On January 29, 1747, Captain Joaquín de Orobió y Basterra and about 50 soldiers explored the Gulf Coast spanning from the San Antonio River to Tampico. He landed on Mustang Island and trekked overland to a bay that he named San Miguel Arcangel (Corpus Christi Bay). Orobió y Basterra explored the Cayo del Oso (Watershed of the Bear) and called Oso Creek La Purísima Concepción (the Immaculate Conception). Oso Bay and Oso Creek were prized by the Karankawa tribe who depended on the watershed for their survival. Today Oso Creek, offers a glimpse of South Texas scrub birding with species such as Groove-billed Ani, Long-billed Thrasher, Curve-billed Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, and Olive Sparrow relatively easy to see here. One can also find waterbirds, including Least Grebe and the Couch’s Kingbird in the trees that border the creek.
A riparian area is the part of the landscape that borders a creek or river. When a riparian area is healthy and functioning properly it filters and slows run-off and floodwaters, and allows for sediment trapping and groundwater infiltration. Healthy functional riparian areas have been shown to improve water quality by removing nutrients, improving dissolved oxygen, storing sediments, regulating temperatures, and buffering flood energies. They have been shown effective in reducing pathogens such as coliform and cryptosporidium. Since 2002, water quality testing has found that concentrations of bacteria are elevated in Oso Creek.

On August 31, 2016 the Nueces River Authority submitted a report of the riparian evaluation for the Oso Creek watershed they conducted. The report can be found in its entirety at: http://ccs.tamucc.edu/wp-content/uploads/Oso-Riparian-Evaluation-Report-9-29-16.pdf. The following summary was provided in the riparian evaluation report:

One of the most cost effective ways to protect and improve water quality is to protect and improve riparian function along creeks and drains. Riparian function along the Oso Creek and its tributaries varies greatly. Some areas of high function were identified, mostly along the upper reaches of the main creek, but also in isolated spots along some of the creek’s tributaries. The majority of stream miles and potential riparian acres are marginal (at-risk) or non-functional. Riparian areas generally recover their function when the activity that is hindering that recovery is halted.

Hindrances to riparian recovery identified along Oso Creek and its tributaries include:

• farming or mowing too close to the creek bank
• artificial manipulation of banks, channels, or stream sediment
• physical alteration of floodplain
• manicured or altered residential or park landscapes next to the creek
• excessive vehicle traffic in creek area

Based on the mapped potential riparian buffer, 300 feet wide on each side of Oso Creek and 150 feet wide on each side of the primary and classified tributaries, the total potential riparian area within Oso Creek watershed is estimated to include about 3,269 acres. The existing high functioning riparian areas could amount to about 15% - 20% of this acreage. This would indicate that 75%-80%, or roughly about 2,500 acres, hold opportunity for enhanced riparian function. Many storm water ditches exist within both the rural and urban portions of the watershed and some of these also hold opportunity for enhanced function for water quality benefit.
Oso Creek: Septic System Evaluation Planning Meeting

Meeting information:
WHEN: February 16 & 17, 2017 from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM
WHERE: South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center
8545 S. Staples St. Corpus Christi, TX 78413

The Problem
Since 2002, water quality testing has found that concentrations of bacteria are elevated in Oso Creek, which may pose a risk to people who swim or wade in it. In 2013, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality began to develop a project called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in conjunction with area stakeholders. Studies are underway to gather information on potential bacterial sources.

Septic System Survey
This survey will target a group of 400 plus homes in this Oso Creek watershed, north and south of Staples Road, (see map below) and evaluate the operational status of their system. Door-to-door surveys provide a means to share project information and identify systems that may need further inspection.

Why Should Homeowners Attend?
Participants will gain a better understanding of the practices required to keep their system working. An additional incentive for participating is that your septic system may be eligible for a free evaluation that could include pumping of your septic tank**.

For more information, contact:
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Oso Creek from Weber St. Bridge

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin. This work is made possible by funding through the Clean Water Act Section 319(h) dollars provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).
*Initial evaluation limited to visual observation of the system, verifying the system type and location, as well as the presence of odors or surface effluent without opening or uncovering the system.

**Up to twenty OSSFs may be selected for septage removal and inspection. Inspection candidates selected according to systems age, potential operational issues, maintenance frequency, proximity to surface water, and other criteria approved by TCEQ project administrators.

Map of Neighborhoods Identified for OSSF Survey and Evaluation in Corpus Christi, Texas

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Ecological sites are used to stratify the landscape and organize ecological information for the purpose of monitoring, assessment, and management. Ecological Sites are the basic unit of land classification for rangelands. They describe vegetation, ecological potential, and ecosystem dynamics of land areas.

Knowing what type of ecological sites are on your property can allow you to make better decisions about the potentials and limitations of forage production for your piece of land, thus reducing excessive grazing and degradation of rangeland conditions.

One of the ways landowners can learn about the ecological sites on their property and the soil types connected to them is by using Web Soil Survey (WSS). The WSS is a web application that provides landowners, producers, agencies, technical service providers, and others electronic access to relevant soil and related information needed to make wise land use and management decisions. It can be accessed at: https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx

To use you simple zoom in to a map of your location and identify the property boundaries (or area of interest). From there you can click on the Ecological Site Assessment tab and view the various ecological sites on that particular tract. It will describe potential annual forage production in poor, fair, and good years. It provides a Plant Growth Curve that shows how this annual forage production is distributed through the year. And finally it will describe the plant species composition for the area.

All this information can be used to evaluate and adjust grazing management practices. It can also be used to determine if the sight is starting to become degraded due to overgrazing. Another excellent use of this information is to help with reclamation projects such as reseeding on severely degraded sites or along newly constructed right-of-ways, other disturbed areas.

Through enhanced education regarding riparian protection and proper vegetation management on grazing lands, we can further reduce the level of bacterial contamination in the streams and rivers.
Oso Implementation Plan
Coordination Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 23, 2017
5:30 PM Refreshments - 6 PM Meeting
S. Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center
8545 S Staples St, Corpus Christi, Texas 78413

You are invited to the Oso Bay and Oso Creek Implementation Plan Coordination Committee meeting, a community-led stakeholder group working to restore water quality in Oso Bay and Oso Creek to recreational use standards.

More information can be found at http://ccs.tamucc.edu/tmdf-implementation-plans/oso-tmdf-outreach-project/oso/. Look for us on FACEBOOK at Center for Coastal Studies OR Oso Bay & Oso Creek Watershed to keep up with news.

Growing a Healthy Community
Thank you for your support and participation!

Coastal Issues Forum
Monday, February 13th

Join us as we welcome speakers Ray Allen the Executive Director of Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program, Rocky Freund the Deputy Executive Director for the Nueces River Authority and a representative from the City of Corpus Christi Environmental and Strategic Initiatives for an in depth look at the Nueces River System, including the history of the reservoirs, benefits of freshwater inflows, and available scientific research, as well as a detailed look at the Pass-Thru Requirements of the Agreed Order.

We will be meeting on February 13th at 5:30 p.m. at the Del Mar Center for Economic Development Center-ROOM 106. Come on out for a great evening discussion!
URBAN TIPS — CONSIDER SOIL TESTING FOR SPRING

FREE SOIL TEST

January 1, 2017-February 17, 2017
Turf, Vegetable Gardens & Landscapes
Sponsored by
City of Corpus Christi Storm Water
&
Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Nueces County

Pick up your soil testing kit at:

Gill Landscape Nursery
2810 Airline Road
Corpus Christi, TX 78414

Turners Gardenland
6503 South Padre Island Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Bay Area Landscape Nursery
5902 S. Staples Street
Corpus Christi, TX 78413

***Follow the instructions provided with the kit***

Drop off the form and soil sample bag at:

Corpus Christi Water Utilities Building
2726 Holly Road, Corpus Christi

Texas AgriLife Extension Service
710 E. Main Ave. Suite 1, Robstown

Results will be distributed by the Nueces County Extension Service.
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED PLEASE CONTACT:

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