

# State offers venue for campers, RVers, anglers

**I**t's one of the best bargains anywhere on the Texas coast.

Mustang Island State Park, one of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) catalog of parks, is 13 miles south of Port Aransas on State Hwy. 361. It's nearly 4,000 acres of land, including five miles of natural beach frontage on the Gulf of Mexico and wetlands and a bulkheaded channel on the Corpus Christi Bay side of Mustang Island.

It also includes 48 trailer spaces for visitors, with plans - not yet funded - to more than double that number of spaces. But even of those spaces are all filled, campers are welcome on the beach. Just be aware that the beach camping area includes no fresh water, electricity or sewage provisions.

That beach, by the way, is one of the natural stretches of beach along the Gulf, aside from the Padre Island National Seashore. While the cities of Port Aransas and Corpus Christi



Children play near the shore at Mustang Island State Park.

clear their beaches of debris, only the part of Mustang Island

State Park directly in front of the bath house is cleared. While seaweed does accumulate on the park beaches during the spring, it gives visitors a chance to experience a totally un-manicured beach area.

Facilities near the park headquarters include campsites with water, electricity; shade shelters; and restrooms with showers. Facilities at the north end of the developed area (day-use only) include parking, portable toilets and rinsing showers. Facilities south of the main swimming area include open-beach; primitive campsites (undesignated); widely spaced convenience stations with portable toilets, rinsing showers and bulk water supply. The first-come, first-

served area accommodates about 300 camping units.

The 5-mile open beach allows hiking and mountain biking. Call the park at (361) 749-5246 ahead of time concerning beach conditions (high tides, etc.), which would determine if camping is allowed.

A State Park store lies in the headquarters building.

The park, which opened in 1979, includes the Fish Pass, dredged during the 1970s with jetties as an aid to water circulation between the Gulf of Mexico and Corpus Christi Bay. The has later silted in and has not been open since. The jetties remain, a prime fishing spot.

Starting with the influx of Winter Texans in December, the park is virtually full through the summer. The park's busiest time is December-March, and again from May through September, when school is out.

Entrance fee for day activities at the park is \$4 per person 13 years and older. Overnight camping in one of the trailer spaces with water and electricity is \$16 a night. A Texas State Parks pass (\$60 for a calendar year) allows unlimited use of all state parks.

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