

Free guided, unguided tours available

Tour island wetlands at education center

The Wetlands Education Center helps visitors understand what makes Mustang Island's ecology tick.

The center is a man-made salt marsh located between the University of Texas Marine Science Institute (UTMSI) Visitor Center and the Aransas Pass, on the northernmost tip of Mustang Island.

Officially dedicated in August 2008, the center is part of the 185,708-acre Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve. The reserve is jointly administered by UTMSI and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The center is open seven days a week and features a self-guided tour of a 3.6 acre salt marsh and sand dune complex. Guided tours are also conducted at 10 a.m. each Tuesday and Thursday. Beginning June 20, guided tours also will be conducted at 10 a.m. on Saturdays.

The time of the tours changes seasonally, and as volunteers



Students from all around South Texas visit the Wetland Education Center on field trips. Free, guided tours are offered at 10 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursday and, starting June 20, at 10 a.m. on Saturdays.

tive habitats on the planet and how sand dunes protect barrier islands from storm surges. A geodetic marker stands at the entry to the center, showing distances to other National Estuarine Research Reserves throughout the world.

The paths and boardwalks that wind around the salt marsh and through the sand dunes are handicapped accessible.

The center was created through a 13-year-long collaboration between federal, state and county governments as well as The University of Texas at Austin and private donors, who raised \$4.4 million to build it.

The facility was designed by Corpus Christi architect David Richter. Its concept was developed by Dr. Rick Tinnin, director of Marine Education Services at UTMSI and the education coordinator for the Mission-Aransas Reserve.

More information about The University of Texas Marine Science Institute can be found at www.utmsi.utexas.edu.

become available, so check the weekly editions of the South Jetty, where tours are listed on Page 2A in the Island agenda, or call ahead to confirm. The

number is (361) 749-6805.

Visitors can view sand dune and salt marsh vegetation and identify the various species of plants by reading displays that

are located at kiosks throughout the outdoor center.

Visitors will learn why salt marshes represent some of the most ecologically produc-



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