



News Release

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Habitat for Endangered and Threatened Birds Saved by Shoreline Restoration Project

Houston, Texas – Three priority bird species—the Brown Pelican, Reddish Egret and White-faced Ibis—and their habitats are conserved thanks to an erosion-protection project on North Deer Island in West Galveston Bay. Project partners protected the highly populated bird nesting habitat by armoring approximately 1.7 miles of shoreline.

The most productive bird nesting island on the Texas Coast, North Deer Island has experienced up to 10 feet of erosion per year. This project protects bird nesting habitat for these three and 16 other bird species.

“This island has been extremely important to the recovery of the Brown Pelican in Galveston Bay. Based on a strong and healthy population, our agency has proposed removal of the Brown Pelican from the endangered species list.” said Benjamin N. Tuggle, Ph.D., Southwest Regional Director for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The project is part of the region’s habitat conservation goals established by the Galveston Bay Estuary Program partnership, whose mission is to preserve the bay’s economic and ecologic health. Partners worked for eight years to restore and protect North Deer Island’s rapidly eroding shoreline. Erosion destroyed highly-productive habitat for up to 30,000 nesting pairs using this island as well as nursery areas for commercially and recreationally important finfish and shellfish. The young produced here are likely the birds that everyone sees wading in marshes and bayous throughout the Houston-Galveston area.

Partners barged in 24,100 tons from a rock quarry in Missouri—using the Mississippi River and the Intracoastal Waterway as a route—to create 6,450 feet of stone breakwater and armored shoreline. The planning, engineering, and construction costs for the eight-year endeavor were over \$3.2 million dollars.

“These group efforts demonstrate that by working together we can turn good ideas into tangible results” said Jamie Schubert, Project Manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. “These habitats are important to our economy. Fish and wildlife resources in Texas contribute over \$8 billion to the economy. These resources are part of our natural heritage and deserve our consideration for their intrinsic value. By protecting the island, we ensure that these benefits will be there for our children.”

The large and diverse partnership includes, but is not limited to, the following: Audubon Texas, EcoNRG, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, Houston Audubon Society, The Kempner Foundation, Meadows Foundation, Reliant Energy, Shell Marine – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Texas Commission of Environmental Quality - Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Texas General Land Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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