



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®
Galveston District

News Release

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Corps, community celebrate restoring mouth of San Bernard River

About 400 people from along the Texas coast gathered near the area called River's End in Brazoria, Texas, on March 21. Pontoons and speedboats ferried people to the spot where the San Bernard River now empties into the Gulf of Mexico. The event that brought together a congressman, state and local officials, news media, and hundreds of residents and well wishers marked a celebration of the completion of a project and the realization of a dream—thanks, in large part, to the Army Corps of Engineers.

"It looks pretty good, doesn't it?" Col. David C. Weston, Galveston District commander asked the crowd looking out to the Gulf of Mexico. "It was a real team effort, and I applaud you."

The project began a couple of years ago when a local community group, the Friends of the River, approached local and state officials about the problems caused by the blockage at the river's mouth.

The mouth of the San Bernard River had closed at its original location and migrated eastward due to sand accretion, choking off development and recreation along the length of the river. The blockage also diverted the water flow into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway eastward, exiting through the Brazos River Flood Gates. The increased velocity of the current there created problems for commercial navigation. About 30,000 barges



Flying High The Corps banner flies above the festivities at the opening of the San Bernard River on March 21.

cross the intersection of the Brazos River and the GIWW, making it one of the busiest along the waterway.

When the river's mouth closed, the water merged with the Brazos River. It caused steep drop-offs at the Brazos River during heavy rains. But after about a year of planning and coordination and 6 weeks of dredging, the waters of the San Bernard and the Gulf of Mexico once again mingled.

In January 2007, the Galveston District announced that it would undertake restoring the mouth under its authority to maintain safe waterways for commercial navigation. The project called for cutting a 10-foot deep, 100-foot wide opening that ran almost 8500 feet.



Colonel David C. Weston, Galveston District commander, addresses the river opening celebrants with Commissioner "Dude" Payne. (USACE photo)

Delays caused by Hurricane Ike and potential environmental issues pushed the project into 2009, with a \$2.27 million contract awarded in January.

On Feb. 20, the dredging crew broke through the surf line and the two bodies of water were joined. Dredging finished up around mid-March, and the Friends of the River brought out the hot dogs and champagne for a March 21 celebration.

Among the 400 celebrants were government and industry officials from all levels, a sure sign of the

successful blending of benefits to the local community, government, and the navigation industry.

"You can't find a better model for community activity and how to go about harnessing the expertise and wherewithal of government to get something like this done," Weston told the crowd. "You are all great Americans."

Judging by the applause and cheers that greeted Weston's remark, it was obvious that the crowd returned the compliment.