



CASE STUDY

Wetlands Educational Center Trail

Location: Port Aransas, TX

Designer/ Fabricator: The University of Texas Marine Science Institute

The Wetlands Education Center is a trail system at The University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, Texas. These trails are a key educational component to the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve. This 3.6-acre wetland is cultivated with seagrass and salt marsh plants. Interpretive signage is placed along the trails to help visitors learn about the local coastal habitats. This site is ADA compliant and gives students and visitors alike a hands-on experience in wetlands. It is the only center of it's kind in the State of Texas. On August 25, 2017, the area was struck by the massive category 4 Hurricane Harvey. A recovery grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for the Mission-Aransas Reserve was used to repair the 16 informational signs.



The University developed the signs with design expertise in-house and procured iZone Imaging for the fabrication of those signs. Ironically, the pandemic facilitated the time required for a swift in-house design process. The majority of the signs feature scientifically accurate watercolors of habitats from wildlife ecologist and artist Marcia Hawthorne, as printed in Texas Coastal Zone Biotopes: An Ecography. The paintings were developed by a field team of ecologists, who sketched in the field, identified the individual living organisms, and aided in the niche perspective. The result is a pictorial summary of the environment, plant, and animal population of the various identified ecological systems called biotopes.



The University of Texas Marine Science Institute worked with iZone Imaging to fabricate both the signs and stands. Design and installation were conducted by the University of Texas Marine Science Institute.

“Our signs must withstand climate extremes. The weather in South Texas can be described as variable and extreme and any signage must be durable. With an average summer maximum range of 33.3 - 35.6°C coupled with in winter, radical changes with passing cold fronts (can drop 30-40°F within a few hours). iZone Imaging and their CHPL products are the most durable signs available we have found to withstand the harsh environment.”

- Sally Palmer, Marine Science Institute