

Pierce Marsh Fact Sheet



Location:

Pierce Marsh lies on Jones Bay, just south of the town of Hitchcock in Galveston County, off State Highway 6, just northwest of Bayou Vista.

Size:

1,361 acres (The Nature Conservancy, 2/3 undivided interest; Galveston Bay Foundation, 1/3 undivided interest)
985 acres (Galveston Bay Foundation)
Total area = 2,346 acres

General Information:

Pierce Marsh has become a sanctuary for a variety of flora and fauna. The property consists of approximately 70% open water, 20% low salt marsh, and 10% high salt marsh. Pierce Marsh is the location of a 63 acre wetland restoration effort that was completed with the assistance of volunteers. This project was funded by the Natural Resource Damage Assessment from the 1990 Galveston Bay oil spill, Galveston Bay Estuary Program/Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Aerial photo of Pierce Marsh terraces constructed in 1999.

Two-thirds of the 1,361-acre tract was donated in December of 1987, by Clive Runnells and the Pierce Estate to The Nature Conservancy of Texas. In December of 1997, GBF purchased, through a gift from John Davisson, the remaining 1/3 interest in the 1,361 acre tract. In 1998, GBF acquired an additional 985 acres with funds received from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. This portion has been named the Lloyd and B.A. Bentsen Preserve at Pierce Marsh.

Flora and Fauna:

The Complex's marsh and shallow estuarine habitats serve as a nursery for young finfish and shellfish. Vegetation on the site is mainly composed of smooth cordgrass, marshhay cordgrass, saltwort, and other inter-tidal plant species. The area supports a large winterfowl population in the winter, as well as a variety of year-round bird species. Pierce Marsh is located near vital nesting islands and thus serves as an important feeding area during the nesting season. Wading birds and shorebirds utilize the mudflats and shallow marsh ponds located throughout the area. Wintering waterfowl include gadwell, northern pintail, lesser scaup, American wigeon, green-winged and blue-winged teal, and snow geese.



Pierce Marsh terrace covered in oyster shell.

Preserve Management:

The primary focus of the site's management program is habitat restoration and enhancement with the help of a growing volunteer program. The area has been affected by subsidence in the past, but now that subsidence rates have returned to normal levels, restoration efforts can be implemented. Earthwork is required to raise the elevations of the soil to heights that will support marsh vegetation. Restoration at Pierce Marsh in 1999 restored 63 acres of inter-tidal wetlands through the construction of terraces. In 2001, an additional 45 acres were restored through terracing, and four terraces were covered with oyster shell to provide nesting habitat for terns and gulls.

Potential Restoration Projects:

Restore Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
Increase the freshwater inflow into Basford Lake

For more information please contact the Galveston Bay Foundation at (281)332-3381 or visit us at www.galvbay.org.