



Pierce Marsh Restoration Project

Property History

The Galveston Bay Foundation will be successfully restoring a 25 acre estuarine complex at Pierce Marsh. Jointly owned by the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) and the Nature Conservancy, Pierce Marsh is a sanctuary for a variety of flora and fauna. It consists largely of open water, as well as low and high salt marsh habitat.

The preserve was first acquired through a private donation to the Nature Conservancy in 1987, when they were given 2/3 of the entire 1,361 acre tract. In 1997, GBF purchased the remaining 1/3 undivided interest in the 1,361 acre tract through a private gift. GBF acquired an additional 985 acres the following year with funds received from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act – that specific parcel is named the Lloyd and B.A. Bentsen Preserve at Pierce Marsh.

Habitat Value

Pierce Marsh provides valuable nursery habitat for finfish and shellfish. A variety of intertidal plant species including smooth cordgrass, marshhay cordgrass, and saltwort also support a large waterfowl population in winter and year round bird species. Wading and shore birds utilize mudflats and shallow marsh ponds located throughout the area. Located near vital nesting islands, Pierce Marsh is an important feeding area during nesting season.

Project Summary

Over time, accumulated impacts have caused the area to subside. Consequently, restoration activities require earthwork to raise elevations high enough to support plant species and create emergent marsh habitat. The Galveston Bay Foundation is poised to complete this project and re-establish habitat following impacts from a nearby highway construction project.

In total, GBF will construct more than 11,000 linear feet of terraces within the 25 acre design footprint. The terraces will be contoured to optimize water circulation and create a natural looking marsh. Following construction and a short settling period, GBF and volunteers will plant the newly created terraces with smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*).

Additionally, GBF has completed year one of a citizen-based habitat monitoring program. Six stations are currently located at Pierce Marsh, and new stations will be incorporated to monitor the success of the restored habitat resulting from this project.

Previous Restoration at Pierce Marsh

This project will dovetail a prior 63 acre wetland restoration effort within nearby Basford Lake completed with volunteer assistance. Again, this project was accomplished by constructing terraces in a checkerboard layout. This endeavor was funded by the National Resource Damage Assessment from the 1990 Galveston Bay Oil Spill, the Galveston Bay Estuary Program Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.