

GBF GAZETTE

Volume 19, Issue 2

2nd Quarter 2009

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Save these Dates

August 18, 2009

The Galveston Bay Foundation will be recognized at the Astros home game on Tuesday, August 18th. See details on page 6.

September 6-7

GBF's annual Redfish Raft-Up takes place during Labor Day weekend next to Redfish Island in Galveston Bay. For more details, visit our website: www.galvbay.org.

October 10-11

The second annual "LyondellBasell Bike Around the Bay" will take place on October 10th and 11th. To sign up for the ride and for more details, please visit our website: www.galvbay.org.

Burnet Bay Wetlands Project Breaks Ground

The Burnet Bay Wetlands Restoration Project is now under construction! Contractors began preparing the site in late May and started construction in mid-June. Over the next several months, the contractor will be dredging on-site material to create marsh mounds. Upon completion, the project will restore over 30 acres of intertidal wetlands.

The project site can easily be seen from Crosby-Lynchburg Road. So take the family for a day of fun to San Jacinto State Park, ride the ferry across the Houston Ship Channel, and witness the progress of this project firsthand!



Title photo: View of Burnet Bay from the north shoreline.

Above (foreground to background): A yellow turbidity curtain surrounds the dredge pipe as it pumps a new marsh mound adjacent to a completed mound. The San Jacinto Monument can be seen in the distance.

Below: A dredge pipe in action!



Thanks to the following project partners who have made this project possible: Restore America's Estuaries, NOAA Restoration Center, Texas General Land Office Coastal Management Program, Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Harris County, Mitsui USA, USFWS Coastal Program, Port of Houston Authority, Texas Parks and Wildlife, NRG Texas, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and NOAA Fisheries Habitat Conservation Division.



GBF is excited to announce that SB 2445 passed the Texas Legislature and has been signed by Governor Perry. The new law will make it clear that a variety of boater sewage regulations apply to coastal waters and will enhance enforcement against boaters who choose to ignore the rules and discharge sewage illegally. The effort to pass this bill was broadly supported as GBF cooperated closely with the Marina Association of Texas, the Texas Outdoor Council and Texas Sea Grant.

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As I sit down to write this article, the Houston area is in the middle of a late June heat wave. Temperatures hit 104 degrees yesterday and broke an all-time June record for Houston. Houston has not had any real rain for over a month. We've had some rain in Houston this year prior to the last month, but it came in major downpours and although the yearly average for precipitation is in the normal range, the actual number of days when we've had any rain this Spring and early Summer is miniscule. Further inland, the Austin area is experiencing its worst drought since the early 1900s. Is this a typical summer heat wave or are we experiencing the impacts of global climate change?

Since it is impossible to tie any short-term weather patterns to something like global climate change, most would say the scientific answer would be no. On the other hand, these are exactly the types of impacts that scientists predict will occur due to global warming. Among other things, southeast Texas will likely experience higher summertime temperatures, greater periods of drought, and bigger downpours when it does rain. Less freshwater is likely to get to the coast from our rivers and bayous because more will evaporate due to higher temperatures. And of course, the threat of sea level rise may be the biggest challenge Galveston Bay faces.

During the last 100 years, we have measured approximately 60 centimeters of relative sea level rise at a tide gauge at Pier 21 in Galveston. Slightly more than half of that rise was due to subsidence of the land; the rest was due to Gulf itself rising. But scientists generally agree that the proportion between those two influences will change, perhaps dramatically. There are myriad projections regarding how fast sea levels may rise in the next century, and those projections are being constantly revised based upon new data. But a moderate prediction is that we will have approximately a meter of sea level rise from rising

seas alone in the next 100 years. That increase will certainly change Galveston Bay as we know it today.

So what does this mean for the Galveston Bay Foundation? While the Bay has been constantly evolving for thousands of years, these changes may come relatively quickly. To best position the Bay to adapt to future change, we need to make sure it is as healthy as possible in the short term. We need to continue our restoration of wetlands around the Bay, which has dual benefits: improving water quality and storing carbon from the atmosphere. We must continue our work to ensure an adequate supply of freshwater into Galveston Bay. And we have to be prepared to adapt to climate change as it occurs.

On that note, we have invited Professor John Anderson from Rice University to address us at a quarterly GBF member meeting on September 16. Professor Anderson is the Maurice Ewing Professor of Oceanography in the Department of Earth Sciences. He will give us his views on how climate change and the associated sea level rise will impact Galveston Bay. Please look for additional details in the near future and make plans to join us. We'll look forward to hearing from Professor Anderson and working with you to help us face the challenges climate change may present for Galveston Bay.



The Galveston Bay Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization affiliated with Earth Share of Texas, and with Restore America's Estuaries.

Want to be in the loop on current and upcoming events with the Galveston Bay Foundation? Follow the Galveston Bay Foundation on Twitter, www.twitter.com/GBayFoundation and Facebook, www.facebook.com.

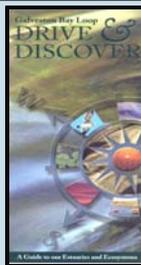
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Galveston Bay DRIVE & DISCOVER

Sylvan Beach Park

By Jim Dobberstine



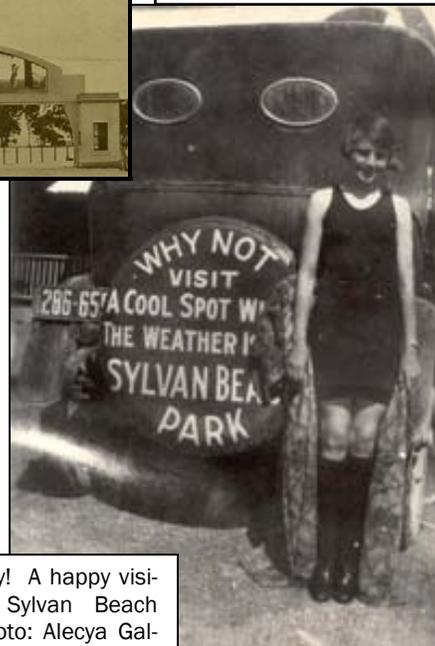
The Galveston Bay Foundation has updated the Drive & Discover Galveston Bay Trail with 22 new interpretive signs bay-wide! Look for these signs as you explore the trail, and don't forget to watch future issues of the Gazette for spotlights of each site!

Sylvan Beach Park overlooks the upper portion of Galveston Bay and has been the site of choice for the Galveston Bay Foundation's "Bay Day" celebration on many occasions. When La Porte was incorporated in 1892, 22 acres were set aside for a city park, now known as Sylvan Beach Park. During the 1920s and 30s, Sylvan Beach Amusement Park gained national attention as a result of popular bands, including that of Benny Goodman, performing at local events. The original train depot that served the area, which sits across from the park, has been restored and converted to a museum housing numerous pieces from La Porte's historic past.

The park is also not far from the Houston Ship Channel. Container vessels can be seen traversing the channel in the distance from the vantage point at Sylvan Beach, often on their way to or from the Port of Houston's Barbour's Cut terminal just past Morgan's Point.



Left: Photo from "The Romance of Old Sylvan Beach", Erna Foxworth, Waterway Press, 1986.



Above: Back in the day! A happy visitor to the historic Sylvan Beach Amusement Park. (Photo: Alecy Galloway, The Environmental Institute of Houston)



Drive & Discover sign at Sylvan Beach Park. (Photo: Jim Dobberstine)

More than 200,000,000 tons (2,000 pounds per ton) of cargo is moved each year through the Houston, Texas City, and Galveston Ports! Fishing is also a popular past time at the park, either along the shore, from the pier, or by boat. The area is frequented by a number of recreational sportfish, including seatrout and drum.

The Foundation's *Drive & Discover Galveston Bay* sign for Sylvan Beach is located at the picnic area near the boat launch. Parking is available at the site. There is excellent fishing and bird watching available at the site, so don't hesitate to bring your gear. Don't miss out—grab a Guide and get going!

Another Successful Marsh Mania

Marsh Mania 2009 kicked off on Saturday, April 25, at four sites around Galveston Bay, including Nassau Bay Peninsula, Isla del Sol, Snake Island Cove, and the Texas City Prairie Preserve. At all sites, volunteers were faced with the challenge of exceptionally high water due to heavy rains and wind driven tides.

At Nassau Bay Peninsula, approximately 40 volunteers planted 24 buckets of smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) on the north end of the site. Another 15 volunteers were taken to the interior of the Peninsula to pick up trash left by Hurricane Ike.

At Isla del Sol on West Galveston Island, roughly 30 volunteers planted the adjacent marsh restoration site. Volunteers planted 15 buckets of smooth cordgrass on three marsh mounds and on the eroding natural shoreline.

At Snake Island Cove in West Bay, approximately 30 volunteers were led in the transplanting of seagrasses (*Halodule wrightii*) on the bay bottom behind geotextile tube breakwaters. Since the geotextile tubes were installed in 2007, GBF and partners at the National Marine Fisheries Service have been monitoring the site for naturally recruiting

seagrasses. Substantial patches were found earlier this year which were used as a harvesting site to obtain the 1,260 plugs transplanted by volunteers. Harvested plugs were placed in peat pots, and volunteers planted the 1,260 peat pots within 8 one-meter plots within Snake Island Cove.

At the Texas City Prairie Preserve 66 volunteers, mainly from Hogg Middle School and the University of St. Thomas, planted 15 buckets of smooth cordgrass on a shell island adjacent to the Preserve. The scheduled planting of a nearby small island in Dickinson Bayou was put off a week due to high water levels and strong currents in the bayou. GBF, TCPP, and TPWD staff planted 5 buckets of smooth cordgrass on the south side of the island on Monday, May 4.

On May 30, a second planting event was held at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Seventy-two volunteers gathered to pick up trash washed up by Hurricane Ike and to plant 30 buckets of smooth cordgrass in an area damaged by the storm. The weather was beautiful and the tides were cooperative, making for a great day for volunteering. Afterwards, lunch was served, t-shirts were given out and door prize drawings were held. Additionally, the North Shore Surf Club educated volunteers on special attributes of the bay as part of GBF's Bay Ambassadors program.

Thank you to our Marsh Mania 2009 Sponsors!



John P. McGovern Foundation

Marsh Maniacs of 2009

THANK YOU to all who volunteered at Marsh Mania 2009!

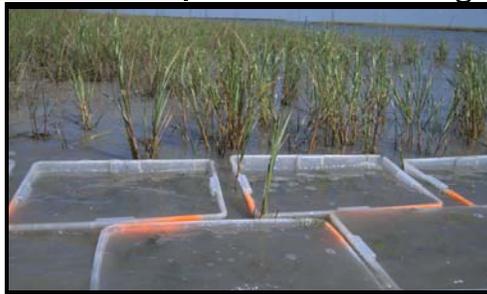


Marsh Maniacs at Nassau Bay planted 24 buckets of cordgrass!



They even had time to "sit down" on the job!

More than 30 volunteers transplanted seagrass at Snake Island Cove. Thank you for your hardwork!



Above: volunteers enjoyed lunch after cleaning up trash left by Hurricane Ike and planting cordgrass at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.



Cordgrass was planted at Isla del Sol and the Texas City Prairie Preserve by more than 70 volunteers.



Bay Day 2009 a Great Success!

On May 16, 2009, thousands of bay-area residents attended the Bay Day 2009 festival at the Kemah Boardwalk to celebrate Galveston Bay. The celebration included over 45 interactive exhibits and displays that emphasized the multiple and important uses of Galveston Bay.

Festival attendees enjoyed entertainment by Billy B, Bill Oliver, and Calliope Puppets. Other highlights of the day included the Blue Crab Scavenger Hunt, the Bay Gazer Photo Contest, live animal exhibits, and free cruises on the *R.V. Karma*, an educational vessel that provides participants with the opportunity to experience a research ship and learn about the creatures that inhabit Galveston Bay.

Bay Day 2009 would not have been possible without the help of the dedicated Bay Day volunteers, exhibitors, and sponsors who helped make Bay Day a successful outreach and education event! Thank you!



Special Thanks to our Flagship, Charter and Admirals Sponsors.



John P. McGovern Foundation

Spotlight on...GBF Member

Bill Baker

GBF is pleased to highlight executive committee member Bill Baker in this month's member spotlight. Bill has been a lifelong resident of the Galveston Bay area and has taken an interest in its ecology since he was a young boy. He fished and hunted along Dickinson Bayou as a boy, and his passion for the Bay ultimately led him to Texas A&M, where he studied wildlife and fisheries science. He returned to the area quickly and began work as a marine biologist for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

In 1983, he began his career in the private sector in the environmental department of Houston Lighting & Power. Although the name of the company has changed several times over the years, Bill has been in the environmental department of what is now known as RRI Energy for 26 years. He has an incredible record of success in working on environmental projects in that role. In 1986, he established HL&P's Environmental Partners Program as an initiative to develop stronger community relationships with agency and advocacy groups by working together on habitat restoration and environmental education projects. The catalyst for the development of this program was the establishment of a wetlands plant nursery at the Cedar Bayou Generating Station in 1989. The facility, initially known as the Cedar Bayou Natural Resource Center, is still in existence today and is called the NRG Eco-Center. Since its inception, it has produced literally millions of stems of smooth cordgrass that have been transplanted into restoration projects in Galveston Bay.

Bill also has extensive experience working on dredge material beneficial use projects around Galveston Bay and initiated the Galveston Bay Foundation's Dickinson Bay island restoration project.

He also had the opportunity to pioneer a technique that used coal ash as alternative substrate for oyster reef in Galveston Bay. This technique has been used not only in Galveston Bay, but also to create the nation's largest coal ash fish reef 35 miles off the coast of Freeport, Texas. Over the years, four of his Environmental Partners projects have been recognized by the Coastal America Program and the Environmental Partners Program now operates on a national level in nine states.

But Bill's true love remains the work he does in and around Galveston Bay. He has worked with GBF in one way or another almost since its inception. Bill states, "I am blessed to be able to work with GBF in both a professional and personal capacity. I tell people I have the best job in my company because I get to do things I truly enjoy doing and make a difference at the same time. My relationship with GBF has been pivotal for my career. I was in the right place at the right time and was able to bring some things to the table that have really made a difference for our Bay. I've accomplished more working with groups like GBF than I ever could have individually. I hope more people will get involved and support the efforts of GBF."

GBF is grateful for Bill's participation and all he has done for Galveston Bay. It looks forward to being the "right place" for Bill's efforts for a very long "right time" to come.



Left: Bill at the Texas City Prairie Preserve 2007 Marsh Mania. Bill's never afraid to get his hands dirty and we appreciate all his time and hard work!



Above: Bill Baker talking with future marine biologists.



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The mission of the Galveston Bay Foundation is to preserve, protect and enhance the natural resources of the Galveston Bay estuarine system for present users and for posterity.



GBF Gazette underwriting provided by our valued partner, the Port of Houston Authority.

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Photos in this month's issue of the GBF Gazette contributed by:

- Alecya Gallaway
- Erna Foxworth
- GBEP
- GBF Staff
- Jim Dobberstine



For event details and volunteer opportunities, visit our website at www.galvbay.org



Galveston Bay Foundation has received a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest and most-utilized independent evaluator of charities. You can see our listing on their website, www.charitynavigator.org.



The **Houston Astros** are going to recognize the Galveston Bay Foundation at their home game on Tuesday, August 18th. This is one of the many components of the **Astros Play Green™** initiative launched in 2008. We have a limited number of free tickets. If you are a member and would like to join us, please contact Emily Demmeck at edemmeck@galvbay.org or 281.332.3381 x213.

