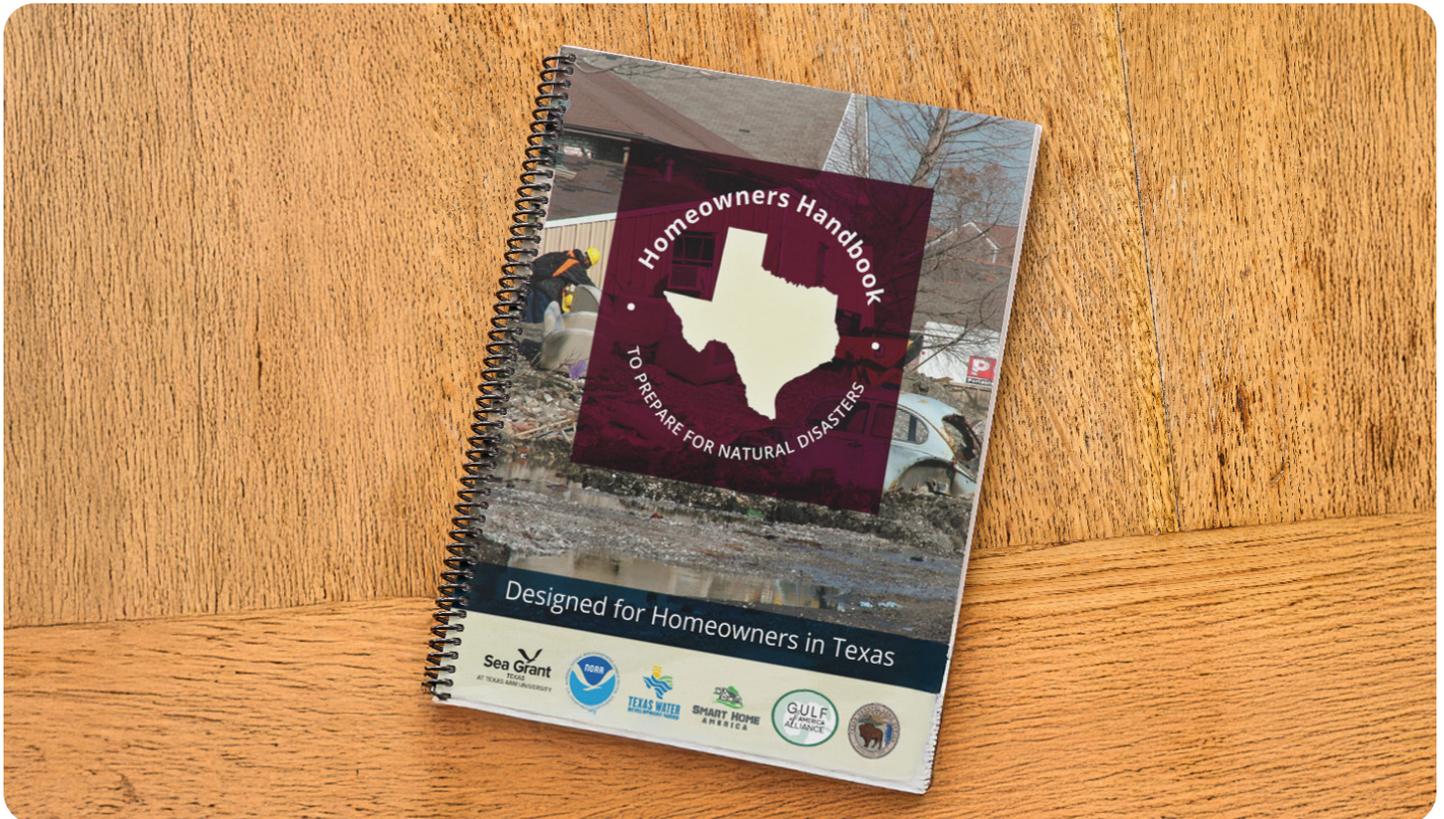
## New Homeowners Handbook to Help Prepare for Coastal Natural Hazards

By: Megan Towery, Texas Sea Grant College Program, Texas A&M University

The new Texas Homeowner's Handbook is now available! The Texas Homeowner's Handbook to Prepare for Coastal Natural Hazards is a practical resource for Texans who live along the coast or in flood-prone areas. It helps homeowners better understand the risks they face and take simple steps to prepare before a storm hits.

The handbook covers common hazards such as hurricanes, storm surge, flooding, strong winds, and tornadoes, and walks readers through everyday actions that can make a real difference. Topics include emergency supplies, evacuation planning, home improvements that reduce wind and water damage, and what to expect during recovery. By focusing on realistic, cost-effective actions,

the handbook helps homeowners protect their families, their homes, and their investment, especially as hurricane season approaches. Access it today at [texasseagrant.org/txhomeownershandbook](http://texasseagrant.org/txhomeownershandbook) or request a copy from the Texas General Land Office, Texas Water Development Board, or Texas Sea Grant ([seagrant@tamu.edu](mailto:seagrant@tamu.edu)).



*The Homeowner's Handbook provides homeowners with simple steps to prepare for a storm.*

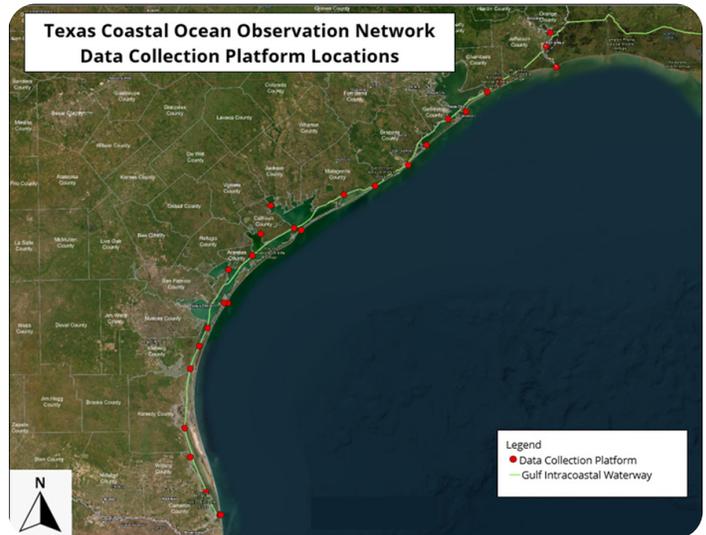
# New Tools and Technology

By Virgie Greb, Texas General Land Office

The Texas Coastal Ocean Observation Network (TCOON) Station #8774513 located in Copano Bay, Texas, has been successfully rebuilt after damage sustained during Hurricane Harvey. This rebuild enhances TCOON’s ability to deliver real-time coastal monitoring data that helps communities better understand and protect the coast.

Established in 1989 and officially recognized by the State of Texas in 1991, TCOON operates 28 monitoring stations along the Texas Gulf Coast. These stations are maintained through a partnership between the GLO, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), and the Conrad Blucher Institute at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi.

TCOON stations monitor key environmental conditions—such as water levels, currents, waves, salinity, temperature, wind speed and direction, and tidal benchmarks. This real-time data supports a wide range of users, including maritime industries, port authorities, researchers, emergency managers, and everyday Texans who enjoy our coastlines.

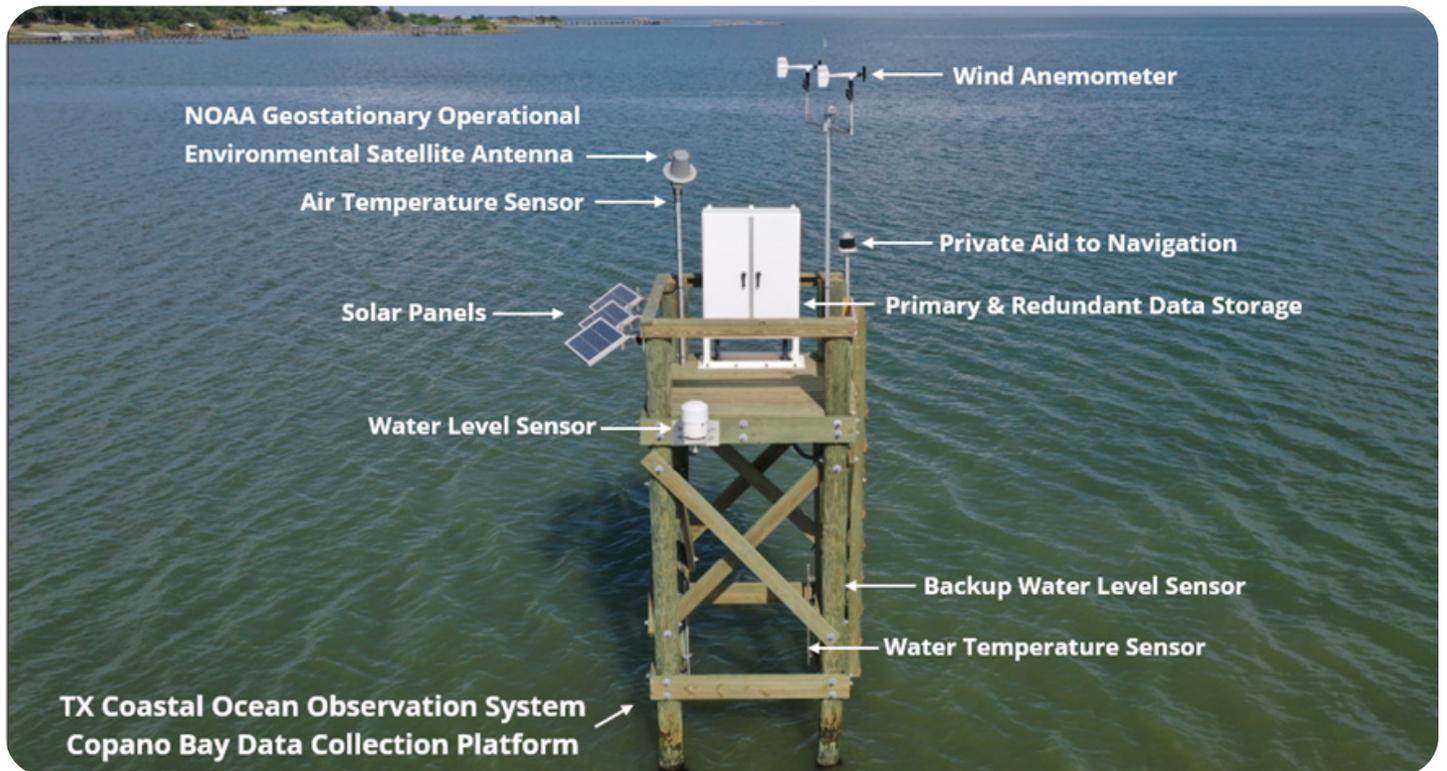


Map of TCOON Data Collection Platforms (DCP) along the Texas Gulf Coast

By providing accurate, reliable data, TCOON helps guide policies that protect Texas beaches, estuaries, and communities – now and for future generations.

The Texas General Land Office remains committed to maintaining and strengthening TCOON—ensuring a safer, more resilient, and thriving Texas coast.

Access real-time, local, ocean, and weather data at: <https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov>



Copano Bay Data Collection Platform

## Presenting the Permit Service Center

By Allison Buchtien, Texas General Land Office

One of the lesser-known functions of the Texas Coastal Management Program (CMP) is its ability to assist coastal entities during the early phases of construction projects. Before construction starts, projects often must obtain a variety of state and federally required permits. Entities applying for environmental permits, such as those needed for a pier or breakwater, within the Texas Coastal Boundary Zone and Joint Permit Application boundaries, are eligible for permitting assistance from the GLO's Permit Service Center (PSC). The PSC offers free advice and assistance to customers new to the coastal permitting process or who would like the convenience and benefits of working with expert permitting staff. The permitting process can be quite daunting, and the PSC is here to help by streamlining and simplify permitting for applicants. The PSCs are housed in the GLO's Coastal Field Operations division. For any permitting questions, please contact the PSC at either of the two locations:

### Corpus Christi PSC

602 N. Staples St., Suite 240  
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401  
(361) 886-1630

[permitting.assistance@glo.texas.gov](mailto:permitting.assistance@glo.texas.gov)

### Galveston PSC

Texas A&M University Galveston Campus  
1001 Texas Clipper Road  
Building 3025 Room 123  
Galveston, Texas 77553  
(409) 741-4057  
(866) 894-7664 (toll free)

[permitting.assistance@glo.texas.gov](mailto:permitting.assistance@glo.texas.gov)

For more information on GLO permitting, leasing and easements, [visit the new Coastal Leasing and Easement website](#)



## Welcome to the Team!

Say Hello to Coastal Resources' New Hires!



### Ryan Ono

Ryan Ono joined the GLO in November 2025 as the Clean Coast Texas Coordinator. He brings extensive experience from national non-profit organizations, where he focused on federal ocean and coastal acidification policy, shellfish aquaculture, and fisheries management in the Southeast U.S. Over the course of his career, Ryan has worked in Washington, DC, and Austin at the intersection of policy, stakeholder engagement, and strategic communications.

He holds a bachelor's degree in environmental economics and policy and a master's degree in marine policy. Now based in Austin, Ryan is excited to deepen his connection with the Texas coast. He's also on a mission to discover the best local seafood on the coast, with Snoopy's Pier in Corpus Christi currently topping the list.



### Kristen Hernandez

Kristen A. Hernandez joined the GLO in September 2025 as a project manager on the GLO's CEPR program. She holds a bachelor's and master's degree in environmental engineering from Texas A&M University – Kingsville. Kristen has experience in project management, permit writing, public speaking, and outreach. Before joining GLO, she worked at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, where she led the Water Supply Division's receivership and temporary management program and assisted in public water systems. Kristen is a native Texan, originally from South Texas, and has made Austin her home. As an avid hobby collector, she enjoys spending her free time working on one of her many hobbies, including needlepointing, baking, and beading.



### Jacob Lehner

Jacob Lehner joined the GLO in November 2025 as a CEPR project manager. Jacob holds a bachelor's degree in geographic information science and technology and a PhD in coastal geomorphology. His background focused on coastal research integrating AI and LiDAR data to assess the resiliency of barrier island dunes. His recent work focused on North Padre Island and Prince Edward Island in Canada, working in a technical capacity, assisting citizen science endeavors and global-scale comparative studies. He returns to Austin excited to expand his understanding of coastal resources and assist with the protection of the Texas coast.



**COASTAL RESOURCES**  
NEWSLETTER