NFWF | Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

RECIPIENT
Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program

AMOUNT
*$3,120,000

PARTNERS
USFWS

Audubon Society of Texas

LOCATION
Nueces County, Texas

AWARD DATE
November 2014

STATUS
Active

PROGRESS UPDATE
After rebidding the project in April 2019, NFWF has provided additional funding needed to initiate construction of rookery islands in a manner that maximizes sustainable habitat.

The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), supports projects to remedy harm and eliminate or reduce the risk of harm to Gulf Coast natural resources affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. To learn more about NFWF, go to **www.nfwf.org.**

TEXAS

Nueces Bay Rookery Islands Restoration

This project will restore and protect around two acres of important colonial water bird nesting habitat on three rookery islands in Nueces Bay. Critical rookeries in Nueces Bay are less productive as a result of erosion, relative sea-level rise, mammalian predators, imported fire ants, coastal wetlands loss, and human disturbance of nesting sites. This investment will protect the existing islands from further erosion and place 5,130 cubic yards of new material to restore essential nesting habitat. This additional acreage of nesting grounds is projected to support hundreds of additional pairs of wading birds and ground-nesting birds each year.

Historically, rookery islands in Nueces Bay have supported nesting colonies of various species of colonial waterbirds such as Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets, Caspian Terns, and Black Skimmers. Since the 1960s, nearly 12 acres on 40 critical nesting islands in Nueces Bay have been lost to persistent erosion, hard shell dredging, and storm events. This investment would contribute to overall health of important bird species in Nueces Bay and the Texas Gulf Coast.

Restoration of these four rookery islands is critically important because they provide protection from predators for bird species and minimize human impact on nesting activities.