

There is a management plan for Galveston Bay

Galveston Bay ranks high among the nation's great bay systems, providing huge economic benefits to both the region and the state. Remarkably, the bay's natural resources are self-renewing as long as the bay remains healthy and productive. However, Galveston Bay, like many other U.S. bays, faces significant issues related to habitat loss and species decline, conflicting human uses, and pollution.

Congress recognized the national significance of Galveston Bay, and in 1989 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) agreed to Texas' request to include our bay in the National Estuary Program. Federal funding was provided for state administration of the program. This was followed by a five-year effort to produce *The Galveston Bay Plan* (the Plan) – a strategy for assuring that Galveston Bay will remain healthy and productive for future generations.

Developing the Plan involved a consensus-building effort among all Galveston Bay user groups. Federal and state agencies, local governments, industry and business, research and academia, recreational and commercial interests, and the public all helped to build the Plan. This coordinated effort produced a document that identifies 17 specific issues associated with the Galveston Bay system, along with 82 comprehensive, ecosystem-based initiatives to address these issues.

Among the issues to be addressed by The Galveston Bay Plan are:

- ❖ habitat destruction and its effect on fish and wildlife populations,
- ❖ competing human uses of the bay, and
- ❖ water and sediment quality.

The numerous initiatives to be implemented include a wide range of activities, such as:

- ❖ economic incentives,
- ❖ controlling harmful exotic species,
- ❖ promoting water conservation, and
- ❖ storm water management programs.

Galveston Bay stakeholders support the plan.

There is broad-based support for The Galveston Bay Plan and the process by which it was developed.

"The Plan reflects strong commitment, consensus-building, and leadership within the committees in attempting to address long-term problems in such a large, complex, and dynamic ecosystem as Galveston Bay."

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

"The wise stewardship of this estuary is long overdue, and of utmost importance economically, recreationally and environmentally."

- Houston Audubon Society

"...the creation of the Galveston Bay Council provides the foundation for continuing communication and cooperation by all parties."

- Greater Houston Partnership

"...it is possible to have a healthy productive bay and continued economic development."

- Galveston Bay Foundation

"The Plan demonstrates that sound research, combined with consensus program development, yields quality results."

- East Harris County Manufacturer's Association

"The Plan is a viable tool for the Bay's restoration, maintenance, and protection."

- Coastal Conservation Association

"The Plan reflects the...virtues of combining careful research and consensus development."

- Houston Lighting and Power

The Galveston Bay Estuary Program

A program of the
**Texas Natural Resource
Conservation Commission**
and the
Texas General Land Office

Galveston Bay



A program of TNRCC/GLO

Current Innovative Projects

Galveston Bay Public Attitude Survey:

Assess public attitudes about environmental issues confronting Galveston Bay with the aim of establishing a base-line for measuring trends and targeting education efforts.

Data and Information Management System:

Provide public access to quality data for the purpose of monitoring resources in the Galveston Bay Ecosystem.

Demonstration of Improved Compliance by Small Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plants:

Provide compliance/technical assistance to plants experiencing operational problems.

Nonpoint Source Program for the Galveston Bay Watershed:

Support storm water management plans for local municipalities and inventory nonpoint source pollution concerns.

Seafood Consumption Safety Program for Public Health Protection:

Initiate development of a Seafood Consumption Safety Program that will characterize and monitor potential health risks to consumers.

The following projects are happening in the Dickinson Bay/Bayou Watershed:

Oyster Reef/Wetland Restoration:

Create oyster reef and fish habitat, while demonstrating various techniques for shoreline stabilization and providing protection for emergent wetlands.

Galveston Bay Shoreline Management by Local Governments:

Give technical assistance to local governments to develop model ordinances, model land use controls and shoreline access planning.

Demonstration of Innovative Watershed Geographic Information System:

Demonstrate transfers of existing monitoring data to develop a centralized geographic information system for the Dickinson Bayou watershed.

Demonstration of a Bayou Barometer:

Develop a user-friendly water quality index, easily accessed by the public.

Voluntary Inspection and Information Assistance To Reduce Bacterial Pollution Caused by Malfunctioning Septic Systems:

Identify failing septic systems and provide technical and information assistance.

Pollution Prevention Technical Assistance to Small Businesses:

Conduct on-site environmental assessments of small businesses to identify areas of operation contributing to nonpoint source pollution and provide recommendations for best management practices to address those areas.

Encouraging Sustainable Wetland Habitat Values:

Provide leadership for facilitating and maintaining stakeholder involvement in community-based environmental protection.

Citizen Monitoring:

Expand the capabilities of citizen monitoring to include assessing for eutrophication and monitoring for bacterial contamination.

Galveston Bay is an estuary

Estuaries are unique water bodies where fresh water from rivers, streams, and direct rainfall mixes with salt water from the sea. Estuarine habitats include river deltas, emergent marshes, mud and sand flats, submerged seagrass beds, oyster reefs, and open bay bottoms – all of which occur in the Galveston Bay system.

These habitats are critical for the survival of fish, birds, and other wildlife because they provide safe spawning grounds and nurseries. Marshes and other vegetation in the estuaries protect marine life and water quality by filtering and binding some pollutants and stabilizing the shoreline, reducing erosion.

Galveston Bay is valuable

There are approximately 110,000 bay-related jobs.

One-third of the state's commercial fishing income (\$200 million annually) and over half the recreational fishing expenditures (\$600 million annually) are derived from Galveston Bay.

The Port of Houston is the 2nd largest in the U.S. and 8th largest in the world in tonnage, generating \$5.5 billion in annual revenues. The bay is also home to the Port of Texas City and the Port of Galveston.

Travel-generated dollars spent in the bay's watershed exceeded \$4.2 billion in 1994.

The Houston-Gulf Coast Region accounts for almost half of the nation's basic petrochemicals manufacturing capacity and over one-third of the nation's petroleum refining.

More than 90 percent of the commercially harvested seafood species in the Gulf of Mexico and its bay systems require estuarine environments like Galveston Bay for one or more of their life stages.

For more information contact: Galveston Bay Estuary Program
711 W. Bay Area Blvd., Ste. 210
Webster, TX 77598
281/332-9937

"No environmental program in the history of the state has involved citizens and stakeholders more directly in environmental problem solving. Working in a collaborative fashion, over 220 individuals helped to create The Galveston Bay Plan. It took three phases over a five year period."

- The Galveston Bay Plan, Executive Summary

Ten thousand recreational boats are registered in the Galveston Bay Area. This tally is the third largest concentration of pleasure boats in the U.S.

In 1996, manufacturing contributed \$25.7 billion of the Gross Area Product in Harris and adjoining counties that neighbor Galveston Bay.