

Eagle Point Oyster Reef Restoration Phase I

Partners

USFWS
Texas Parks & Wildlife
Department

Galveston Bay
Foundation

Eagle Point Community
Residents

Southeast
Aquatic Resources
Partnership

National Fish Habitat
Action Plan

Location
Galveston Bay, TX

Watershed
Galveston Bay

For More Information:

Moni Belton

USFWS

moni_belton
@fws.gov

Introduction:

Oyster beds serve unique roles in estuaries, yet they are highly susceptible to over-harvesting, diseases and pollution. In addition to having both recreational and commercial value, oyster beds provide ecological benefits such as filtration and habitat for numerous species of invertebrates, fish, and plants. The enlargement of the Houston Ship Channel altered the bay's salinity regime, presenting an opportunity to extend the area of oyster reefs but the potential for poachers presented a challenge for long-term success. Because oyster harvest within 200 feet of residential piers is forbidden by Texas law, the reefs will be protected so that they can provide larvae for oyster reefs throughout the bay and help maintain clean water for the many species in the ecosystem.

Description of Site:

Approximately 2.5 acres of oyster reef habitat near Eagle Point on the north shore of Galveston Bay.

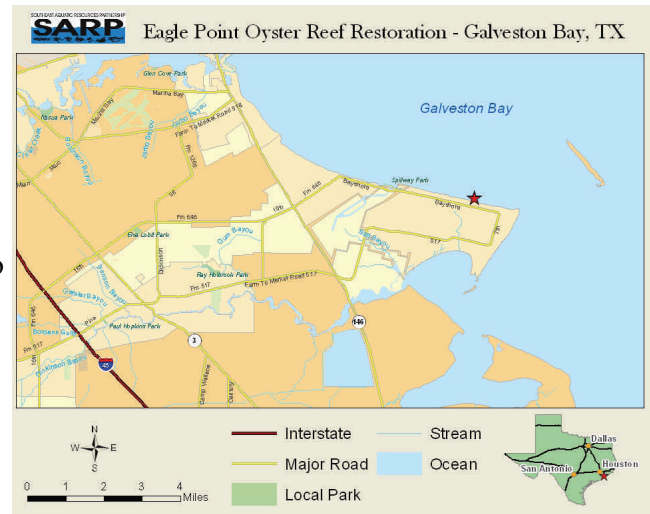
Problem:

- Overharvesting, disease and pollution reduced oyster populations in the area. Hurricane Ike further reduced the population of *Crassostrea virginica* (Eastern Oyster)
- Insufficient substrate for spawning and recruitment limited population growth.

Strategy:

- Create an oyster reef footprint of hard substrate using oyster shell, crushed limestone, and/or concrete rubble near privately owned piers.
- Hang plastic mesh bags of oyster shells from piers to collect oyster larvae (spat). Once colonized, deposit on the substrate for growth.
- Involve landowners in reef planning and spat collection to encourage positive conservation attitudes.
- Encourage local monitoring and responsible recreational fishing.

Construction was completed in September, 2009, and during the first monitoring period two weeks later, spat had started recruiting. Residents reported increase in abundance of recreational fish species.



Residents make shell bags to recruit oyster larvae. .



Volunteers put out shell bags to attract spat for the new reef habitat.