



## **PORTCORPUSCHRISTI**

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For More Information Contact:  
**PATRICIA CARDENAS**  
Marketing & Public Relations Manager  
Dir. Line: 361.885.6124  
Cell: 361.816.3621  
patricia@pocca.com

### **Port Corpus Christi Recognized for Environmental Stewardship**

**Corpus Christi, TX** - The Port of Corpus Christi (PCCA) has been recognized once again for its environmental stewardship. PCCA was honored on November 5, 2009 at the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation Coastal Bend Conservation and Environmental Stewardship Award Banquet in the business and industry category. The Port, the Texas General Land Office, and The U.S. Department of Interior Minerals Management Service were all recognized for the Pelican Island Project that was recently completed. This project, headed by Paul D. Carangelo, REM, PCCA Coastal Environmental Planner, involves the construction of a breakwater to provide erosion protection for approximately 1300 linear feet of the northeast portion of Pelican Island, the premier rookery in the Corpus Christi Bay area for a wide variety of colonial-nesting, fish-eating wading birds.

The eastern lobe and central isthmus portions of Pelican Island that will be protected by this project are extensively utilized by the colonial nesting bird species. Natural and man-induced erosion of 12.4 ft/yr is causing the rapid loss of prime rookery habitat for both ground- and tree-nesting colonial waterbird species. Hurricanes Dolly and Ike in 2008 caused massive erosion that accelerated the annualized erosion rate to 35 to 45 ft/yr. Construction of the revetment/breakwater will stop erosion of the shoreline protected by the structure. The critical issue is that what is eroded/eroding at Pelican Island is not just the habitat extensively used by ground nesting colonial waterbirds such as the brown pelican, but also brush and tree habitat, including mature

mesquites/hackberry/acacia that are intensively used by tree-nesting, colonial water birds. The tree nesting colonial water birds include, but not limited to, ibis, reddish egrets, great egrets snowy egrets, night herons, rosette spoonbills, great blue herons, little blue herons, Louisiana herons and cattle egrets. The rate of shoreline change and impact to ground nesting habitat is an important issue, but the loss of brush nesting habitats is significant as these habitats take decades to develop in arid south Texas. *“The port’s environmental stewardship support’s the sustainability efforts of our region.”* Said John LaRue, Executive Director.

Fledgling brown pelicans and other waterbird species using the shore area are impacted by both wind and ship waves and can be killed or lost. Without the proposed project, the central isthmus will likely be breached and extensive areas of submerged aquatic vegetation including shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*) and widgeon grass (*Ruppia sp*) and emergent wetland habitat (e.g. *Spartina alterniflora*, *Avicennia germinans*), upon which the rookery species are dependant, will also be severely damaged or lost. The project will provide long-term protection of the prime rookery and associated wetland/estuarine habitats, prevent erosion from breaching the central isthmus, and create the first phase of a large, protected shallow-water and shoreline area for use by fledgling, colonial waterbirds. It will also provide regional and coastwide economic and ecological benefits.