



SAVE THE DATE

Come hear updates on activities taking place in the San Antonio-Guadalupe Estuary and share your thoughts about the future of SABP!

April 17, 2017

Reception: 5:00 PM

Keynote Speaker: 6:30 PM

University of Houston - Victoria
North Building - Rm 114

April 18, 2017

Presentations: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Lunch Provided: 12:00 - 1:00 PM

Stakeholder Input: 1:00 - 4:00 pm
University of Houston - Victoria
West Building - Alcorn Auditorium

EVENTS SPONSORED BY: South Star
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Photo credit: Carolyn Rose

San Antonio Bay Partnership

ANNUAL REVIEW

2016

PROTECTING, RESTORING, AND ENHANCING

IN THIS ISSUE

Time to Join Forces & Make Progress

On February 24, 2016, standing on the banks of Spring Lake, where the water from San Marcos Springs begins its journey to San Antonio Bay, Bill West, General Manager of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA), and Jim Blackburn, an environmental attorney representing The Aransas Project (TAP), pledged to work together on a "Shared Vision for the Future of the Guadalupe River System and San Antonio Bay." Under this agreement, these two entities, and other stakeholders, would collaborate in developing and implementing water management policies and programs which provide sufficient water supplies for both human and environmental needs, current and future.

On behalf of the San Antonio Bay Partnership (SABP), I would like to commend GBRA and TAP for agreeing on this new course of action after years of conflict and polarization over this issue.

The health and productivity of our regional economy, and the quality of life in the Guadalupe-San Antonio River Basin and the middle Texas Coast, depend on adequate amounts of safe, affordable and reliable freshwater, even during droughts. Similarly, the health and productivity of the San Antonio Bay/Guadalupe Estuary System depends on adequate amounts

of fresh water flowing into it from the Guadalupe and San Antonio Rivers.

SABP has completed a number of studies and implemented several projects aimed at providing freshwater supplies within the San Antonio Bay/Guadalupe Estuary System, focusing particularly on providing freshwater for endangered Whooping Cranes. Over the past year, SABP and the International Crane Foundation have worked on a stakeholder-driven, consensus-based program to design and implement a freshwater inflows management program for the San Antonio Bay/Guadalupe Estuary System – essentially the same goal GBRA and TAP have agreed to, and which many other entities and organizations throughout the region support.

In light of these various, but similar, initiatives, I believe it is time for all of us - GBRA, TAP, SABP, ICF, plus the myriad of relevant federal, state, regional and local political subdivisions and agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals – to join forces and move quickly ahead in this important effort.

Allan R. Berger
Chair, SABP Board of Directors



Abandoned Crab Traps Removed from Bays

Learn about how SABP and SABP worked with volunteers to remove 570 derelict crab traps from San Antonio and Espiritu Santo bays.

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SABP Continues Efforts to Educate K-12 Students

Read more about how SABP has expanded its efforts to provide local students and teachers with hands-on learning opportunities in San Antonio Bay.

PAGE #3

Water for Whoopers: Water Wells at Welder Flats

by Kiersten Stanzel

While Whooping Cranes are predominantly linked to coastal marsh and tidal flat habitats in the San Antonio and Aransas Bay systems, the Cranes need dietary freshwater for drinking when conditions are dry and bay salinities rise. Availability of freshwater during drought periods is often limited to excavated ponds (stock tanks) in upland areas that are adjacent to fringing coastal marshes. Since water in these ponds is

typically limited to direct precipitation, freshwater can quickly become scarce during periods of drought. By strategically placing solar powered water wells across the landscape and in close proximity to Whooping Crane territories, the stress of traveling to distant ponds in order to find freshwater during dry periods may be reduced.

With funding from the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the SABP and the International Crane

Foundation completed a suitability index that identified "hotspots" for placement of water wells across the Whooping Crane wintering range. Funds were also available through the project to install one new solar-powered water well or to refurbish two existing wells with solar panels on private lands. The SABP examined the suitability index results to help identify potential locations for wells. The index identified several priority sites on the Sea-Dan Ranch, an area also known as Welder Flats - these sites represented good options for using the funding available through this project.

The SABP staff met with landowners of the Sea-Dan Ranch to discuss installing and/or refurbishing wells on their property. The landowners were shown the suitability index results, which served as a starting point for discussions. Eventually, three sites were selected - one existing well was chosen for refurbishment with a solar unit and two locations were selected for installation of new solar-powered wells. The SABP used funds from this project to cover the cost of the solar power units for all three wells, and the property owner contributed in-kind matching funds for the jetting of the existing well and the drilling of two new wells. Because of the generous contribution from the landowners, three new solar-powered water wells were installed at Welder Flats! Shortly after being installed, the wells were already being used by Whooping Cranes and other wildlife.



San Antonio Bay Crab Trap Clean-up Completed

by Allan Berger

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) closes the bays to crabbing for 10 days each February to allow volunteers to legally pick up derelict traps. Besides being eyesores, the derelict traps continue trapping fish and crabs, which eventually die and provide more "bait" that continues the killing process. Therefore, picking up abandoned traps is essential to improving the health of our bays.

Led by Dan Alonso of the San Antonio Bay Foundation (SABF), volunteer boats and crews removed 570 traps from San Antonio Bay – leading the Texas coastal bay systems according to Norman Boyd of TPWD Coastal Fisheries. Using funds from the Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge, SABF hired Daniel's Flying Service to perform aerial reconnaissance of the bay and help locate derelict traps. This was instrumental in helping SABF direct boats and staff/volunteers to the traps. Volunteers and staff from the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, International Crane Foundation, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Dow, Texas Airboat Association,

USAA, and Colville Ranch assisted SABF in their efforts.

Allan Berger with the Port O'Connor Chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association and the San Antonio Bay Partnership had crews in Espiritu Santo Bay running specific routes designed to locate and remove traps from the bay.

A total of 56 volunteers and 19 boats participated in the crab trap removal effort this year and are responsible for more than doubling the number of traps collected during the previous year (258). Judging from the sheer number of commercial traps observed in the bays during crabbing season, derelict traps were certainly missed and additional help is always needed. To be included in next year's efforts contact Dan Alonso at dalonso@sabay.org or Allan Berger at allanberger@comcast.net.



SABP Continues Hands-on Education for Hundreds of Teachers & Students

by Kiersten Stanzel

For the third year in a row, the San Antonio Bay Partnership raised funding to host a hands-on education program called "Estuary Education Week." Generous contributions from numerous organizations throughout the San Antonio Bay watershed allowed 623 students and teachers from 9 different school districts to participate in the Texas Floating Classroom, as well as on-shore educational lessons. The program took place over a three-week period in October 2016. The goal of "Estuary Education Week" is to improve students' understanding of the ecology of the local bay systems and to help them recognize the role they play in conserving coastal resources.

The Texas Floating Classroom program included a 90-minute trip aboard the R/V Archimedes into either San Antonio or Matagorda bays - the boat departed from the cities of Seadrift, Port Lavaca, and Palacios. Students explored the plants and animals that share our bays, collecting and observing live plants and animals in touch tanks and under a microscope. While

waiting for their turn on the boat, students and teachers also had the opportunity to participate in on-shore lessons provided by trained educators.

In 2016, SABP also provided their hands-on educational experience to adult learners, as part of the Victoria College Academy of Lifelong Learners. These "lifelong learners" were provided the same opportunity to interact with the plants and animals that share our bays.

Plans are already underway for Estuary Education Week in 2017! Contact Kiersten Stanzel to participate (kiersten.madden@gmail.com; 361-813-1401).



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS OF ESTUARY EDUCATION WEEK 2016!

Dow Chemical Company
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San Antonio River Authority

San Antonio Bay Partnership
Prosperity Bank

First National Bank in Port Lavaca

Beacon 44 Seafood - Port O'Connor

The Eads Foundation

Wood Family Memorial Trust

Richard & Melanie Weischiwill

The Berger Family

The Kallina Family
Pat Robertson

Kids Birding Program Expands!

by Brigid Berger

During the 2016-2017 school year, the San Antonio Bay Partnership expanded its efforts to provide a hands-on birding program to students of Austwell-Tivoli ISD. The expansion was requested by Principal Stephen Maldonado, who

wanted to provide the program to both the "Gifted and Talented" students and the "Young Scholars." With these two groups of students combined, the program had a total of 16 participants! This more than doubled the size of the program and expanded the grade levels to 1st through 8th grade.

Coinciding with the program expansion, SABP was fortunate enough to receive a very generous grant from the Dow Community Gives program. The \$5,000 contribution allowed us to not only purchase the additional binoculars needed for the expansion of the program, but we were also able to buy a high-powered scope with a sturdy tripod. Our other generous sponsors include the Texas Ornithological Society and an anonymous donor from the Texas Master Naturalists.

During our monthly birding classes at the school, volunteers from the Texas Master Naturalists would not only teach the students how to identify birds, but also how to be a better birder and person. We stress collaboration and team work over competition. The birding program teaches the life skills of interpersonal relations and communication. Activities such as "Be the Flock," where a team of students demonstrate bird flock behavior, provide opportunities for interaction and group decision making.

Students also have the opportunity to get out in the field and practice the skills they learn in the classroom. Field trips this year have included: (1) Hazel Bazemore Park in Corpus Christi, (2) Texas Zoo in Victoria, (3) Riverside Park in Victoria, and (4) Flights of Fancy at the Museum of the Coastal Bend in Victoria. Our birding program will continue through the end of the school year and culminate with the kids competing in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Great Texas Birding Classic.

With the expansion of this year's program, more than ever, we would like to thank our Texas Master Naturalist volunteers. Glenn Gomez, Bob Friedrichs, and Barbara Mathis have donated their time and talents, helping to guide the children in both the classroom and field, while also serving as role models of life-long learning, care, and appreciation of our natural world.



Paddling Trails Update

by Allan Berger

We are making progress! Applications were submitted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for the "Seadrift Trail" from Highway 35 to Seadrift, and thanks to Charlie Kouba, President of the Coastal Bend Paddling Club, the "Guadalupe Valley Paddling Trail" will be extended from FM 236 to connect to the "Victoria Trail" at Nursery Bridge. TPWD will survey both trails this March. In the meantime, trail descriptions of these and other potential trails can be seen at the *Off the Marked Trails* tab on the San Antonio Bay Partnership website (www.sabaypartnership.org/manager/wp-content/uploads/Paddling-the-Coastal-Bend-Off-the-Marked-Trails.pdf). Charlie Kouba has also been working to get all the road signage in place for both the Victoria and Cuero Trails.

More good news - maintenance of the "Port O'Connor Paddling Trail" was accomplished this summer! Several missing markers were replaced and all of the original trail markers were updated with new signs and taller posts for greater visibility.

We are grateful to the community sponsors listed below! Please help us thank them for their generous support in making these exciting improvements to the Texas Paddling Trails Systems.



If you have a favorite paddle you would like to see added to the local trail system, please contact Allan Berger allanberger@comcast.net or Charlie Kouba charlie.kouba@classicnet.net

Seadrift Trail

City of Seadrift
 Calhoun County
 Calhoun's Riverside RV Retreat
 West Side Calhoun County Navigation District
 Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
 Coastal Bend Paddling Club
 San Antonio Bay Partnership

Guadalupe Valley/Cuero Extension

Cuero Chamber of Commerce
 Dewitt County Economic Development Corporation
 Dewitt County
 Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
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 San Antonio Bay Partnership

Working with Industry to Enhance a Colonial Waterbird Rookery

by Kiersten Stanzel

The "Carbide Colony" is an approximately 38-acre waterbird rookery located in Calhoun County. It is in close proximity to the Victoria Barge Canal and Mission Lake, and it is situated on property owned by Dow Seadrift Operations. At times, several thousand pairs of waterbirds have been known to utilize the habitats at the Carbide Colony for nesting. Six aerial surveys by TPWD over a nine-year period recorded an average of 1,488 nesting pairs per year with a maximum of 4,100 during 2004.

Since the Carbide Colony has the ability to support thousands of nesting birds and is located in a region where good nesting sites are limited, it is an extremely important location for colonial waterbirds. The importance of the site was highlighted during a stakeholder-driven conservation planning process for the San Antonio Bay Region. Stakeholders identified the need to develop a management plan for the Carbide Colony as a high-priority conservation project for the region. They recognized that proper management of this area is needed to ensure that nesting continues.

With funding from EPA and support from the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, the San Antonio Bay Partnership

was able to partner with staff at the Dow Seadrift Operations on the development of the 'Carbide Colonial Waterbird Management Plan.' The goal of the Plan is to provide Dow employees with a list of management recommendations that could be implemented at the Carbide Colony site in order to sustain healthy colonial waterbird populations and the habitats they depend on. None of the strategies listed in the Plan are mandated - they are simply meant to provide Dow staff with recommendations about how to manage the site for the benefit of colonial waterbirds. In addition, the Plan identifies monitoring strategies, education/outreach opportunities, and chances for improved access.



How are Whooping Cranes Using Freshwater Ponds?

by Kiersten Stanzel

In 2016, the San Antonio Bay Partnership collaborated with the International Crane Foundation on a project to improve our understanding of the use of freshwater ponds by Whooping Cranes. The project was designed to: (1) monitor a recently completed well installation project at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR); (2) compare use of this created site with other water resource sites to determine how far cranes travel for freshwater as populations expand; and (3) integrate findings into other water well planning efforts and future well installations throughout the Whooping Crane wintering range.

Funding from the Texas State Aquarium - Wildlife Care, Conservation, and Research Fund was used to purchase 16 wildlife cameras that could be placed at nine freshwater ponds within the Whooping Crane wintering range. Monitored ponds were located on the ANWR (Blackjack Peninsula and Tatton Unit) and Lamar Peninsula. Cameras were set to record during daylight hours and take photos every five minutes. Monitoring lasted from Feb-Apr in 2016. However, three cranes decided to “over-summer” on the Texas coast, so the cameras continued to monitor several sites throughout the remainder of the year.



Whooping

Cranes were recorded using all four ponds that were monitored on Blackjack Peninsula, including the “Dry Hole” site, which is a natural depressional wetland with a solar-powered water well installed nearby to supply water during dry periods. Cranes were recorded using only 1 of 3 ponds on the Lamar Peninsula. Two ponds were monitored on the Tatton Unit, but no Whooping Cranes were recorded at these sites. Interestingly, the cranes were observed spending more time at the Dry Hole site (natural depressional wetland with a water well) compared to other ponds (excavated ponds with no well). The cranes at Dry Hole also showed a broader array of behaviors (foraging, preening) at the Dry Hole site than was observed at other sites. This information will be valuable as SABP, ICF, and partners continue efforts to install water wells within the Whooping Crane wintering range.

SABP & ICF Work Together to Promote Planning for Freshwater Inflows for San Antonio Bay

by James Dodson

In February 2016, an agreement was established between the San Antonio Bay Partnership (SABP) and the International Crane Foundation (ICF) for a joint effort to establish an organizational and operational framework for the development of a freshwater inflow management planning and implementation program for the San Antonio Bay-Guadalupe Estuary System (SAB-GES). Under that agreement, James Dodson with SABP and Dr. Elizabeth Smith with ICF, spent the remainder of the year working on four major tasks associated with the joint effort:

- Meet with organizations and agencies involved in freshwater inflow management issues in the SAB-GES and gather information and ideas about a management planning program and implementation framework;
- Develop and communicate an effective “message” regarding past, present, and proposed freshwater inflow planning and management programs;
- Develop a rationale, job description, and budget/funding proposal for a new ICF position: Environmental Flows/ Water Resources Program Leader for the Aransas/Wood Buffalo Migrating Flock of Whooping Cranes; and
- Develop program and project proposals/grant applications for the implementation of the proposed elements of a freshwater inflow management planning program.

We held twelve meetings with entities involved in freshwater management issues to determine the issues, research, programs, and activities they were engaged in. We also determined each entities’ level of support for a freshwater inflow management planning program and implementation framework. The project team also organized a panel of speakers for a special session on “Developing Freshwater Inflow Management Programs -- The Texas Experience: How Science, Public Policy and Planning Efforts have Supported a Diversity of Approaches and Programs” at the 2016 Restore America’s Estuaries/The Coastal Society Annual Conference. Other project activities included: (1) developing a needs assessment, justification, recommendation and job description for a new ICF position, and (2) preparing a grant proposal for the National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine - Gulf Research Program for a “Capacity Building Grant.”

The SABP-ICF project has provided support and momentum for the development of a freshwater inflow management planning program and implementation framework for SAB-GES. It has also created the context for ongoing cooperation among many entities involved in these issues. SABP anticipates continuing, and hopefully expanding, efforts to address this critical need.

Meet the SABP Board of Directors



Allan Berger, Chair

Allan Berger, Chair of the SABP Board of Directors, grew up in Port O'Connor, Texas, and after a career as a petroleum engineer, he has recently returned there to paddle, fish, and live on the bay. He and his wife, Brigid, are active volunteers, involved with a host of environmental organizations in the mid-coast area of Texas.



Jerry Pearce, Vice-Chair

Jerry Pearce was born and raised in Coleman Texas. He came to Victoria in 1989 with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. After retiring from the agency, Jerry became Executive Director of the Texas Association of RC&D areas where he oversees environmental projects across the state. Jerry has been a lifelong member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society.



Steve Fotiades

Steve Fotiades has been a member of the SABP board for about two years. He is an environmental engineer having worked in the petroleum and petrochemical industries for over 30 years. His environmental experience has focused on water-related regulations, such as waste water permitting, industrial storm water management, water rights, and ground water monitoring. His interests include outdoor sports, travel, and spoiling his five perfect grandchildren.



Kathleen Welder Carey

Kathleen Welder Carey serves as Manager of the Espiritu Santo Bay Camp in Seadrift, Texas. She has also hosted wildlife photographers at the Seadrift Ranch for the last five years. Kathleen volunteers her time with several different organizations in Victoria and the surrounding area. She has served on the Nave Museum Board for eight years, has been Community Board member of the Warm Springs Rehabilitation for eight years, and is the Past-President of the Court of Six Flags. She is also a member of the Junior League.



Charles Clapsaddle

Charles Clapsaddle is a zoologist and telecommunications expert. He currently operates a fish hatchery in Goliad County, serves on the board of Canoe Trail Goliad, and is Chair of the Goliad County Democratic Party. He is a frequent speaker at tropical fish clubs and conventions around the country. He also testifies as an expert witness in telecommunications administrative/court actions and served as Vice Chairman of the Texas 9-1-1 Commission. His hatchery uses environmentally sensitive operations to conserve water.



John Kusalus

John Kusalus has served on the SABP Board since the organization was founded. He holds a PhD in organic chemistry, having spent most of his industrial career on the Texas Gulf Coast. An avid fisherman and duck hunter, he represents the interests of sportsmen as well as industry.

Vickie Grove, Treasurer/Secretary

Vickie Grove is a Certified Public Accountant and enjoys spending weekends at her home in Seadrift, where she can practice her birdwatching skills.

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 Vickie Grove & David Ryan
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 Dolphin Kayaks

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 Victoria Preservation, Inc.
 Welder Wildlife Foundation
 West Side Calhoun County Navigation District

San Antonio Bay Partnership

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www.sabaypartnership.org

The San Antonio Bay Partnership, Inc. (SABP) is a non-profit, stakeholder-driven planning and management program. The purpose of SABP is to create and sustain a working partnership of committed stakeholders in order to protect, restore and enhance the natural resources of the San Antonio Bay System for the benefit of the ecosystem and its human uses.