



# OCEAN TRUST NEWS

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## **Ocean Trust Receives Two National Conservation Awards** *Leadership Role in Largest US Coastal Wetlands Restoration Project Cited*

Brownsville, Texas June 22, 2007. The US Fish & Wildlife Service and Coastal America honored Ocean Trust, a national conservation foundation, for its leadership in building one of the largest public private partnerships to restore a 10,000 acre Gulf of Mexico estuary at a dedication of internal channels within the Bahia Grande. The South Texas estuary will provide important nursery and juvenile habitat to a variety of fish and shellfish species as well as migratory waterfowl like the redhead duck that depend on this region as its primary over wintering habitat.

This project is considered one of the largest and most successful coastal wetland restoration projects in the United States, said John Wallace, Refuge Manger of the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. This project will be recognized in the Presidential Wetlands Report, which is a real honor for us, continued Wallace. There are usually only two projects a year that get that kind of recognition so we know we re doing something very important.

Ocean Trust received the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service s 2006 National Wildlife Conservation Award for its leadership in restoring the Bahia Grande wetlands. Their commitment and leadership have helped put 10,000 acres back into fish and wildlife habitat, said Chris Pease, Chef of Refuges for USFWS Region 2 as he presented Ocean Trust with the award.



Thor Lassen, president of Ocean Trust led a partnership of over 65 national and local public and private organizations in restoring the internal channel system within Bahia Grande, all of whom were part of the Bahia Grand partnership and honored with a Coastal America Award.

Thor Lassen is responsible for bringing this whole group together, said Tim Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans & Atmosphere prior to the presentation of the Coastal America Award. He brought the money in, knew how to organize it, and got everyone working together, so my congratulations to him for being the big rainmaker for this project.



The restoration project raised \$1 million of private and public funds to bring tidal water back into Bahia Grande transforming a dust bowl into a shallow water basin. Ocean Trust also helped put funding proposals together for another \$2.7 million to restore the estuarine functions of the South Texas Bahia Grande coastal ecosystem. The Bahia Grande partnership and Ocean Trust also received the 2005 Cooperative Conservation Award from the Department of Interior.

*Ocean Trust & building science, conservation and industry partnerships for the sustainability of the oceans.*

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