

PRESS RELEASE

Texas coast to get \$1.74 million in grants

Public access, water quality continue to improve

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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(AUSTIN, Texas) — Land Commissioner George P. Bush today announced \$1.74 million for projects to improve public beach access and help restore sensitive bay systems on the Texas coast.

"These projects were carefully selected to be a good investment for the Texas coast," Bush said. "We're able to accomplish some pretty ambitious goals — like improving water quality in the bays — with these relatively small grants by working closely with local coastal communities."

The grants flow from the General Land Office's Coastal Management Program, which has funded nearly \$40 million in coastal grants since 1994. Coastal Management Program grants have made it easier for the public to get to the beach, restored wetlands, revitalized waterfronts and educated the public about the coast.

Projects funded that will have an impact across the coast are:

- Texas Coastal Planning Program: Providing Technical Assistance to Texas Coastal Communities, \$31,000

Texas A&M University will support land-use and environmental-related planning in Texas coastal communities that lack the planning capacity or knowledge to effectively prepare for issues, such as coastal environmental hazards and economic development.

Texas A&M University will provide training, tools, and assistance necessary to facilitate the transformation of communities from high risk/low opportunity to equitable, resilient, and adaptive, by mitigating the threats to the economy, environment, and culture.

Contact: Josh Gunn, 409-741-7115

- Cataloguing Texas Coastal Species Interactions: A Database for Coastal Managers, Scientists and Educators, \$52,000

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Contact: Dr. James Simons

- Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program, \$31,000
Texas A&M University will support land-use and environmental-related planning in Texas coastal communities that lack the planning capacity or knowledge to effectively prepare for issues, such as coastal environmental hazards and economic development. Texas A&M University will provide training, tools, and assistance necessary to facilitate the transformation of communities from high risk/low opportunity to equitable, resilient, and adaptive, by mitigating the threats to the economy, environment, and culture.

Contact: Tiffany Caudle, 512-475-9572.

Projects on the Upper Texas Coast include:

- Port Neches Riverfront Enhancement Planning & Design Project, \$45,000

The City of Port Neches will prepare a comprehensive plan for developing the riverfront.

By having a plan available, the City will have “shovel ready” projects as funding opportunities arise to proceed with revitalization efforts. As envisioned, the plan for this area would be consistent with CMP objectives involving waterfront revitalization to increase shoreline accessibility to the coastal zone, enhanced recreational utilization, and improved public enjoyment.

Contact: Taylor Shelton, 409-719-4204

- Port Neches River Front Enhancement Clean Up Project (Phase I), \$85,000

The City of Port Neches will remove derelict structures and debris from its riverfront that constitute an impediment to safe recreational boating, tanker/barge traffic, and general use of the area by the public.

Contact: Taylor Shelton, 409-719-4204

- Bucket Brigade - What is in our water?, \$99,816

The Artist Boat, Inc. will engage between 100,000 to 200,000 beachgoers of all ages on Galveston Island in place-based learning events to promote improved perceptions and attitudes toward water and sediment quantity and quality on Texas gulf waters and beaches. Transforming impressions of poor water quality based on water clarity, sediments and sargassum in the water, and the larger role of non-point source pollution (litter, marine debris, and chemicals) transported from across oceans and down watersheds will promote increased actions at home to improve water quality on Texas gulf waters and beaches.

Contact: Karla Klay, 409-770-0722

- The Wetland Plant Partnership, \$97,615

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will design and construct storm water wetland demonstration projects in Galveston, Brazoria and Harris counties, a three-county region that contributes flows to Galveston Bay. Funding will also be used to construct a plant nursery, which will provide stock for the storm water wetland demonstration projects, and to educate students and volunteers on the values of wetlands.

Contact: Dr. John Jacob, 281-218-6352

Projects in the Houston and Galveston area are:

- Restaurants to Reefs: Galveston Bay Oyster Shell Recycling Program, \$40,000

The Galveston Bay Foundation will reclaim spent oyster shell from local seafood restaurants and properly cure the shell in preparation for reuse in oyster reef restoration work in Galveston Bay. Shell obtained from the program is used for (separately funded) projects that benefit ecosystem services of Galveston Bay and the health and sustainability of the native oyster population.

Contact: Philip Smith, 281-332-3381 x210

- Boater Waste Education Campaign (BWEC): Communicating Environmental Impact and Facilitating Enforcement, \$60,000

Galveston Bay Foundation will refine the BWEC based on lessons learned from stakeholder feedback and preliminary water quality and Dockwalker survey data gathered in Cycles 17 and 18 and will continue to track program improvements. In Cycle 20, the main focus will be to expand and improve campaign communications by outlining a social media and Web marketing distribution plan; improve data analysis used to determine campaign success by increasing collaboration with the Technical Advisory Committee; refine marina research sampling designs in order to reduce variance in data, improving the ability to compare long-term data in Marina Del Sol and Lakewood Yacht Club; increase the number of agency partners tied into and number of citizens using the GBAN mobile app in order to increase the quantity and quality of reporting and facilitate more streamlined and focused enforcement efforts by agency partners; and collect and analyze additional Dockwalker survey data in order to better understand knowledge gaps and garner additional stakeholder support for a federal No Discharge Zone in Galveston Bay.

Contact: Charlene Bohanon, 281-332-3381 x215

- Cease the Grease Campaign (CtG): Enhancing Outreach and Launching Grease Recycling Pilot Program, \$55,752

The Galveston Bay Foundation will enhance the CtG campaign by expanding the number of campaign partners, increasing the visibility of campaign materials, improving awareness of fats, oil and grease-related water quality problems, as well as launching the community grease recycling pilot program. GBF will launch four residential grease recycling drop-off locations in at least two cities.

Contact: Charlene Bohanon, 281-332-3381 x215

- A Prototype Information System for Monitoring and Predicting Phytoplankton Productivity over Galveston Bay, \$95,475

The Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station will improve the ability to maintain coastal ecosystem health (related to phytoplankton) by creating a prototype phytoplankton productivity information system over Galveston Bay. The proposed prototype information system will contain two parts, which include monitoring phytoplankton productivity through satellite remote sensing and predicting phytoplankton productivity using state-of-the-art modeling capabilities. The model will be given the capability to conduct phytoplankton seasonal forecasting driven by

predicted seasonal weather forecasts from the National Centers for Environmental Prediction Climate Forecast System.

Contact: Dr. Huilin Gao, 979-845-2875

- Toward Wetland Protection in the Houston-Galveston Region: Assessing Mitigation Practices and Facilitating Watershed-Based Decision Making, \$100,000

The GeoTechnology Research Institute will analyze full 404 permit records (2008-2015) and add them to the reports created in phase 1 of the project to examine the success of mitigation sites. The team will compare ecological conditions within the mitigation site to conditions existing prior to permit activities using historical aerial photographs and descriptions of the area. Results will be presented at a stakeholder meeting for government agencies and nonprofit organizations, in the final report, and in publications.

Contact: Lisa Gonzalez, 281-364-6044

Projects in the Coastal Bend are:

- Shell Bank: Oyster Shell Recycling, Community Engagement, Teacher Institute, and Oyster Health, \$99,289

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) will continue its oyster shell recycling program. TAMUCC developed its program to reclaim discarded oyster shell from local area restaurants, seafood wholesalers, and festivals, and return it to coastal bend bays to restore degraded habitat. TAMUCC will expand oyster shell collection, host community-based restoration events, provide training to local school teachers, and monitor the success of alternative reef restoration materials used at current restoration sites.

Contact: Dr. Jennifer Pollack, 361-825-2041

- Evaluating Groundwater Inflow and Nutrient Transport to Texas Coastal Embayments, Phase II, \$99,400

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will conduct a study to advance the understanding of groundwater inflows and nutrient transport to bay systems in South Texas for improved environmental flow recommendations and nutrient criteria. Groundwater discharge will be explicitly incorporated into the freshwater inflow needs and nutrient budgets. Specifically, this project builds upon current efforts to estimate freshwater and nutrient contributions from groundwater to the Nueces, Laguna Madre and Aransas estuaries.

Contact: Dr. Dorina Murgulet, 361-825-2309

- Pesticide loading and sediment accumulation in Baffin Bay: Addressing an Important Stakeholder Concern Regarding the Bay's Health, \$77,841

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will coordinate with other principal investigators conducting water quality sampling to integrate pesticide sampling into their existing routines. Samples collected will be analyzed for concentrations of legacy and current-use pesticides in Baffin Bay water, sediment and dwarf surf clam tissues. This research

will quantify loading and the accumulation of pesticides in Baffin Bay and assess the impacts on the dwarf surf clam and subsequently the economically important black drum. Ultimately, this research will provide a critical parameter needed to fully assess water pollution impacts on the ecosystem health of Baffin Bay.

Contact: Dr. Jeremy Conkle, 361-825-2862

- Palacios Coastal Education Pavilion, \$84,000

The City of Palacios will construct a new pavilion to be utilized as a multi-use venue that can help revitalize Palacios, re-establish a historic community icon, serve as a community venue, promote education, and enhance tourism. The pavilion will be adjacent to a wetland area and will be used for educational purposes.

Contact: Anna-Marie Mackey, 405-834-8305

- Trash or Treat, \$19,694

The University of Texas at Austin will educate the South Texas Coastal Community on the impacts of marine debris and encourage actions that mitigate damage to the region's coastal environments by coordinating cleanup events on Mustang Island.

Contact: Sara Pelleteri, 361-749-6764

- Nueces Delta Wetland Functionality Study, \$88,997

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will assess the structure of the benthic community, phytoplankton, zooplankton, and fishes using trophic linkage assessment by multiple stable isotopes. This assessment is necessary to understand how effective the implementation of management recommendations and activities have been since the connectivity of the Nueces Estuary with the Nueces Delta was achieved.

Contact: Dr. Paul Zimba, 361-825-2768

And finally, projects in South Texas are:

- Lower Rio Grande Valley Low Impact Development Outreach Education and Demonstration Program, \$97,000

Texas A&M University-Kingsville will develop coastal Low Impact Development (LID) projects within rural regions as part of this program. Texas A&M University-Kingsville will use faculty, staff and graduate students to obtain data from these coastal demonstration projects, develop findings on the effectiveness of these Best Management Practices in the LRGV region and provide outreach and reporting to the partners on these findings. The project will provide recommendations on use of LID concepts, planning strategies and cost analyses.

Contact: Dr. Kim Jones, 361-593-2187

- Moonlight Beach Access Improvements, \$95,000

The City of South Padre Island will improve Moonlight Circle (Public Beach Access Point #13) with the installation of an ADA-compliant dune walkover in place of the aging mobi-mat currently installed. The walkover improvements will include drinking water

and rinse stations. Installed plumbing will also be used to irrigate the surrounding dunes when needed.

Contact: Reuben Trevino, 956-761-8111

- Ocean Circle Beach Access Improvements, \$150,000

The City of South Padre Island will improve Ocean Circle (Public Beach Access Point #2), a completely undeveloped access point located on the southern end of Gulf Boulevard. Construction of a new walkover will be instrumental in keeping the dune system strong and free of weak points leading to gaps and washovers. In addition, a 28-space parking lot, sidewalk, drinking fountain, and rinse station will be installed. The installed plumbing will also be used to irrigate the surrounding dunes when needed.

Contact: Reuben Trevino, 956-761-8111

- San Benito Wetlands Project - Phase II, \$100,000

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Water Resources Institute will restore the remaining 10 ponds at the 165-acre water treatment property along the banks of the Arroyo Colorado and utilize them to water and treat nearby agricultural runoff before entering the arroyo. Evaporation and utilization by vegetation will reduce the amount of fresh water impacting the hypersaline seagrass ecosystem in the Laguna Madre.

Contact: Jaime Flores, 956-969-5607

To learn more about the Texas General Land Office Coastal Management Program, visit www.glo.texas.gov/what-we-do/caring-for-the-coast/grants-funding/cmp/.

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