



# TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE

## JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER

Office of Communications • Mark Dallas Loeffler, Director  
1700 N. Congress Ave. • Austin, TX 78701-1495 • 512-463-5339 • Fax: 512-475-1415

## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 20, 2009**

**Contact: Jim Suydam**  
**(512) 463-5339**  
**(512) 417-5382 cell**

### **Beach restoration brings back historic park's former glory**

*The once sandy shores of Sylvan Beach attracted throngs of visitors in the 1900s*

**AUSTIN** — A \$3.5 million Texas General Land Office beach restoration is under way at Sylvan Beach and crews are working full-time to restore the glory days of one of Galveston Bay's historic gems.

"We're putting the beach back in Sylvan Beach," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "This is one of those projects you can put a pencil to and see the state's investment in rebuilding a beach will bring back a substantial economic return."

Patterson oversees the Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act (CEPRA) program that is funding the work.

Sylvan Beach is a public park along the western shore of Galveston Bay between Morgan's Point and Shoreacres. The historic park dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the railroad had a stop in La Porte, bringing visitors from all over the country. In its heyday during the early 1900s, Sylvan Beach attracted huge crowds to its sandy beach and large grassy park.

Missing from the park today, however, is its historic sandy beach. Over time, the beach eroded away due to wave action generated by wind and large vessels in the Houston Ship Channel.

The city of La Porte took stopgap measures to protect what was left of the Sylvan Beach shoreline using a wooden bulkhead and an assortment of concrete rubble, both of which are failing in areas. This allows the bay to encroach behind the wall causing further shoreline retreat and accelerated bulkhead failure. The existing rock rubble lying against the deteriorating bulkhead makes bay access for visitors nearly impossible if not hazardous.

In 2007 the 80<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature appropriated a record \$18 million toward the CEPRA program for implementing erosion response projects. That same year the city of La Porte applied for funding through the Texas General Land Office's CEPRA program to construct the project that was designed and permitted in a previous funding cycle in 2001.

— more —

The Sylvan Beach Nourishment and Shoreline Protection Project was selected for funding in partnership with the city of La Porte, the primary local funding partner. Harris County, the county of park jurisdiction, is also contributing funds toward the project. Total project cost is approximately \$3.5 million, with the Land Office funding 60 percent.

Work on the project has already begun, with crews using heavy equipment to remove the old bulkhead and concrete rubble. Crews will then begin armoring the shoreline with an articulated concrete mattress that allows for safer pedestrian walkover and natural vegetation to grow through the open grid. The shoreface will be protected with improved stone riprap designed to stop the erosive force of waves.

Finally, two pairs of stone groins will be constructed on either side of the pier, enclosing two 500-foot-long pocket beaches built with imported sand that meets strict specifications for durability and safety. Enhanced sidewalk and landscape lighting amenities are also built into the design. The project design calls for 1,700 feet of improved shoreline protection.

URS Corporation of Houston is the project engineer that designed the project and will provide construction management. Lester Contracting of Port Lavaca was selected as the general contractor for the job through the state of Texas competitive bid process.

Construction began in April and is expected to last approximately five to six months. When completed, for the first time in many decades, Sylvan Beach will have a restored beach and shoreline for visitors to enjoy and is expected to provide significant economic benefits for the surrounding community.

Money spent in the battle against erosion also has a real return for local communities. A report by the University of Texas at Austin concludes that the return on investment from \$30 million spent on coastal protection in 1999, will be more than \$127 million over the next 20 years.

###