



Photo by Liz Smith

San Antonio Bay Partnership
ANNUAL REVIEW
 2014

CONSERVING, PROTECTING, AND ENHANCING SAN ANTONIO BAY

IN THIS ISSUE

2014: A Busy Year for SABP

January 2015 marked five years since the organizational meetings that ultimately led to the formation of the San Antonio Bay Partnership (SABP). Our first Board meeting was October 2011; recognition as a bona-fide 501(c)(3) organization came in January 2013. We are a young organization -- which makes 2014 especially notable. SABP had successful initiatives in habitat restoration, ecology education, and public access to our Bay -- each with an opportunity to continue to grow in 2015. We are proud of the results described in this newsletter and think you will be as well.

Thank you, sponsors and stakeholders, for your money, your time, and your trust -- these are all necessary to achieve

the results described in this newsletter. And thanks to James Dodson and Kiersten Stanzel for their extra efforts to make it so.

Challenges remain, financial and organizational, for SABP to continue to grow and prosper. There remain plenty of opportunities to protect, restore, and enhance the San Antonio Bay System -- your continued help will be required. We look forward to working with you to make 2015 even more successful.

On Behalf of the SABP Board,

Allan R. Berger
 Chair, SABP Board of Directors



Water for Wildlife

The San Antonio Bay Partnership worked with conservation partners to secure funds to refurbish and install water wells on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to provide fresh water sources for the Whooping Cranes and other wildlife during drought conditions.

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SAVE THE DATE

Come celebrate SABP's five-year anniversary!

April 21, 2015

Presentations: 2:00 - 4:00 PM

Social Hour: 4:00 - 5:00 PM

Location TBD



Hands-on Education

Close to 200 teachers and students from the San Antonio Bay watershed had a hands-on experience with San Antonio Bay through the Texas Floating Classroom program.

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San Antonio Bay Day

by Kiersten Stanzel

On October 11, 2014, the San Antonio Bay Partnership, with the help of the City of Seadrift, Seadrift Chamber of Commerce, and Seadrift Lion's Club, hosted the 3rd Annual San Antonio Bay Day in Seadrift, Texas. The goal of the event was to provide a hands-on environmental educational experience for the general public to improve their understanding of the ecology and natural resources of San Antonio Bay. Proceeds from "San Antonio Bay Day" support the SABP's efforts to protect, restore, and enhance San Antonio Bay. Activities included:

Texas Floating Classroom

90-min boat trip in San Antonio Bay aboard the Archimedes – program featured hands-on interaction with local wildlife through plankton tows, shrimp trawls, and marine ecology lesson.

Birding

The public could sign up for a two-hour birding trip to a private ranch where experts helped identify local

birds and other wildlife that are common in the San Antonio Bay area.

Paddling

Dolphin Kayak of Port O'Connor provided an introduction to coastal paddling targeted to beginners. Kayaks and paddle boards were available for those wanting to learn more about this fun recreational activity.

Kid's Fishing Tournament

Families experienced the fun that San Antonio Bay has to offer through a Kids Fishing Tournament. Prizes were awarded for biggest and smallest fish!

Educational Exhibits

The Mission-Aransas NERR, Texas A&M Corpus Christi - Wetlands on Wheels, and Aransas National Wildlife Refuge provided exhibits and activities that educated visitors about the importance of conserving our coastal resources.



SPONSORS

- San Antonio River Authority
- H&H Door Company, Inc.
- Eads Foundation
- Victoria Advocate
- Mid-Coast Chapter - Texas
- Master Naturalists
- Dolphin Kayaks
- Prosperity Bank
- Wells Fargo
- Big Bear Shrimp & Seafood
- Coastal Bend Marine
- First National Bank
- HEB Port Lavaca
- Beacon 44 RV Park and Seafood
- Jerry Pearce
- Michael & Michelle Samford

HABITAT CONSERVATION AND COASTAL PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN FOR THE SAN ANTONIO BAY SYSTEM



PREPARED BY:
San Antonio Bay Partnership

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:
The Center for Coastal Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
International Crane Foundation

IN COOPERATION WITH:
Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program

FUNDING PROVIDED BY:
Texas General Land Office, Coastal Management Program, Cycle 16

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San Antonio Bay Partnership
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Planning for San Antonio Bay

The San Antonio Bay Partnership (SABP) received funding to begin the process of developing a Comprehensive Management Plan for San Antonio Bay. SABP adopted the community- and consensus-based planning approach, utilizing the previous partnerships that had been formed since the creation of SABP. Under the guidance of stakeholder groups, the SABP and private contractors worked to draft both a habitat conservation plan and a coastal public access plan. Although the two plans were developed in separate phases, they were written and structured in parallel so they could be included in a larger plan that encompasses all watershed programmatic areas. To download a copy of the plan, go to: <http://cbbep.org/publications/publication1224.pdf>

Status and Trends Reports

To assist in the planning process, status and trends reports were developed for San Antonio Bay for the following topics: water quality, benthic macrofauna, and epibenthic fauna; colonial nesting waterbirds; upland birds; Aplomado Falcon; Attwater's Prairie Chicken; Whooping Crane; and fisheries. Check out our website to see a copy of the reports: www.sabaypartnership.org



Dry Hole Road

Two wells were drilled and plugged before finding suitable quality water on the third try. Photo by James Dodson.



Wildlife Camera

Whooping Cranes and Sandhill Cranes using the pond created by the water being pumped from the new well drilled on "Dry Hole Road." Image provided by wildlife camera at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

Water for Wildlife

by Kiersten Stanzel

The Aransas National Wildlife Refuge is the winter home of the last wild, migratory flock of endangered Whooping Cranes and is a focal point of ecotourism activities in the Coastal Bend region. While Whooping Cranes are predominantly linked to marsh and tidal flat habitats along the shorelines of San Antonio and Aransas bays, dietary freshwater is necessary when bay salinities exceed 15-18. Availability of freshwater during drought periods is often limited to excavated earthen ponds (stock tanks) in upland areas adjacent to fringing coastal marshes.

Recent drought conditions have drastically diminished available fresh water supplies, creating additional threats to the recovery of the Whooping Crane population. By providing reliable freshwater resources through the placement of energy-efficient water wells, managers may be able to help reduce the stress the cranes experience

when looking for sources of fresh water.

During Phase I of the "Water for Wildlife" initiative, SABP worked in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which owns and operates the Refuge, to install one new water well and add solar power to an existing well. Funding was used to contract with Carter Water Well Drilling, LLC to perform the repairs to the existing well and drill the new well. The water from the wells is being piped to a nearby pond, where it will be available for wildlife use.

Generous contributions from the following organizations made this project possible: AEP, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuges, San Antonio River Authority, Coastal Bend Community Foundation, Texas State Aquarium – Wildlife Care, Conservation, and Rehabilitation Fund, SABP, and Carter Water Well Drilling.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In January 2015, SABP was awarded a contract by the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program to complete a project titled "Water Well Suitability Study." The goal of the project is to create suitability maps that identify the highest priority locations for water well rehabilitation and installation throughout the Whooping Crane wintering range in order to better provide these endangered birds with drinking water during times of drought. The project will also include the rehabilitation or installation of water wells at high priority locations identified in the study. SABP will collaborate with the International Crane Foundation to complete the project, along with a licensed water well driller.

Rookery Island Planning

In recent years, the number of colonial waterbird nesting pairs has decreased in many areas along the Texas coast. In San Antonio Bay, breeding birds are primarily found on four island colonies: Second Chain of Islands, Seadrift Island, Steamboat Island/South Pass Island, and Third Chain of Islands. With the exception of Brown Pelicans, most colonial waterbird populations in San Antonio Bay show signs of varying degrees of decline in the system. Lack of islands, erosion of existing islands, human disturbance, and predators are implicated as most problematic.

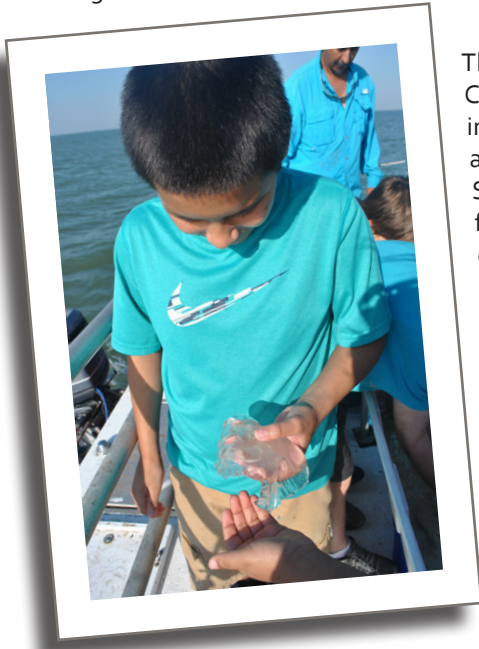
In 2014, SABP worked with partners (USFWS, TPWD, CBBEP, and Audubon Texas) to update the management strategies for rookery islands in San Antonio Bay. The goal was to update previous plans based on up-to-date monitoring data, information on current impacts/threats, and knowledge of on-going and future management and monitoring efforts. The Plan focuses on the major rookery islands in San Antonio Bay that currently support active colonies of waterbirds (Second Chain of Islands, Seadrift Island, South Pass Islands, and Third Chain of Islands) or could support large numbers of waterbirds in the future with proper management (Turnstake Island).



Hands-on Education

by Kiersten Stanzel

SABP was awarded funding from the Trull Foundation, Dow Chemical, and the Wood Family Memorial Trust for a project titled "Providing Hands-on Marine Education for K-12 Students near San Antonio and Matagorda Bays." Funds were used to provide students and teachers from selected school districts within the San Antonio and Matagorda bay watersheds with the opportunity to participate in the Texas Floating Classroom.



The Texas Floating Classroom program included a two-hour trip aboard the R/V Archimedes into either San Antonio or Matagorda bays. The boat departed from the cities of Seadrift and Palacios. While on the boat, students explored the plants and animals that share our oceans. Live plants and animals were collected and observed in touch tanks and under a microscope. Funding was also used to provide classroom lessons that supplemented the concepts covered during the Texas Floating Classroom program. The overall goal of the project was to improve students' understanding of the ecology of these bay systems and to help them recognize the role they play in the conservation of our coastal resources.

A total of 195 students, teachers, and staff from five different school districts participated in 12 trips aboard the Texas Floating Classroom vessel. The trips occurred on five different days over the course of two weeks in October (Oct 13-24). SABP hopes to raise additional funds to offer the program to a larger number of students in the fall of 2015.

Explore the Bay Paddling Series

by Allan Berger

In 2014, SABP began hosting a series of paddling events that allowed interested paddlers the opportunity to better explore the San Antonio Bay System. Each paddling event allows participants to explore a different area by taking a new and different route. Lunch is provided at the events, along with an informal presentation about the ecology or history of the route. The outings are geared towards intermediate to experienced paddlers who have an interest in discovering and learning about the estuary. Routes are typically 10+ miles. Periodically, events will be planned for beginner or novice paddlers who would like the opportunity to advance their skills. A donation is requested from each paddler with proceeds directed to SABP's efforts to protect, restore, and enhance the San Antonio Bay System. To register for upcoming events, go to: www.sabaypartnership.org



Paddling offers individuals a fun way to explore our bay. SABP's 2014 paddling series was a huge success with over 40 individuals participating in four different paddling events.

2014 Paddling Events

- June 8 Paddle to the Pass
- Aug 10 Paddle Barroom Bay
- Sept 14 Paddle Mule's Slough
- Oct 26 Paddle the Lagoon

UPCOMING 2015 Paddling Events

- Mar 29 Paddle Teller's Point (Port O'Connor)
- Apr 12 Paddle Shoalwater Bay (Charlie's Bait Camp)
- May 3 Paddle from Little Jetties (Port O'Connor)
- Jun 7 TBD

POC Paddling Trail

by Kiersten Stanzel

SABP has partnered with the Port O'Connor Chamber of Commerce, Calhoun County, and the West-Side Calhoun County Navigation District to become the community sponsors of the Port O'Connor (POC) Paddling Trail. The POC Paddling Trail is currently the only marked trail in the San Antonio Bay System. The trail begins in Port O'Connor and ends near a primitive camp site at the Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area, totalling about 25 miles of marked trails. The sponsors are already working with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to expand the route to include additional trails to Pass Cavallo/J-Hook and Barroom Bay. The expanded trail has been marked and an informational kiosk will be built at the Little Jetty Launch site in March. TPWD's paddling website is being updated to reflect these changes and should be ready in time for the summer paddling season.



Above is an updated map of the POC Paddling Trail, including recent expansions.

Environmental Flows Study

by James Dodson

SABP has contracted with the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to conduct a study for the Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, and Aransas Rivers and Mission, Copano, Aransas, and San Antonio Bays Basin and Bay Stakeholder Committee ("GSA BBASC") to identify and evaluate strategies for better obtaining minimal freshwater inflows into San Antonio Bay. The study, which addresses a priority issue in the GSA BBASC's "Work Plan for Adaptive Management," will quantify the location, seasonal availability, and increased amount of freshwater potentially available, as well as strategies to better achieve the estuarine attainment frequencies identified in the recently adopted TCEQ environmental flow standards.

Work is currently underway to quantify freshwater volumes that could be made available to supplement inflows with the implementation of strategies based on the donation, purchase or lease of existing water permits and the use of Aquifer Storage and Recovery to increase storage of water for releases. The Guadalupe-San Antonio Water Availability Model (GSA WAM), and other appropriate tools, will be used to evaluate how these strategies could be implemented and their potential benefits in terms of increases in freshwater inflow during critical drought periods.

Objectives for the project include:

- Analyzing inputs used to calculate the minimum volume of additional freshwater inflows necessary to achieve target freshwater inflow frequencies, determining lesser volumes necessary to increase attainment frequency goals and reporting the level of increased attainment that might be achieved by these lesser amounts.
- Developing and evaluating strategies that include the

donation, sale, or lease of new or under-utilized water permits, and increasing storage of water for releases for environmental flows from Aquifer Storage and Recovery, and determining how much additional freshwater inflow implementation of these strategies can provide to the bay during critical drought periods.

- Modeling (primarily using the GSA WAM) to calculate time series of freshwater inflows and produce tables quantifying attainment frequencies achieved with implementation of selected strategies.
- Estimating the cost for acquisition or lease of existing water rights from willing sellers, and the capital and Operation & Maintenance costs for the development of Aquifer Storage and Recovery facilities.
- Developing an implementation plan that outlines the legal and regulatory steps which may be necessary to provide supplemental supplies for environmental flow benefits.

A final report, summarizing analyses from the above tasks and recommending strategies for implementation, will be submitted to TWDB no later August 31, 2015.



San Antonio Bay Partnership

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Photo by Liz Smith



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www.sabaypartnership.org

SAN ANTONIO BAY PARTNERSHIP

The San Antonio Bay Partnership, Inc. (SABP) is a regional, non-profit, stakeholder-driven planning and management program for the San Antonio Bay/Guadalupe Estuary. The purpose of the San Antonio Bay Partnership 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.

SABP is a non-profit organization, incorporated in Texas as The San Antonio Bay Partnership, Inc. and is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. SABP, Inc. is governed by an appointed Board of Directors that consists of members with diverse backgrounds from different geographic areas along the middle Texas coast. Current Board members are:

Allan Berger, Jr, Chair
Jerry Pearce, Vice-Chair
Vickie Grove

Terry Baiamonte, Treasurer/Secretary
John Kusalus
Kathleen Carey