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**NORTH DEER ISLAND PARTNERS HONORED BY PRESIDENTIAL AWARD**  
*Team recognized for protecting critical bird habitat*

On Dec. 2 the North Deer Island Protection Team received the Coastal America Partnership Award—the only environmental award of its kind given by the President of the United States—for their efforts to protect the most important colonial water bird rookery on the upper Texas coast: North Deer Island.

“North Deer Island is emblematic of natural habitats that are not only critical for fish and wildlife, but ultimately benefit the many people who live on and visit the Texas coast,” said Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department executive director. “This is only one of two natural islands left in West Galveston Bay. Without help, projections showed one third of it would have eroded away in 30 years.”

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department accepted the award on behalf of a large coalition of diverse partners, which include Audubon Texas, NRG Energy, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, EPA Region-6, Houston Audubon Society, Texas Commission of Environmental Quality - Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Texas General Land Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Galveston Bay Foundation.

“Fish and wildlife resources in Texas contribute more than \$8 billion to the state’s economy every year,” says Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D., chairman of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. “This award recognizes the efforts of the many agencies, stakeholders and individuals in the on-going efforts to restore and protect our nation’s sensitive coastal environment. The TCEQ, through the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, is proud to be a part of this important work.”

The partners worked for nine years to armor approximately 1.7 miles of North Deer Island’s rapidly eroding shoreline. Erosion was destroying highly-productive habitat for up to 30,000 nesting pairs of birds using this island, including the Brown Pelican, and two priority-bird species—the threatened Reddish Egret and White-faced Ibis— plus 16 other bird species on the Audubon Society’s bird island sanctuary. The island’s wetland marshes provide valuable nursery habitat for shrimp, redfish and other important fish 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 removed the Brown Pelican from the endangered species list. The North Deer Island Protection Team played an important role in our efforts to bring the Brown Pelican back from the brink,” said Benjamin Tuggle, Ph.D., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Regional Director.

The project, led by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, helps implement regional habitat conservation goals established by the Galveston Bay Estuary Program partnership, whose mission is to preserve the bay’s economic and ecologic health. 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 7,100 feet of stone breakwater and armored shoreline. The planning, engineering, and construction costs for the eight-year endeavor were over \$3.2 million.

The Coastal America Awards Program recognizes outstanding efforts and excellence in leadership for protecting, preserving and restoring the nation’s coastal resources and ecosystems. Coastal America Awards have been presented annually since 1997.

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