



NFWF

Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

RECIPIENT

The Nature Conservancy

AWARD AMOUNT

\$8,079,000*

PARTNERS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

LOCATION

South Padre Island, Cameron County, Texas

AWARD DATE

November 2018

STATUS

Awarded

*Project was amended in February 2019 to add \$3,079,000 to fund acquisition of the entire property.

The Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), supports projects to remedy harm and eliminate or reduce the risk of harm to Gulf Coast natural resources affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. To learn more about NFWF, go to www.nfwf.org.

TEXAS

South Padre Island Land Acquisitions – Phase II

This project will conserve 3,200 acres of pristine barrier island and sea turtle nesting habitat on South Padre Island. The acquisition continues the strategic acquisition and transfer of tracts to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The proposed tract has frontage on both the Gulf of Mexico and the Laguna Madre and includes a variety of coastal habitats such as beaches, dunes, bays, tidal mudflats, and marshes. These habitats support threatened and endangered wildlife species injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill including the Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle, Piping Plovers, Wilson’s Plover, Snowy Plovers, and Red Knots. Additionally, protection of the proposed tract will conserve critical sea turtle nesting habitat. The total acreage for this project will be acquired for conservation in early 2019 with a supplemental allocation of approved funding from the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund.

Protection of Padre Island has been a conservation priority for the USFWS and Texas for decades. In 2000, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased 24,532 acres on the Island to create the South Padre Island Unit of the Laguna Atascosa NWR. In 2017, TNC was awarded NRDA funds to support the acquisition of 1,400 acres on South Padre Island for inclusion in the Laguna Atascosa NWR. This project will leverage the previously awarded NRDA funds by completing the acquisition of the 4,600 acre tract, securing the largest ‘gap’ in unprotected land on South Padre Island. It also enhances conservation benefits of a 2017 GEBF award that protected 1,682 acres of similar habitat. Together these projects will allow USFWS staff to better control vehicle and other public use, especially in sensitive dune and sea turtle nesting areas.



Credit | NPS



Above, a Kemp’s Ridley hatchling moves towards the ocean on Padre Island. At 113 miles, Padre Island is the longest barrier island in the world and supports numerous wildlife species that have federal or state conservation status.