



**Community Workshop Case Study Summary  
Port Aransas, Texas - January 19, 2006  
University of Texas Marine Science Institute**

**SOUTH TEXAS CASE STUDIES PANEL DISCUSSION SUMMARY: Conservation, Habitat restoration, Inflow issues, Water Quality**

A panel of regional environmental experts led a discussion of diverse issues affecting the Gulf of Mexico and its coastlines, including conservation, habitat restoration, inflow, and water quality.

Raphael Calderon of the Nature Conservancy reviewed the various coastal habitat types and gave details about the importance of each environment. Mr. Calderon explained the value of conservation of these habitats in maintaining both the environmental and economic viability of the region.

Dr. Ken Dunton of the University of Texas Marine Science Institute spoke about a variety of coastal habitats, with particular emphasis on the importance of wetlands, salt marshes and seagrass beds to local communities. Dr. Dunton described a variety of functions of these areas, including the ability of wetland and marsh habitats to absorb the wave energy of storm surges, which is particularly important in attenuating the impacts of hurricanes. Also addressed was the problem of prop-scarring of seagrass beds, which provide a critical habitat to a variety of important recreational and commercial fish species. Restoration of these important resources was stressed.

Mr. Ron Massey, representing the City of Corpus Christi, made a presentation on the city's role in supplying and regulating freshwater inflow to local bays and estuaries, as well as funding and implementing restoration projects in these areas. Mr. Massey outlined the process by which the city determines the quantity and timing of freshwater releases, most notably in Nueces Bay. Remediation projects, such as a cut that restored freshwater input into Rincon Bayou, was also discussed, as well as future city inflow restoration projects.

Ms. Sandra Alvarado of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) presented an informative talk on the commission's water quality initiatives. Determination of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) that is allowable for any given body of water was explained, as well as different monitoring programs. Ms. Alvarado also answered questions regarding bacteria, as well as other water-quality related issues (particularly those in Oso Bay).