



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
GEORGE P. BUSH, COMMISSIONER

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PRESS RELEASE

**GLO Completes Berm Restoration at McFaddin
National Wildlife Refuge in Jefferson County**

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AUSTIN — AUSTIN - Today Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush announced the Texas General Land Office (GLO) completed a dune structure along the shoreline of the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Jefferson County. The successful project was a collaboration between Jefferson County, the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge, the Texas General Land Office, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. The new dune stretches approximately 14 miles from the eastern end of the Refuge near Sabine Pass to the western end near High Island and will help to slow shoreline retreat, reduce saltwater inundation to sensitive interior wetlands and habitat, facilitate restoration of the beach, and replace the natural barrier between residents and destructive storm surge.

"Completion of this berm is a milestone in defending Texas' largest coastal wetland," said Commissioner George P. Bush. "Having a healthy marsh is critical to storm surge protection for thousands of Jefferson County homes and business as well as nationally significant energy and national security assets in Port Arthur and Beaumont and the Big Hill Strategic Petroleum Reserve."

In 2008, Hurricane Ike's high winds, heavy rains and storm surge besieged the Refuge, overtaking a large section of shoreline and removing much of the natural dune structure that served as a barrier to saltwater inundation. The inundation caused the loss of much freshwater wetland and the destruction of miles of natural habitat within the McFaddin Refuge. It also removed a substantial portion of this natural barrier to storm surge, posing a danger to county residents further inland in future events. The berm will assist in protecting and restoring sensitive interior wetlands and natural habitat for wildlife and birds that are an important part of our state heritage and replace a vital form of defense against storm surge in the area. Additionally, the world class waterfowling and birding tourism sectors here are anchored by a healthy resilient marsh.

"The McFaddin NWR berm project will reduce the frequency and the extent of sea water inundation into the interior marshes, in all but the most extreme cases, for decades to come" said Denise M. Ruffino, Ph.D., Refuge Manager with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Meeting the habitat needs of McFaddin NWR's diversity of wetland dependent resident and migratory birds requires maintaining a range of coastal marsh habitat types

and sequential stages of the plant community within these marsh types, all of which can be achieved by restriction of saltwater intrusion. Paramount to the protection of the McFaddin NWR wetlands, the beach berm will help conserve one of the largest remaining freshwater marshes on the Texas Coast, along with thousands of acres of intermediate to brackish marsh, all of which serves as important feeding and resting habitat for migrating and wintering populations of waterfowl."

Funding came from the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, the Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act program, and the Community Development and Revitalization's program for Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery. This project serves a total of 239,912 persons, of which 102,478 (43%) are low-to-moderate income.

"This outcome is heartening to the state and federal agencies, county representatives and Ducks Unlimited who spent several years drafting the Salt Bayou Watershed Restoration Plan," said Jefferson County Judge Jeff R. Branick. "Jefferson County Commissioners Court is very appreciative of GLO Commissioner George P. Bush's leadership and follow through on a project of this magnitude."

About GLO Community Development & Revitalization

The Community Development & Revitalization program of the Texas General Land Office administers Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Texas was allocated \$3.1 billion for hurricanes Ike and Dolly and \$36.3 million as a result of the 2011 wildfires. For more information on the Community Development & Revitalization program, please visit TexasRebuilds.org.

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