

N330.6
AR67
3:2

AROUND

THE BEND

News of the
Coastal Bend's Bays and Estuaries

Vol. 3, No.2 - Spring 1997



Government Publications
Texas State Documents

MAY 16 1997

Depository
Palas Public Library

Bay Shrimpers Help Study Birds

Bay shrimpers participate in study to determine the effectiveness of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs or "birds") for reducing bycatch.

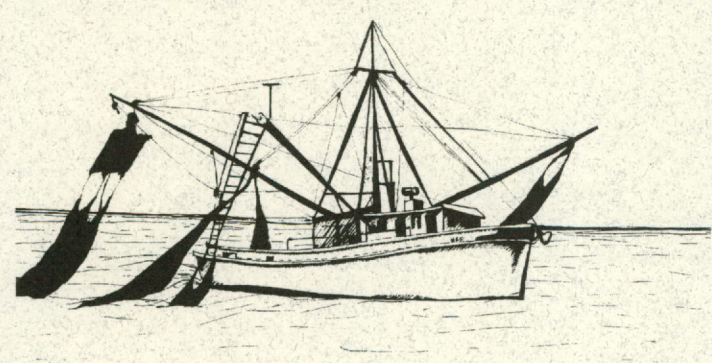
The CCBNEP funded study is the first of its kind to be conducted in the bay waters of Texas.

The study begins this Spring and will be replicated during the Fall. Billy Fuls, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Science Specialist for Resource Programs, has been involved in bycatch studies before and says this project is unique for Texas. "Similar studies have been conducted in the Gulf, but never in the bays".

Bycatch includes any animals other than shrimp captured in shrimp trawl nets. Depending on the season and location, the amount of bycatch by weight has been estimated to be about 4 times that of shrimp for the Lower Texas Coast. The effect of this incidental harvest is unknown but many think it may have an impact either on commercial and recreational fisheries, or possibly the entire estuarine ecosystem.

The study will evaluate three different BRDs over the course of two seasons, but Fuls is careful to point out that bay bycatch management is still in its infancy. "Bay shrimpers may be concerned that TPWD will promulgate new regulations based on this study, but that is not our intent.

We are simply interested in finding ways to reduce bycatch acceptable to everyone concerned." The collaboration provided through the CCBNEP project will facilitate development of consensus by interested parties.



Fuls has been working with the Texas Seafood Association and Texas A&M University Sea Grant Extension Service on this study. Sea Grant Extension Agent, Russ Miget is pleased to see the partnerships fostered by the project. "Bycatch is a complex problem, requiring the cooperation and input from all parties. When everyone involved works together, equitable solutions are inherent."

see 'Bay Shrimpers' next page

ON THE INSIDE

'Teaching Environmental Science' Course Available Page 2

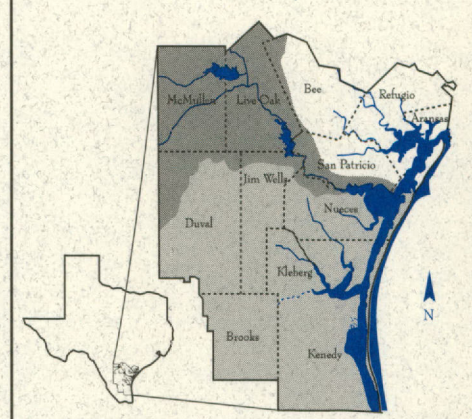
Program Director's Report Page 3

Citizens Advisory Committee Charges Forward Page 3

'Queen of Clean' Reigns in Rockport Page 4

Environmental Trust Raising \$1 million Page 4

Neighborhood News - Aransas County Page 5



Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program Study Area






The shrimp fishery is an important part of the economy in Texas. It accounts for over 90 percent of the value for all commercial seafood, and bay shrimping comprises 15-20 percent of that value. Terry Ricks, president of Texas Seafood Association (TSA) represents about 375 bay shrimpers and is working with TPWD on this study. "We are interested in investigating viable options to reduce bycatch. After all, bycatch represents loss of revenue, so naturally we want to reduce it."

Ricks acknowledges concerns that bycatch may have a detrimental effect on the environment but is quick to point out that the study also examines retention of commercial shrimp using the BRDs. "The best BRD in the world is a big hole in the net, which some people might like to see. But bay shrimpers operate on a small profit margin and can't afford to lose many more shrimp and stay in business." Ricks estimates that about 10 percent of harvested shrimp are lost when using currently mandated turtle excluder devices (TEDs). Significant additional losses would put many shrimpers out of business.

Ultimately, bay shrimpers depend on a healthy estuarine system to support their industry. It was actually the TSA that submitted the grant proposal for the study. "We realized that we could be part of the solution and demonstrate our interest in protecting the environment by actively investigating the bycatch issue," say Ricks.

Results from the study are expected to be available in early 1998. Data included in the study will include:

-  Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) of bycatch and shrimp
-  Percent reduction of bycatch for each BRD
-  Percent retention of commercial shrimp for each BRD

For more information about this study contact Billy Fuls at TPWD, 512/729-2328

'Teaching Environmental Science' Graduate Course Available

Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program and the Board of Trade add estuarine ecology to summer program

The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program and the Board of Trade are pleased to announce the return of the popular 'Teaching Environmental Sciences' (TES) graduate course for elementary teachers. The course offers **free tuition** for teachers, three hours of graduate credit, and full certification by the Texas Environmental Education Advisory Committee. Topics covered in the course will be air pollution prevention, water conservation, pollution prevention, current trends in waste

The ten day summer graduate course offers plenty of hands-on experience. Last year, field trips included a guided tour of Ward Island by TAMU-CC. Professor Graham Hickman. This summer plans include visits to several estuarine habitats such as tidal flats, coastal marshes, and seagrass meadows.



management, and a new two-day unit on estuarine ecology.

The course allows teachers to develop an on-going educational partnership with TAMU-CC, government agencies, local industry, and environmental nonprofit organizations. These partnerships provide teacher access to speakers, and field trips for their classes throughout the school year. Teachers who attend also receive free educational materials ready to incorporate into classroom curricula.

For more information, call 512/239-0012, or write to: TNRCC, Office of Pollution Prevention and Recycling, Education K-12, MC-113, P. O. Box 13087, Austin, TX 78711-3087. Registration ends April 25th, and size is limited.

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. For more information about the Program, call 512/980-3420.

Contributors to this issue include Doug Baker, Mercedes Salinas, Richard Volk. Illustration credit: Dinah Bowman, and Center for Marine Conservation.

News items, photographs, and letters are welcome and may be submitted to the CCBNEP office, Natural Resources Center, Suite 3300, TAMU-CC, 6300 Ocean Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412. The submission deadline for the next newsletter is May 10, 1997.

Printed on recycled paper.

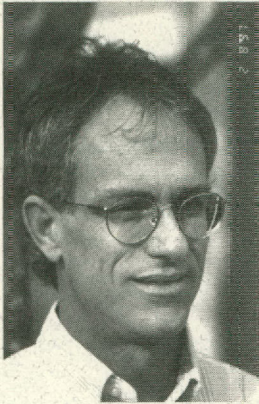
CCBNEP-100/97-2

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 name or commercial products does not in any way constitute an endorsement or recommendation for use.





Program Director's Report



Regular readers of 'Around the Bend' probably have a pretty good idea of the main mission of the Corpus Christi Bay National Estuary Program — namely, to develop and implement the Coastal

Bend Bays Plan. But, unless you're a regular participant, you may not have a full sense of the impressive volunteer hours being invested in this planning process.

Since January of last year, more than 250 individuals representing more than 100 organizations have been hard at work to reach a common understanding of the resource management issues and potential solutions for our bays and estuaries. We call these participants our "stakeholders", and they comprise the 13 Task Forces which are charged with developing the management actions that will be recommended for adoption by the Program's Management and Policy committees.

Although we have worked diligently to be inclusive in our stakeholder involvement, we know (and can appreciate) that some folks are just plain too busy to give of their time for direct participation in such a process. But that's OK. There's plenty that you can do on your own.

I'd like to encourage you to continue in your own way to become informed of the resource management issues which underlie, and will exert an increasing influence on, the region's economy and its offerings of a high quality-of-life for all who live here. From ensuring that we

don't exert an unsustainable pressure on our fishery resources, to understanding the environmental needs of freshwater and the importance of maintaining optimal inflow to the bay system, to helping our leaders identify acceptable solutions to the problems which arise from haphazard shoreline developments or the 'urban sprawl' which squeezes agricultural lands and valuable habitat — your support for a coordinated approach to these and other planning needs will ultimately determine how well prepared the region will be for a doubling of the population the first half of next century.

We welcome you to call or come in at any time, and while we may be busy at the moment, we certainly will make time to assist your own search. There's also our home page (at www.sci.tamucc.edu/ccbnep) which is a growing resource as well.

And finally, please be assured that there will be plenty of opportunity for you to review and comment on the draft **Coastal Bend Bays Plan** when it becomes available early next year. We will schedule a series of public meetings to hear your views. We will attempt to provide summary versions of key management actions in local newspapers and other media. And we will schedule meetings directly with key stakeholder groups, perhaps an organization to which you belong. The bottom line is this: We will want to hear from you, either sooner or later! And we will be glad to know that YOU have taken opportunity to demonstrate your commitment as yet another steward of our bay system — and its legacy for our children.

Richard Volk, CCBNEP Director

Citizens Advisory Committee Charges Forward

Members of the CCBNEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) are busy these days. Committee members are involved in working with the program's 13 Task Forces which have been meeting since January 1996 to develop the **Coastal Bend Bays Plan**. Other committee members are working diligently with staff as CAC "liaisons" in developing outreach materials such as PSAs, fact sheets, videos, and a slide show. And still others have agreed to assist staff in organizing presentations to stakeholder groups on the continued development of the **Coastal Bend Bays Plan** in the upcoming months.

"The CAC is definitely a critical part of making the **Coastal Bend Bays Plan** a success," says CCBNEP Program Director Richard Volk. "In order for us to ensure successful implementation of the Plan, we need to have citizen support. I am pleased to see the CAC continue to lead this effort."

At their January meeting, the CAC voted to remove ex-officio status from its membership to give all members regular voting status and it also lowered its quorum requirement ensuring the committee's ability to conduct regular business at each meeting.

The CAC is responsible for guiding the development of outreach activities during the four-year planning phase of the Program and is made up of representatives of major businesses, industries, and their associations; environmental and civic groups; agricultural and fishing groups; and educators and other affected citizens and user groups.

For more information about how you can become involved, please call Mercedes Salinas at 512/980-3420.

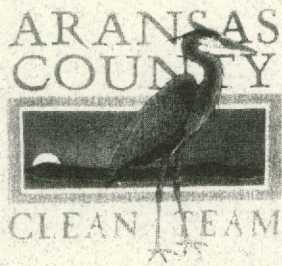


The "Queen of Clean" Reigns in Rockport

Aransas County Clean Team Sparks Civic Pride

Jacqueline (Jake) Colvill cares about her community, and the environment. She and a core group of concerned citizens joined together in 1991 to form the Aransas County Clean Team (ACCT). Acting as the Clean Team's president from 1991-94, Jake's dedication to the environment and community has earned her the nickname, "Queen of Clean."

The Clean Team is a volunteer organization participating in many environmental activities including cleanup and beautification projects, recycling, community awareness, education, and law enforcement. The successes achieved by the Team can be attributed to the many people who volunteer their time and money. From its core group in 1991, the Clean Team's membership has blossomed into about 300 active members today. The Team's high profile projects and broad support have served as a catalyst for building community pride.



One project the Clean Team initiated is the annual Aransas County Trash-Off. The Team solicited County officials

to designate one day each year for residents to bring refuse to the transfer station at no charge. "The community response has been overwhelming" says Jake. "We are seeing less trash each year during the Trash-Off because many people have taken advantage of this opportunity in previous years." And that means fewer illegal dump sites.

The Team also focuses on illegal dumps by alerting County officials of their locations. Members are methodical in their efforts to reduce litter. "We start by getting educated about litter laws" says Jake. "Then we approach litter abatement officials and encourage some action based on observations of illegal dump sites."

This cooperation between volunteers and government officials is working. The Clean Team recently won the Governor's Award as a Keep Texas Beautiful Community for their work in Rockport. The award included about \$70,000 worth of materials and labor for a landscape make-over of downtown. "The award meant a lot, not only to members of the Clean Team, but the entire community," says Jake.



Pictured above are members of the Aransas County Clean Team accepting an award for their environmental work from Laura Bush.

If you are interested in joining the Aransas County Clean Team, call ACCT president, Bob Austin at 512/790-7806.

Environmental Trust Raising \$1 Million

In 1995, several members of the Rotary Club of Corpus Christi and some longtime friends of M. Harvey Weil met to decide on a fitting memorial to Mr. Weil, a native of Corpus Christi and a leading conservationist. An inveterate fisherman, hunter and nature enthusiast, Harvey was aware of the decline of our natural resources and spent a lifetime serving conservationist and environmental interests.

The group known as The Friends of Harvey Weil Steering Committee created a memorial which recognizes sportsmen who are also renowned conservationists of wildlife and marine environments. The memorial provides financial support for organizations doing outstanding work in natural resource conservation. The mission of the Award Trust is to demonstrate that human needs can coexist with the needs of wildlife and marine environments. Since the fund's inception, over \$340,000 has been raised towards their goal of \$1 million.

Nominations for the prestigious award have been received and the winner will be announced at the first annual Harvey Weil Sportsman's Conservationists Award dinner hosted by the Rotary Club of Corpus Christi tentatively scheduled for early May. The recipient will then join the selection committee to award a grant to an outstanding education, research, or conservation initiative aimed at protecting wildlife habitats and the natural environment.

For more information, call Karen Bonner at 512/993-1002.





Neighborhood
NEWS

Aransas County Tells Polluters - 'Just Don't Do it'

Tote Your Boat, If it Don't Float!

Abandoned boats left by careless residents pose a serious threat to people and wildlife. They often have hazardous materials aboard such as oil, grease, gasoline, or paint, which eventually leak into the surrounding waters. These materials leak slowly, but the damage to wildlife may be chronic. Discarded vessels end up sinking, creating both an eyesore and a hazard to navigation. This is especially true in the shallow man-made channels common in the CCBNEP study area.

In Aransas County, officials are putting a stop to this insipid pollution by asking residents to cleanup their 'backyard' - the Copano Cove boat channel. According to Thomas Touchstone, Director of Environmental Health in Aransas County, property owners along the channel are responsible for removing derelict boats on their property.

Touchstone has taken a personal interest in this channel. "Cleaning up the water

is very important to our community. Channel waters discharge to Copano Bay, which has one of the few open oyster beds left in the Coastal Bend," he says. "Having clean water is a source of pride for the community and provides an economic advantage over more polluted areas."

"We have been conducting a litter abatement program since 1992 and the channel cleanup is just one part of our overall effort to control dumping," says Touchstone. Funds for this project are provided by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission through the Coastal Bend Council of Governments.

No Dumping!

In its continuing efforts to battle trash, Aransas County is targeting illegal land dump sites. Last year, the county documented more than 75 large (more than 500 pounds) chronic, illegal dumps, and many more smaller ones. County residents play an important role in this effort by helping locate illegal dump sites. "We just don't have the resources to cover the landscape adequately. We depend on volunteers, like the Aransas County Clean Team to help", says Touchstone.

Finding problem areas is just the first step. In some cases it takes a written warning to get the attention of polluters. According to county records, there were over 200 warnings issued during 1996. "Our goal is not to levy fines, but to remove hazards from the environment" says Touchstone.



Illegal dumps are an eyesore and present a threat to the public health. This dump in Aransas County was cleaned as a result of their litter abatement program.

This approach appears to be working. Last year over 300,000 pounds of trash and debris were removed county-wide as a result of the litter abatement program. This is especially amazing in light of the fact that there were no fines levied during the same period.

"We are pleased with the response we are getting to the litter abatement program. There is still a small minority of the population that feel the land and water are a legitimate dumping grounds for their refuse," says Touchstone. "But thanks to community support, we are making great strides in Aransas County".

The cooperation of volunteers, the general public and county officials in Aransas County is leading to a cleaner environment. If you have a story about how your community is addressing environmental issues, call Doug Baker at the CCBNEP office (512)980-3420.



Abandoned boats such as the one pictured above are being removed from Aransas County waterways.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 8	Management Committee Retreat
April 9	Policy Committee Meeting
April 19-27	Great Texas Birding Classic
April 22	Earth Day
May 1	CCBNEP Science and Technical Advisory Committee
May 5	CCBNEP Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
May 8	Management Committee Retreat
June 5	CCBNEP Science and Technical Advisory Committee
June 12	Management Committee Retreat
July 8	CCBNEP Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
July 10	Management Committee Meeting

For More Information Call: 512/980-3420

Want to Hear More About the Coastal Bend Bays Plan?

Please call the CCBNEP office if you would like to sponsor a presentation for your group or organization. CCBNEP staff are taking requests for stakeholder meetings to be conducted this summer. Don't miss this opportunity to get informed! Call 512/980-3422 for more information.

Next Newsletter

- Seagrasses in the CCBNEP Study Area
- All-Conference Workshop
- Selected Public Health Issues
- A Look at Bay Debris



Let's Go Birding!

The Great Texas Birding Classic is coming to the Texas coast, April 19-27. Events for the Coastal Bend include, celebrity and competition birding, an art festival, and guided tours. Call Carter Whatley for more information at 512/994-5997.



Printed on Recycled Paper

CCBNEP
Natural Resources Center, Suite 3300
TAMU-CC
6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTIN, TX
PERMIT # 1967