

4. The New and Different Matagorda Bay Foundation

The Matagorda Bay Foundation (MBF) has been in existence for over twenty years. Over that time, the primary focus has been litigation and administrative law hearings trying to ensure freshwater inflows to Matagorda Bay. The time has come to broaden the focus and actions of the Matagorda Bay Foundation, a decision by the board made easy by the potential availability of Bill Balboa of Palacios to join us as executive director. Bill knows Matagorda Bay and the people living, working and playing on the bay. Simply stated, the right person at the right time has appeared, and we at MBF are quite happy with the prospects for the future.

The vision that is being pursued by MBF is one of a full-service advocacy group for Matagorda Bay – a group that restores marshes and oyster reefs, a group that works to enhance research into the bay, a group that works to educate the children and adults about the benefits of Matagorda Bay - a group that is willing to stand up and fight for the bay when and if it is necessary. However, the intent is to focus upon building physical infrastructure in the bay – reefs and marshes – as well as building relationships inland. That will include all parties who are willing to join with us to realize the potential of this great bay system, the most underappreciated on the Texas coast and one of the most valuable.

There are many actions that are coming together. The Comptroller of the State of Texas, Glen Hegar, has hired Robert Gulley to oversee the endangered species program that the Comptroller's office has overseen in Texas since Susan Combs was in office. Robert

Gulley has met with us at Matagorda Bay Foundation along with his Deputy Meghan Hope, and they have determined that studying Matagorda Bay is an excellent focus for their office in trying to understand landscape-scale issues in protecting endangered species and keeping rare species from becoming endangered. To date, their office has issued a request for proposals to study the impacts of flooding and sea rise on the habitats of the at-risk species and to contribute to knowledge of the state of Matagorda Bay. In going forward with this work, Matagorda Bay Foundation will work with the Comptroller's office to hold stakeholder meetings and other forms of public outreach to discuss the research and learn the stakeholders' concerns about protecting Matagorda Bay.



Figure 4. An endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle – one of the species being studied by the Comptroller's office - laying eggs on the Texas coast. Photo from National Park Service.

Additionally, Matagorda Bay Foundation is adding members to its board of directors. To date, three new directors have been added to the board – Fred Beck of Palacios and Austin, Clive Runnells IV from Austin and Matagorda County and Mark Rose of Bastrop County. Each of these individuals brings talent, knowledge and enthusiasm to join with Henry Hamman of Houston, Al Garrison of Matagorda and me on the board of MBF. We intend to reach out to people throughout the bay community, particularly when Bill joins with us full time. Bill is committed to restoring oyster reefs and marshlands and has a list of projects that will require several years and millions of dollars to build. If you are interested in joining with us in this effort, please email me at jbb@blackburncarter.com, and we will find a way to get you involved and keep you informed going forward.