



NEWS

GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER TRUST
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Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust lands \$213,000 in grants from National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and ConocoPhillips for Wetland Habitat Restoration at Whitmire Unit of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEGUIN, TX – The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ConocoPhillips awarded the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust (Trust) grants totaling \$213,000 in support of the Wetland Habitat Restoration at the Myrtle Foester-Whitmire Unit of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Trust officials announced it received \$106,500 from each of the organizations today.

“We are thrilled with this expression of confidence by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ConocoPhillips,” said Todd Votteler, executive director of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust. “We hope to start work to that will provide water to the wetlands of the Whitmire Unit this summer. Matching funds, in-kind services, and other support has been provided by Alcoa, TetraTech, Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuges, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Formosa, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust.”

“The grant monies from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ConocoPhillips comprise the final elements needed to allow us complete the new canal,” said Bill West, Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) general manager.

“Through our partnership with ConocoPhillips, we are excited to support this restoration project being undertaken by GBRA, the Trust and the Refuge. These are the partnerships of the future: major corporations, non-profit organizations, and government agencies working hand in hand to protect and restore the resources that enhance the quality of our lives and benefit nature at the same time,” said Peter Stangel, director of the NFWF Eastern Partnership Office.

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The Myrtle Foester-Whitmire Unit is located in Calhoun County near the end of the GBRA's canal system near the historic site of the port of Indianola, which was destroyed by hurricanes in 1875 and 1886. The Bolling Canal, built in the early 1950s, provides water to the Whitmire Unit, including approximately 750 acres of impoundments that require flooding at critical times for wintering and breeding waterfowl dependent on this wetland habitat. The project will provide an efficient and reliable delivery system of water necessary for high quality habitat to help sustain wintering waterfowl populations.

The Whitmire Unit has been identified as one of the most important wetland habitats on the Texas Coast. Nearly every waterfowl species using the Central Flyway benefits from this high value wintering habitat. Threatened and endangered species found on the Whitmire Unit include, whooping crane, peregrine falcon, piping plover, wood stork, and the brown pelican. Other birds of management concern that use the Whitmire Unit include the reddish egret, roseate spoonbill, and osprey. Important marsh and water bird species also found there are herons, egrets, sandhill cranes, curlews, shorebirds, terns, rails and gallinules.

One of the most important waterfowl areas in North America, the Whitmire Unit is the Gulf Coast terminus of the Central Flyway and Mississippi Flyways, and therefore provides both wintering and migration habitat for significant numbers of the continental duck and goose populations. The project increases the value of the Whitmire Unit during droughts, such as the one currently occurring in the region, by providing a supplemental source of water when other natural wetlands are affected by reduced rainfall.

With completion of the new canal system, the Whitmire Unit will be able to deliver water in an efficient, cost effective and reliable manner. This will allow the Refuge to enhance and restore existing wetlands, as well as the creation of new ones. Having the ability to provide freshwater to selected impoundments at critical times will increase feeding, nesting, resting and breeding sites for federally listed species along with other species of management concern and common waterfowl species.

The grants specifically will enable the construction of a 2.25 mile canal with water delivery structures including two double check structures, two double canal siphons, and two ditch crossings. In addition, educational outreach efforts like Project Web-Foot from Ducks Unlimited will be offered to elementary students in Calhoun County ISD.

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These classroom materials, workshops for teachers and field trips are designed to help expand knowledge of migratory waterfowl and their dependence on instream flows. The curriculum will increase awareness of natural resources and impacts on the environment and habitat.

The Trust and its lead partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the GBRA, will contract for the building and restoration of the Goggans Canal. Water control structures will be installed at strategic locations to provide maximum water supply to freshwater impoundments within the Whitmire Unit.

The Trust is a charitable, non-profit 501(c)3 organization that was developed to conserve the land and water of the Guadalupe River watershed for its natural, recreational, scenic, historic and productive value. The mission of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Trust is to promote and encourage the conservation, stewardship and enjoyment of the land and water resources of the Guadalupe River watershed, while maintaining its unique and irreplaceable natural heritage.

The GBRA was established by the Texas Legislature in 1933 as a water conservation and reclamation district. GBRA provides stewardship for the water resources in its 10-county statutory district, which begins near the headwaters of the Guadalupe and Blanco rivers, ends at San Antonio Bay, and includes Kendall, Comal, Hays, Caldwell, Guadalupe, Gonzales, DeWitt, Victoria, Calhoun and Refugio counties. The Mission of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority is to protect, conserve, reclaim and steward the resources of the 10-county district in order to ensure and promote quality of life for those we serve.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The USFWS manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations.

ConocoPhillips is an international, integrated energy company. It is the third-largest integrated energy company in the United States, based on market capitalization, oil and gas

proved reserves and production; and the second-largest refiner in the United States. Worldwide, of nongovernment-controlled companies, ConocoPhillips has the fifth-largest total of proved reserves; and based on crude oil capacity, is the fourth-largest refiner.

A nonprofit established by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation sustains, restores and enhances the Nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Through leadership conservation investments with public and private partners, NFWF is dedicated to achieving maximum conservation impact by developing and applying best practices and innovative methods for measurable outcomes. Since its establishment, NFWF has awarded more than 8,000 grants to nearly 3,000 organizations in the United States and abroad and leveraged – with its partners – more than \$340 million in federal funds, for a total of more than \$1 billion in conservation. For more information, visit www.nfwf.org.

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