



Texas Wetland News

and WETLAND CONSERVATION PLAN UPDATE

4200 Smith School Road • Austin, TX 78744
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wetlands/publications



JANUARY 2004

TEXAS WETLAND DISCOVERY TRUNKS NOW AVAILABLE FOR EDUCATORS

Twenty-five “Wetland Discovery Trunks” – educational materials for loan – are available at various sites around the state for teachers and people who are working with youth. The trunks include activity ideas, background information, the “Texas Treasures: Wetlands” pamphlet and some basic field equipment for studying local wetlands. The list of loaner sites is available at:

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/edu/trunks/wetlandstrunk.phtml



WANT TO GET ON THE MAILING LIST?

If you would like to be added to the mailing list or would like to submit an article for the next issue of the Texas Wetlands News, contact:

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Texas Gets \$1 Million in Coastal Wetlands Grants

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has been awarded more than \$1 million in federal grants to buy, protect and restore more than 1,000 acres of coastal wetlands, a vital habitat type for fish and wildlife that has been increasingly threatened by rising human population pressures and development.

The 1997 report *Texas Coastal Wetlands; Status and Trends, Mid-1950s to Early 1990s* showed that the coastal study area contained about 4.1 million acres of wetlands in 1955 and less than 3.9 million acres in 1992, a net loss of about 210,000 acres across the Texas coast in less than four decades.

Wetlands are among nature’s most biologically productive areas. They provide breeding, nesting and feeding habitat for more than a third of all rare and endangered animal species and also support many endangered plant species across the nation. In commercial terms, wetlands sustain recreational and commercial fisheries, hunting, birding and other sustainable nature tourism activities worth billions of dollars per year in Texas. Wetlands also help control flooding and provide natural filtration to improve water quality.

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Coastal Wetlands Grants, continued

Private landowners have made the two new Texas grant projects possible by voluntarily cooperating with government and nonprofit partners. The new grants come from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant program and will be supplemented with matching funds from state and private partners.

One grant will fund efforts to acquire approximately 924 acres of wetland and adjacent upland habitats along the Egery Flats of Copano Bay, north of Corpus Christi at the mouth of the Aransas River. Three landowners will sell part of their land, provide conservation easements and transaction costs as part of the match for the federal grant. The non-profit Coastal Bend Land Trust will own the property and hold the conservation easement and be responsible for stewardship of the property and the easement in perpetuity. The Texas Coastal Coordination Council administered through the Texas General Land Office also provided support.

The Egery Flats project will provide feeding habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds, including brown pelicans and peregrine falcons, as well as provide nursery habitat for shrimp, blue crabs, red drum, spotted seatrout and flounder.

The federal grant share of the Egery Flats project is \$148,180 and the partners' share is \$326,250, making the total project cost \$574,430.

The other grant will acquire 100 acres, restore 10 acres of estuarine intertidal marsh, plant one acre of seagrass, and protect 451.7 acres by construction of a geotextile breakwater in the Starvation Cove area of Galveston Bay. This project will protect and restore biological functions critical to the barrier island ecosystem, including shorebird nesting habitat. Partners include the Trust for Public Land, Reliant Energy, Galveston Bay Foundation, Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Spanish Grant Homeowner's Association, Texas

General Land Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The federal grant share of the Starvation Cove project cost is \$954,000, the state share is \$410,000 and the other partners' share is \$216,500, making the total cost \$1,580,500.

National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grants are awarded through a competitive process. The program is one of three conservation efforts funded by the federal Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act of 1990.

Funding for the program is generated from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat and small engine fuels. These taxes are deposited into the Sport Fish Restoration Account of the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund (commonly called Wallop-Breaux after its Congressional sponsors).

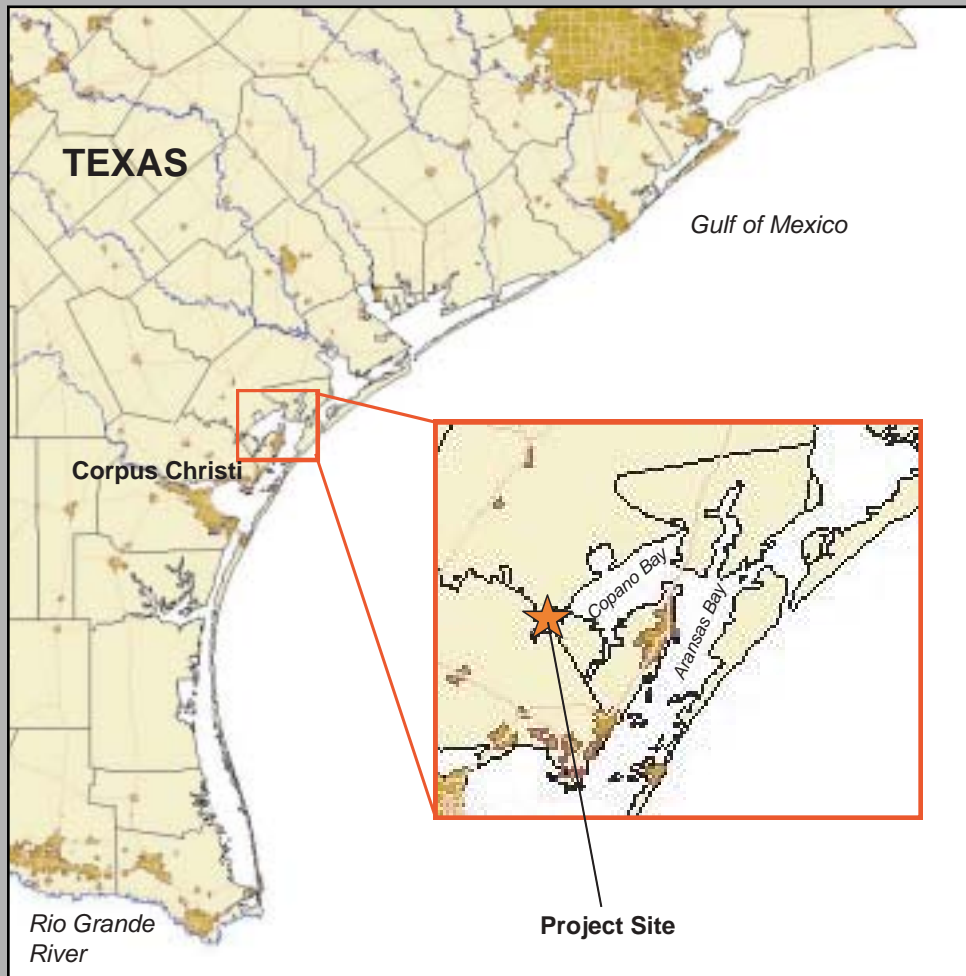


Fig. 1. Location of Egery Flats project site in Copano Bay, Aransas and Refugio counties, Texas

**PowerPoint images
by Kay Jenkins**



Fig. 2. Location of subject tracts to be acquired for the Egery Flats Project in the Black Point, Egery Island/Egery Flats and Taft Drainage conservation areas.

For more information about Texas wetland grants and conservation tips, see the Wetlands Assistance Guide for Landowners on the TPWD Web site:

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/wetlands/programs/landowner

Kansas Senator Pat Roberts Introduces Legislation to Protect Playa Lakes, Recharge Ogallala

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Senator Pat Roberts introduced important conservation legislation this week to preserve playa lakes, protect wildlife and recharge the Ogallala Aquifer.


“The playa lakes are wetlands often overlooked, but invaluable to water quality, to recharging the Ogallala Aquifer and as sanctuary for wintering birds,” Senator Roberts said. “This bill works within legislation that is already proven to bring real conservation results in a sustainable way.”

Playa lakes stretch from West Texas up through the Panhandle and parts of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming. Playas are the most common wetland in these areas, totaling approximately 60,000 in the seven states. They are shallow, clay-lined wetlands that average less than 30 acres and are not filled with water on a year round basis. In many areas, the

lakes have been used for grazing, irrigation and run-off. Some playas have also been filled in by sediment runoff from crop land.

Senator Roberts said the bill protects these wetlands by amending the Farmable Wetlands Program under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to allow the enrollment of 40 contiguous acres instead of 10, and allow payment on 10 of the acres instead of five. These changes ensure that the majority of lakes and their buffer areas will be eligible for enrollment, and it also guarantees that playas will be considered eligible wetlands by USDA.

“This bill helps to define playas as wetlands, which has not always been the case, and gets some welcome funding going toward playas and landowners that have them,” said Mike Carter, Coordinator of the Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV).



**“This legislation makes
a critical investment in
our water supply.”**



“Given the importance of playa lakes for wildlife habitat and replenishing water supply, this bill has broad appeal – for landowners, municipalities and conservation groups.”

Because playa lakes are dry much of the year, traditionally they have not been recognized as wetlands in Farm Bill programs. But the wet-dry cycle of playas is a natural function of the wetlands. The seasonality of playas produces diverse vegetation which supports all types of birds – waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds and grassland species alike. When the playa’s clay basin is dry, deep cracks form which are the main channels for recharge of water through the playa into the Ogallala Aquifer.

“Research indicates that playas can be a significant source of recharge for parts of the Ogallala,” Senator Roberts said. “Recharge rates under the playas can be many times greater than surrounding areas. This legislation makes a critical investment in our water supply.”

In addition to recharge, the bill will produce significant benefits for millions of migratory birds which depend on the playa lakes region. The playas support 37 mammal species, 185 bird species and 340 plant species, Senator Roberts noted. They provide temporary shelter for wintering birds including some 400,000 Sandhill Cranes along with 2.5 million ducks and 500,000 geese.

“The Playa Lakes Joint Venture commends Senator Roberts and his staff for introducing this groundbreaking and innovative legislation,” said Bob

McCready, PLJV Chairman. “Given the importance of playa lakes for wildlife habitat and replenishing water supply, this bill has broad appeal – for landowners, municipalities and conservation groups.”

Senator Roberts is a senior member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. He has been a strong supporter of voluntary conservation programs.

The PLJV is a conservation partnership that works to protect playa lakes, other wetlands and grasslands for the benefit of wildlife and people in the Great Plains. PLJV partners include: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, ConocoPhillips and state wildlife agencies of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Since its inception in 1989, the PLJV has raised in excess of \$50 million to conserve more than 100,000 acres of wildlife habitat in the six-state region it serves. For more information about the PLJV, visit: www.pljv.org

Contacts:

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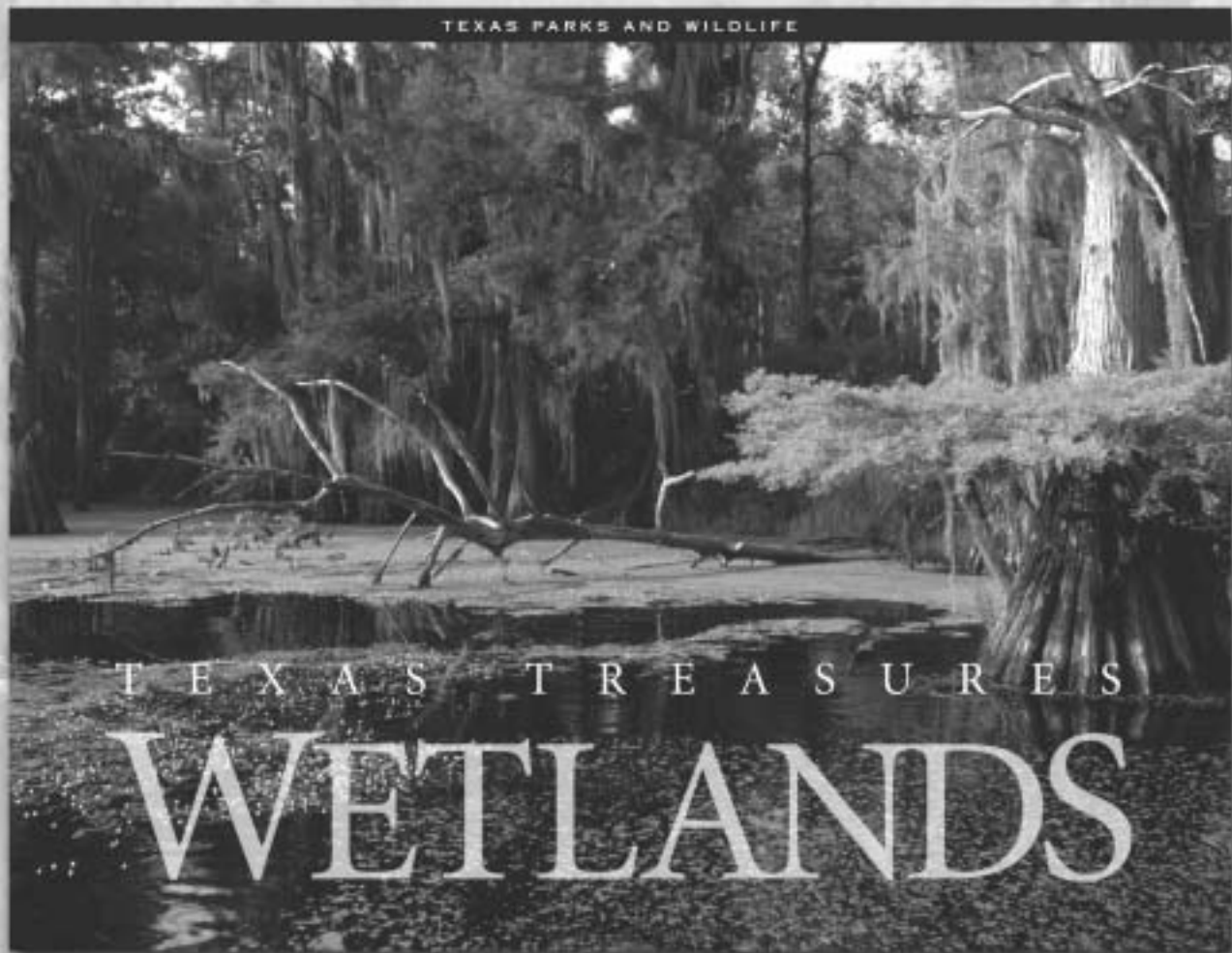


New Educational Texas Wetlands Pamphlet Available on TPWD Internet

A new booklet, **Texas Treasures: Wetlands**, is now available for viewing on the TPWD Web site and makes a colorful state-specific reference book for educators. The booklet details types of wetlands in Texas, the wildlife they support, and how humans can help maintain healthy wetlands across the state.

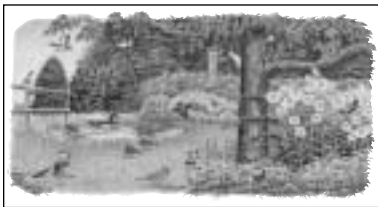
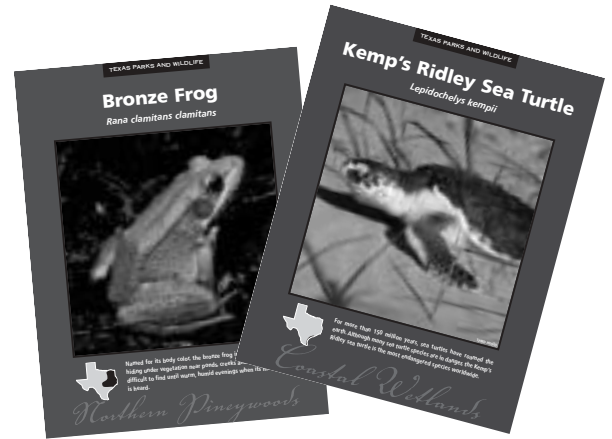
The publication is online and can be accessed under the “Publications” link from the TPWD home page through: Publications > Water & Fishing > Education, or directly at:

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/water_fishing/education/tx_treasures_wetlands.pdf



Poster and Fact Sheet Sets

These wildlife posters and fact sheets are produced by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department with a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. All posters are large, full color artist illustrations of Texas habitats highlighting native plants and animals. The 8.5 X 11-inch fact sheets include full color photographs with fascinating information about each species on the reverse side. Order each set for only \$7.50, which includes shipping and handling. Use the order form below.



Urban Wildlife Poster/Fact Sheets

Blue Jay, Butterfly weed, Cardinal Flower, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Fox Squirrel, Eastern Gray Squirrel, Inca Dove, Maximilian Sunflower, Monarch Butterfly, Northern Cardinal, Northern Mockingbird, Painted Bunting, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-eared Slider, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Wood Duck



Pineywoods Poster/Fact Sheets

Spotted Gar, Dragonfly, Largemouth Bass, Red-shouldered Hawk, Louisiana Milk Snake, Timber Rattlesnake, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, White-tailed Deer, Western Cottonmouth Snake, Southern Leopard Frog, Bald Cypress, Catfish, Marbled Salamander, Big-eared Bat, Giant Floater, Warmouth, Bronze Frog, Copperhead, Flier, Hellgrammite, Dogwood, Sweetgum, Northern Flicker, Pine Warbler, Redfin Shiner, Red Swamp Crayfish



Coastal Wetlands Poster/Fact Sheets

Reddish Egret, American Oystercatcher, Black-necked Stilt, Long-billed Curlew, Fiddler Crab, Stone Crab, Roseate Spoonbill, Eastern Oyster, Common Blue Crab, Piping Plover, Kemp's Ridley Turtle, Barnacle, Lighting Whelk, Whooping Crane, Common Raccoon, Texas Diamondback Terrapin, Northern Harrier, Atlantic Croaker, Atlantic Bay Scallop, Sheepshead Minnow, Sea Grasses, Spotted Seatrout, Red Drum, Gulf Salt Marsh Snake

_____ set(s) of Urban Wildlife
 _____ set(s) of Pineywoods
 _____ set(s) of Coastal Wetlands
 _____ total number of sets X \$7.50 = \$ _____

**TOTAL
AMOUNT
OF ORDER**

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please make checks payable to:
Texas Parks and Wildlife Fact Sheets

Mail to: Project WILD Coordinator
 Texas Parks and Wildlife Fact Sheets
 4200 Smith School Road
 Austin, TX 78744

Discounts are available for orders of 10 sets or more.
 Contact the Project WILD Coordinator at (512) 389-4369



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NOTICE

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department receives federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any Texas Parks and Wildlife Department program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information, please call or write: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office for Diversity and Civil Rights Programs - External Programs, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Webb 300, Arlington, VA 22203, (703) 358-1724.

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