



Agenda Item: Presentation of Partnership Efforts at R.A. Apffel Park and Big Reef

Background: The Park Board continues to curate and develop partnerships with various organizations to benefit our parks, guest experiences, and local communities.

R.A. Apffel park staff works especially close with the non-profit, American Bird Conservancy, who works to protect and monitor bird nesting activity that occurs within the Big Reef and Apffel Park boundaries on an annual basis. American Bird Conservancy began monitoring designated areas in 2014 and the efforts and partnership continue to flourish.

On the east side of Apffel Park, there is a bollard line that separates the parking lot from the area that is utilized by nesting birds. Welded wire fencing is installed on this bollard line to decrease foot and animal traffic from crossing into the area during nesting season, while also catching litter that may otherwise blow into the area depending on wind direction.

In 2020, numerous tidal flooding events heavily damaged the fence, wiping out large portions. In 2021, American Bird Conservancy graciously donated 2,000 linear feet of welded wire fence to replace the old damaged and missing sections. Park staff installed the donated fence in March, before nesting season commenced later that month.

In addition to the fence donation, American Bird Conservancy coordinated a nesting area clean-up in which 15 volunteers from other partner organizations, such as SPLASh (Stopping Plastics and Litter Along Shorelines) and Texas Master Naturalists – Galveston Bay Area Chapter, worked to ensure the nesting area was pristine for the birds that utilize the area. We hope to make this pre-nesting season cleanup an annual occurrence.

Lastly, American Bird Conservancy and Houston Audubon have installed temporary fencing around the perimeter of the nesting area, on an annual basis, to keep traffic out of the nesting area. The fence is erected in late March at the beginning of nesting season and is removed after nesting season ends on August 1st. Temporary signage is also placed along the fence, educating the public on why the area is closed.

It is worth noting that the area monitored by American Bird Conservancy is also permitted as a dredge material placement site for beach nourishment projects. The Park Board and American Bird Conservancy recognize the necessity of utilizing that area for the mentioned purpose. While this act may conflict with immediate nesting and reproductive efforts, the long-term effects would benefit the birds as large open sand flats are desired.

In conclusion, the partnership between American Bird Conservancy and the Park Board continues to evolve and carries great value.

Staff Recommendation: N/A

Funding Source (if applicable): N/A