

MATAGORDA BAY GETS 'DANGER' RANKING IN NWF REPORT

Palacios Beacon

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Matagorda Bay, along with five other Texas bays are being threatened by inadequate measures to protect freshwater inflows, according to a recent report by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF).

"State water policy is putting Matagorda Bay at risk," said environmental expert Susan Kaderka of the Texas Living Waters Project, a collaborative effort of Environmental Defense, the National Wildlife Federation and the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club.

"Healthy rivers and bays add billions of dollars to the Texas economy every year, but right now they are not adequately protected under state law," she said.

She spoke before the Palacios City Council on Monday (Dec. 6) to urge them to join other Gulf Coast elected officials in passing a resolution calling on the Texas legislature to make protecting freshwater inflows a priority during the upcoming legislative session, which starts in January.

"Texas bays and the wildlife and coastal economies they support may suffer serious damage unless the state acts to protect them," she said.

Kaderka cited the new NWF report entitled *Bays in Peril*. The report explains how Texas' century-old water permitting process threaten freshwater inflows to Texas bays—inflows that are essential if the bays are to continue nourishing abundant populations of fish, shrimp, oysters and birds.

Five of Texas' seven major bays—including Matagorda Bay—received a "danger" ranking in the NWF study, which means their shrimp, crab, oyster and fish populations could decline dramatically in the future unless the state takes action.

Other bays cited as in "danger" included San Antonio Bay, Galveston Bay, and Corpus Christi Bay.

Kaderka noted that adequate river flow to provide freshwater into the bays is critical.

"If nothing is done the long-term outlook is grim, not just for fish and wildlife but for the tens of thousands of people who depend on the bays to make a living or who use them for recreation," Kaderka said.

"Matagorda Bay is at the end of the line," Kaderka pointed out. "We've had a lot of rain this year, but we all know the next drought is just around the corner. Without legal protections, the bay, its wildlife, and Palacios' local economy could be left high and dry."

The NWF's *Bays in Peril* report is available online at www.texaswatermatters.org