



Eddie Treviño, Jr.
County Judge

For Immediate Release

October 23, 2020

Contact: Eddie Treviño, Jr.

Cameron County Judge

CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN ON THE SOUTH TEXAS ECOTOURISM CENTER

Cameron County is pleased to announce the construction of the new South Texas Ecotourism Center located at 501 W. State Highway 100, in Laguna Vista, Texas 78578. The groundbreaking ceremony held Thursday, October 22, 2020, was limited to community leaders and key stakeholders who formally gave a kick-off for the construction of this project. The South Texas Ecotourism Center is situated on a tract of land adjacent to the Bahia Grande Complex and is in partnership with the Town of Laguna Vista who dedicated approximately 10 acres for the development of this project. The land was originally owned and donated to the Town of Laguna Vista by Mary and Frank Yturria.

The South Texas Ecotourism Center will have an outdoor and indoor component. The outdoor components include: nature trails, interpretive play amenities, picnic areas, benches, environmental education amphitheater, interpretive signage, birdwatch overlooks, photo blinds, butterfly gardens, native habitat, green open spaces, a rain harvesting system, and the creation of wetlands. The indoor components include: a visitor center/nature center, indoor classroom, multipurpose room, exhibit space, meeting space, and indoor recreational and educational programs. The building concept has been planned for energy and water efficiency.

Cameron County Judge Eddie Treviño Jr. stated, "The South Texas Eco-Tourism Center will act as an information hub to direct visitors to the myriad of other outstanding nature destinations in the Valley, including county parks, state parks, federal wildlife refuge parks, and others. Additionally, it will provide environmental educational opportunities and protect ten acres of coastal prairie habitat that borders the Bahia Grande Unit of the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. We look forward to partnering in the future with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to expand access to the Bahia Grande area."

Cameron County Commissioner Pct.3 David A. Garza stated, "I have been honored to spearhead efforts to develop the South Texas Eco-Tourism Center, to be developed in Cameron County. This project has been a cooperative effort with the Town of Laguna Vista that will promote and partner with ecotourism and environmental education sites throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Visitors will not only obtain information on other destinations, they will find discovery

Construction to begin on the South Texas Ecotourism Center
Page 2
October 23, 2020

opportunities and a unique look at the ecology and wildlife of coastal Cameron County. They will see conservation in practice, immerse themselves in native habitat, and will be treated to a vista of the Bahia Grande unlike any other. We are not only working to create a nature facility, we are working to create an experience.”

Town of Laguna Vista Mayor Susie Houston stated, “The South Texas Ecotourism Center has been in the works as a partnership between Cameron County and the Town of Laguna Vista for several years. Many hours of planning between Cameron County, Commissioner David Garza, representatives from Laguna Vista, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife has gone into this venue. The STEC will be a gateway to the Laguna Madre area, inviting locals and visitors to discover the myriad of flora and fauna indicative to our area. As Mayor of Laguna Vista, it is a privilege to welcome schools, students, families, visitors, everyone to the South Texas Ecotourism Center. “

The funding for this facility was made possible through the County Hotel-Motel Venue Tax and Motor Vehicle Rental Tax (\$7,962,557.00) and from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department awarding two grants from the Local Park Grant Programs totaling \$1.2 million Dollars (Non-Urban Outdoor \$500,000 and Non-Urban Indoor \$750,000). The total project amount is approximately \$9.1 million dollars.

Weather permitting, the construction of the South Texas Ecotourism Center should be complete by summer of 2021.

The Architectural Firm working on this project is Megamorphosis, the Educational Signs Designer is Scott Clarke Designs and the General Contractor selected for the construction is Noble Texas Builders.

###