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CBBEP Awarded \$10,000 Grant from Rotary Club of Corpus Christi at annual Harvey Weil Sportsman Dinner

SINTON, TX - Like an annual migration, conservationist and stewards convene at the Welder Wildlife every April for the Harvey Weil Sportsman Dinner. This event is a treasure to the conservation community of south Texas as one of the few moments where folks from the many groups working in the Coastal Bend are able to come together under the large oaks and Spanish moss for an evening of celebration.



Since 1998, the Rotary Club of Corpus Christi Harvey Weil Sportsman Conservationist Award Dinner honors the life and achievements of Harvey Weil, a longtime South Texas sportsman, attorney, conservationist and Rotarian who dedicated his life to the preservation of nature and sportsmanship. Each year the earnings from the Award fund are distributed to organizations whose goals are the conservation of marine and wildlife resources. A committee of Rotarians and nationally known conservationists select as recipients those entities or projects which the committee determines will promote conservation in either or both of these important fields. Over the past 25 years, almost \$1,100,000 in grant funds have been awarded.



At this year's dinner, CBBEP was awarded a \$10,000 grant for the installation of a Rain Garden at the Sarita Elementary School. Given the growing concerns surrounding water quality and availability, this project will not only improve the water quality on campus, but also offer an opportunity to educate students about their place in the watershed and the key functions of vegetation. Sarita Elementary School is located in the Baffin Bay watershed, which is considered the jewel of the Texas coast because of its historic speckled trout and redfish opportunities. However, high bacterial loads and excess nutrients have impaired the watershed, threatening the health of the people and organisms which rely on Baffin Bay.

Researchers have identified urban runoff from impervious surface as a contributor to water quality decline, and rain gardens are known to be a cost-effective way to reduce the amount of pollutants entering the bays and estuaries downstream. For this project we will work with local entities to install the rain garden on the school campus and provide learning opportunities about stormwater management through community education and outreach. The rain garden will also serve as a valuable teaching tool for Sarita Elementary teachers, allowing for hands on, TEKS-aligned learning opportunities for students. This project is set to break ground in the fall of 2024.

The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring bays and estuaries in the 12-county region of Texas Coastal Bend. CBBEP is partially funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For more information about the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, contact Quinn Hendrick, 361-336-0305 or qhendrick@cbbep.org.

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