

N 330.6
AR 67
1:04

AROUND THE BEND

News of the
Coastal Bend's Bays & Estuaries

Vol. 1, No. 4 - Fall 1995

Government Publications
Texas State Documents

NOV 03 1995

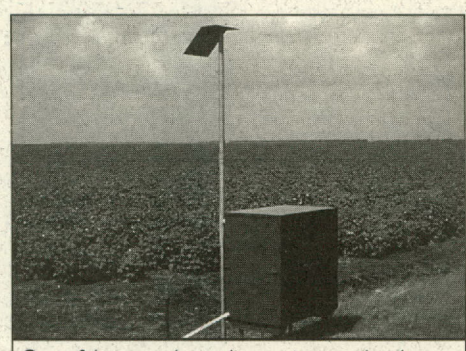
Depository
Dallas Public Library



CCBNEP and TAES Unveil Agricultural Demonstration Project to Media

First study of its kind in Coastal Bend

The Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station unveiled their joint Action Plan Demonstration Project to local media representatives on July 7. A briefing was held at the Experiment Station in Corpus Christi to explain the project's scope and methods, followed by a tour of the project site in fields near Edroy.



One of the several sampling stations, with solar panel attached, at the demonstration project site in Edroy.

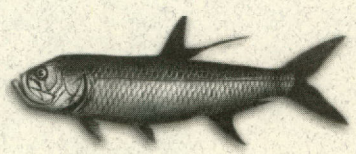
This demonstration project is unique, and the media tour sponsored by the CCBNEP and the Port of Corpus Christi Authority attracted interest from several Coastal Bend media outlets. Most data on agricultural nonpoint source pollution is available only from studies done in other parts of the country, with very different environmental conditions from those experienced by residents of the Coastal Bend. This project will give the CCBNEP real data from this area to use as the comprehensive plan for the bays and estuaries is developed.

The project involves monitoring runoff from 2700 acres of cropland in San Patricio County. The runoff will be monitored for sediment, nutrient and chemical contributions to Nueces Bay over a minimum of 10 rainfall runoff events. The results of the monitoring program will be analyzed in order to assess the Best Management Practices currently used by local agricultural producers, and their impact on the amount and type of polluted runoff draining into Nueces Bay. The results may also provide the basis for area farmers to modify operations to increase economic profitability.

For more information, contact Dr. Bobby Eddleman, the project's Principal Investigator, at 512/265-9203.



John Barrett (r), CCBNEP Management Committee member and the lead agricultural producer with the project, responds to a question from KIII-TV3 reporter John De La Torre (second from left). Also participating in the tour are former state representative Leroy Wieting (l) and Hudson DeYoe (second from right), CCBNEP Research Coordinator.



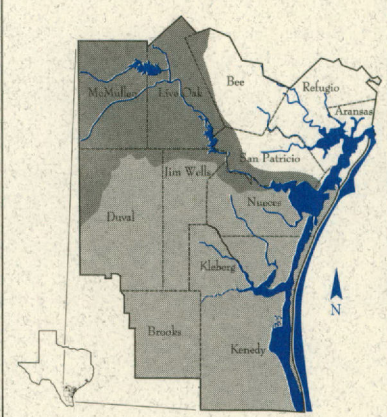
ON THE INSIDE

CCBNEP Forming Partnerships with Local Governments
Page 3

Program Director's Report
Page 3

Texas Watch Program Makes its Mark on the Coastal Bend
Page 4

Local Governments Tackle Bay-related issues
Pages 2 & 5



Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program Study Area



Corpus Christi Proposes New Drainage Utility

City seeking ways to prevent bay pollution caused by storm water runoff

The City of Corpus Christi has proposed the establishment of a new utility to deal with existing drainage problems, and to prevent more problems as the city's population grows. The proposed utility will focus on funding existing storm water services, as well as providing enhanced levels of maintenance. The goals of the proposed utility are to keep the area's receiving waters — our bays — clean, and to meet federal storm water permit regulations.

The city maintains over 865 miles of drainage ditches and over 13,000 catch basins. The 52 people employed by the City's storm water division remove trash and debris from catch basins, drainage ditches, and right-of-ways; maintain over 1,000 miles of underground storm drain pipe; mow 2,500 acres of right-of-way and drainage ditches throughout the city; and respond to complaints from residents about clogged storm water drains. These services are currently funded by a portion of the water revenues collected each month by the city utility office, which charges residents a fee based on their water usage.

Since 1988, the City Water Division has funded storm water activities at an average cost of \$3 million per year. One of the requirements of the U.S. EPA Storm Water Permit calls for the City to establish a funding source to comply with the permit requirements. Pending approval by the City Council, the services listed above will appear as a separate charge on city utility bills starting in 1996.



Trash makes its way into Corpus Christi Bay by way of storm drains like this one. Over two tons of debris has been collected in the City's two downtown pumping stations so far this year. (Photo courtesy of the City of Corpus Christi.)



Volunteers have been helping the City to stencil storm drains, so that the public will be aware of the direct link between what goes into the storm drainage system and what gets flushed into the bay. (Photo courtesy of the City of Corpus Christi.)


Drainage water differs from wastewater in several ways, but one important difference highlights the need for a new way to deal with drainage water resulting from rain and water runoff. Water used inside a house, such as water from a bathroom or kitchen sink, bath tub, or toilet drains to a wastewater treatment plant where it is cleaned and returned back to the environment. When rain or water runoff occurs on impervious surfaces such as roof tops, paved streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and patios, the water flows into the nearest drainage inlet or ditch. The runoff picks up debris and pollutants such as oils, pesticides, and fertilizers, and eventually flows through the City's drainage system and into our bays without being treated.

The City has two pump stations in the downtown area designed to prevent flooding due to its low elevation. The pump stations are equipped with bar screens that collect and remove most of the floatable trash and debris from the water before it enters the bay. There is no treatment system to remove other pollutants that are carried into the bay waters.

Under the federal Clean Water Act of 1987, cities with populations of 100,000 or more are required to obtain a permit for discharging storm water, called the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit, or NPDES. The City of Corpus Christi is the first city in the state of Texas to receive permit approval,

which was granted June 1, 1995. This permit requires the City to evaluate the efficiency of the existing drainage system, and to seek ways to control point and nonpoint sources of pollution through the development of a Pollution Prevention Plan.

The proposed Storm Water Drainage Utility would assess user fees based on the amount of "ground level improvements," or the amount of property that is covered by impervious surfaces. The actual rates will be set by the City Council after a series of public hearings to explain the proposed utility and hear comments from city residents. In addition, City staff members are prepared to make presentations before any group of people interested in learning more about the proposed drainage utility.

For more information, contact Valerie Gray or Yolanda Marruffo at 512/857-1881. 

Around the Bend is produced quarterly by the Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. The newsletter design and layout is done by East Meets West Productions, Inc. For more information about the program, call 512/985-6767.

Contributors to this issue include Mari Brennan Barrera, Yolanda Marruffo, Eric Mendelman, Richard Volk, and Jane Ward.

News items, photographs, and letters are welcome, and may be submitted to:

CCBNEP
TAMU-CC Campus Box 290
6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, Texas 78412

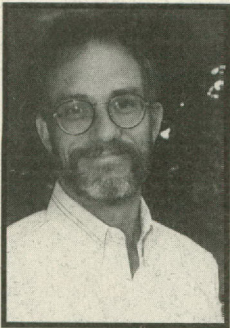
The deadline for submission for the next newsletter is November 1, 1995.

This project has been funded in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under assistance agreement #CE-996363-01 to the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC). The contents of this document do not necessarily represent the views of the EPA or the TNRCC. The mention of trade names or commercial products does not in any way constitute an endorsement or recommendation for use.



Program Director's Report

Some thoughts on the year past ... and the year ahead



It was July 4th, a little more than a year ago, that several hundred citizens gathered at the Corpus Christi waterfront to "Celebrate the Bay!" and inaugurate this four-year

effort to plan for the future of the Coastal Bend's bays and estuaries. Our list of Priority Problems was beginning to take shape, advisory committees were formed, and we had just completed the area's first ever Bay Summit, highlighting the diversity of resources and human uses tied to this 550 square miles of bay waters.

Today, thirteen months and over 40 Management Conference committee meetings later we have:

- showcased our study area through a number of public outreach initiatives.
- ratified the list of Priority Problems with public input.
- developed a Program Vision Statement at our first All-Conference Workshop.
- received results from our first year of characterization studies.
- developed the framework and process for creating a Coastal Bend Estuary Plan.

Yes, it's been a busy year!

But the untold story lies in the innumerable hours of volunteer time dedicated to subcommittee work. I conservatively estimate that our Conference members, representing over 69 stakeholder groups, have so far donated almost 17,000 hours of unpaid time in providing timely and professional input at committee meetings — you know, the mundane but critical tasks of writing scopes-of-work, reviewing proposals and draft reports, and developing creative public outreach materials. At this rate, by the time we've completed our Plan three years from now, there will be well over 67,000 hours of volunteer time invested in this effort!

Clearly, this first year has been one of organizing and information gathering, but we've also worked to initiate or assist "early actions" where possible, and have convened a number of special workshops to enhance coordination and information dissemination. We're supporting a study to evaluate agricultural Best Management Practices towards a better understanding of total loadings from, and the economics of, that sector (see related story, page 1); we organized a technical workshop on solutions to the brown tide problem; we co-sponsored a workshop on "approaches to watershed management" for our area's local governments; and we've invested in efforts to develop our conference members' skills in consensus building and conflict resolution.

These and other initiatives will, I believe, serve us well as we begin work to sort through the facts, assumptions, interests, and potential management actions related to the bay system's various resource management issues.

The months ahead will bring forth both new information and the skeletal construction of our preliminary Coastal Bend Estuary Plan. We are currently working to establish several Action Plan Task Forces that will each focus on a particular piece of the Plan. I urge our readers to stay tuned for future information about these Task Forces, and to be assured that we are committed to providing YOU the opportunity to participate in this process. If you are already involved, we thank you for your many dedicated efforts. If you would like to be involved ... please give us a call!

Richard Volk, CCBNEP Director



CCBNEP Forming Partnerships with Local Governments

First Technical Advisory Committees meetings held in Coastal Bend

The CCBNEP's commitment to collaboration with the estuary's stakeholders has lead to efforts to establish Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) with communities in the Coastal Bend. The purpose of these TACs is to develop an ongoing working relationship with staff and elected officials of area municipalities, so that the particular concerns of each community will be reflected in our Coastal Bend Estuary Plan.

Program staff are working to set up quarterly meetings with elected officials and/or city staff (including public works officials and planning and engineering staff) from each municipality to discuss relevant issues and potential joint projects. The members of each TAC will review the seven Priority Problems identified by the CCBNEP from the perspective of their community, and will provide input on the development of the preliminary Coastal Bend Estuary Plan. As specific management actions are proposed to address one or more of the Priority Problems, the input and advice of each TAC will be sought.

The CCBNEP will work with the TACs to identify funding opportunities for pilot projects, including possible joint ventures between the CCBNEP and the communities of the Coastal Bend. In addition, the Program will help generate publicity and gain public recognition for communities taking positive steps to conserve and protect the bays and estuaries of the Coastal Bend.

By press time, initial meetings have been held with officials from seven municipalities: Austwell, Corpus Christi, Ingleside, Ingleside-on-the-Bay, Port Aransas, Portland, and Rockport. Other meetings will be held throughout the fall with officials from Aransas Pass, Bayside, Bishop, Corpus Christi, Fulton, Gregory, Kingsville, Mathis, Refugio, Robstown, and Sinton. For more information, contact the CCBNEP office at 512/985-6767.





Texas Watch: Coastal Bend Partners Give Something Back

For centuries, people have turned to the Gulf of Mexico for food, recreation and economic profit — sometimes to the benefit of the Gulf, sometimes to its detriment. To prevent long term damage to our precious coastal waters, programs like the Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program and Texas Watch challenge people to ask not what the Gulf can do for them, but what they can do for the Gulf.

How have people responded to this challenge? Positively and enthusiastically! Texas Watch was introduced in 1991 by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) to train volunteers to collect information that can help protect Texas' waters. Today, the Texas Watch Coastal Bend environmental monitoring program includes a dozen participating organizations and hundreds of environmental monitors. Under the guidance of TNRCC, representatives from public and private schools, industries, cities, regional councils, non-profit organizations, and universities work together to understand our coastal waters and to collect accurate, usable water quality data.

Starting this year, Texas Watch partners and volunteers plan to work closely with the CCBNEP. With its comprehensive planning and organizing framework, the CCBNEP is developing a broad, long term vision for how the public can help support the bays and estuaries of the Texas Coastal Bend. Partner activities such as water quality monitoring and environmental education will likely play



Jeremiah Ramsey from Gregory-Portland Junior High lowers a testing device into the La Quinta Channel. (photo by John Krystinik)


an important role in carrying out this vision.

Many successful programs established by partners over the last two years have the potential to provide an infrastructure for CCBNEP outreach and education. Schools participating in Texas Watch, such as Gregory-Portland Junior High, are taking the classroom to the bay, using environmental monitoring as a hands-on approach to science education. For the last two years, the Gregory-Portland Seastars have sampled La Quinta Channel water and sea organisms from the research vessel "Katy." Not only have the students learned more about the channel and the bay, but they have also alleviated fears among the public that the channel is severely overpolluted.

Industries such as Occidental Chemical, which sponsors the activities of Gregory-Portland Junior High, conduct plant tours to show students and citizens new manufacturing techniques and waste management practices which minimize harm to the bay. The Welder Wildlife Foundation, a non-profit organization, uses Texas Watch training in their

wetland and wildlife education program. Texas Watch monitoring meshes well with Welder's wetland restoration and wildlife protection efforts. The Coastal Bend Council of Governments, a regional planning organization, coordinates and supports Texas Watch training and data management with the support of federal grants. These organizations and other Coastal Bend Partners (see list, below) meet monthly to help each other train volunteers, to share training facilities, and to exchange ideas for educating students, citizens, and professionals.

The Coastal Bend Partnership Network invites other organizations to join them in caring for our coastal waters. As the CCBNEP begins to address the issues facing the Coastal Bend's bays and estuaries, such as freshwater inflows, non-point source pollution, and natural disaster and oil spill response, Texas Watch participants will be ready to join CCBNEP in giving something back to the Gulf.

For more information, contact Jim Bowman at 851-8484 or Eric Mendelman at 512/239-4738. 

Texas Watch Coastal Bend Partners

- Adopt-a-Wetland, Center for Coastal Studies, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Contact: Ms. Nivra Kelly, 512/994-9005.
- American Chrome and Chemicals. Contact: Ms. Julie Eberhard, 512/880-7718.
- Coastal Bend Council of Governments. Contact: Mr. John Giles or Mr. John Buckner, 512/883-5743.
- City of Gregory. Contact: Mr. Luis Galvan, 512/643-6562.
- Hoechst-Celanese in Bishop. Contact Mr. Max Baldischwiler, 512/584-6169.
- KOCH Refining. Contact: Mr. Frank White, 512/242-8755.
- Nueces County WCID #4. Contact: Mr. Jim Edmondson, 512/749-5201.
- Nueces River Authority. Contact: Mr. Con Mims, 210/278-6810.
- Occidental Chemical Corporation. Contact: Mr. Chris Varnado, 512/776-6165.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife, Port O'Connor. Contact: Mr. Norman Boyd, 512/983-4425.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife, Corpus Christi. Contact: Mr. Kenneth Rice, 512/993-4492.
- Welder Wildlife Foundation. Contact: Ms. Selma Glasscock, 512/364-2643.



Irma Major from OxyChem addresses Gregory-Portland students aboard the Katy research vessel. (photo by John Krystinik)



City of Ingleside Maximizes Opportunities

Like all coastal communities, the City of Ingleside is faced with the need to improve drainage while reducing pollution of coastal waters by storm water runoff. To accomplish this, the City has designed a multi-use project in popular Ingleside Cove Park to implement several best management practices (BMPs) that will reduce the pollutant loading in the runoff. The proposed project will complement the adjacent double-lane boat ramp and parking area, and the attractive wetland mitigation area already completed on the site. Citizens and school children will participate in the project, and area residents will be encouraged to implement similar measures on their properties.

The proposed Ingleside Cove Park project entails redesign, contouring, soil enhancement (using lawn and garden waste), and planting native species as a vegetative filter to reduce nonpoint source discharge into the cove. The filter area will receive runoff from over a mile of Highway 361 and from nearby residential areas, and will require only minimal maintenance for a heavy use area. Laboratory monitoring of inflow and outflow will be conducted by City staff and volunteers with the Texas Watch program. Information on the project will be made available to other communities via the Ingleside Home Page on the Internet and by printed materials distributed through the schools and the Ingleside City Hall. The proposed project is designed to help local property owners understand how they can save money while improving the local environment by implementing BMPs on their property, just as the City will be doing at Ingleside Cove Park. The City is currently seeking funding and in-kind support to implement this project.

Like its residents, Ingleside is being called upon to stretch every dollar and to maximize the use of its assets. Over the last

few years, the City has worked with the San Patricio Drainage District, the Texas Highway Department, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, the South Texas Library System, the U.S. Navy, and local land owners, developers and businesses to plan projects that solve problems faced by the community. That cooperation has resulted in reduced residential flooding in low-lying areas, improved streets and highways, extension of a sanitary sewer to 80 percent of the residents, development of an 89 acre woodland public park, and expansion of housing and business development.

The newest partner being welcomed by Ingleside is the CCBNEP. The estuary, like the City of Ingleside itself, is a community of many neighborhoods with varied and sometimes divergent needs. The live oak, mesquite, red fish, and dolphins are as much our neighbors as the family next door, the rancher up-country, or the industries on which so many of us depend for our livelihood. Like good neighbors everywhere, we must work together to solve problems and maintain the health of our community, both environmentally and economically.

Contributed by Jane Ward, representative of the City of Ingleside on the CCBNEP Local Governments Advisory Committee. For more information, call 512/776-2635.



New TNRCC Commissioner Tours CCBNEP Study Area

Ralph Marquez, one of the newly appointed commissioners of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, visited Corpus Christi on July 21 to tour the CCBNEP study area and discuss some of the key environmental issues of the Coastal Bend with Management Conference members. The day was spent visiting several sites around Corpus Christi and Nueces Bays, the Laguna Madre, and Aransas and Redfish Bays, culminating in a tour of the Port, inner harbor, and industrial areas. Also joining the tour was Andy Barrett, the chief environmental advisor to Governor Bush.

The tour highlighted the multiple human uses of our bays and estuaries, and the range of ecological diversity found between the relatively wetter regional climate of Copano and Aransas Bays and the semi-arid, hypersaline conditions of the Laguna Madre. Among the many topics discussed were the growing importance of ecotourism to the area, several environmental improvement initiatives underway by industry, and the status of the brown tide.

Several local residents joined the tour for all or part of the day, including Policy Committee member Ray Allen; Management Committee member Dick Bowers and his proxy, Greg Brubeck, representing the Port; Local Governments Advisory Committee member Dipak Desai; TNRCC Region 14 Manager Buddy Stanley; and City of Corpus Christi council member John Longoria.

"Based on his many years of work with industry in the Houston area and his experience as a chemical engineer with Monsanto, Commissioner Marquez provided valuable insight during the development of the Galveston Bay Plan," said CCBNEP Director, Richard Volk. "The Commissioner seems genuinely interested in our 'place-based approach,'" and, Volk added, "I assured him that this Program will work diligently to discover and replicate wherever possible the many success stories coming out of the private sector."

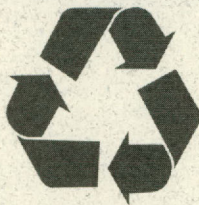




Calendar of Upcoming Events

- Sept. 14 Management Committee meeting
- Sept. 29-
Oct. 1 Bayfest - See box for details
- Oct. 5 Scientific-Technical Advisory Committee meeting
- Oct. 12 Management Committee meeting
- Nov. 2 Scientific-Technical Advisory Committee meeting
- Nov. 6 Citizens Advisory Committee and Local Governments Advisory Committee meeting
- Nov. 9 Management Committee meeting
- Nov. 12-16 Estuarine Research Federation's 13th Biennial International Conference (FMI Call 512/749-6779)
- Nov. 18 Arborfest (FMI Call 992-4608)

For More Information Call: 512/985-6767



Printed on Recycled Paper

CCBNEP
TAMU-CC Campus Box 290
6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

BAYFEST™

September 29 - October 1

Set your sails for fun... at this year's Bayfest! Join the CCBNEP and other organizations and companies at the environmental activities tent on the Barge Dock. There will be games, contests, information, and FUN for all members of the family. Activities will include touch tanks, a scavenger hunt, a demonstration composting pile and worm bin, redfish tagging, a casting contest, and the "Anything (recycled) that floats but a boat" competition". "Look for us on the Barge Dock, and stop by, have some fun and learn about our bays and estuaries at the same time."
See you there!

NEXT NEWSLETTER

- CCBNEP Action Plan Task Forces
- Report on second year characterization studies
- Highlights of environmental activities at Bayfest
- ERF '95 Conference highlights

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CORPUS CHRISTI, TX
PERMIT # 1048