



Legislative TOUR

# NAVIGATING THE NECHES 2018

# PORT OF BEAUMONT

CLASSIFICATION- SPECIAL EVENTS



# SUMMARY

Navigating the Neches, a three-day, tri-city, collaborative legislative event, took place April 18-20, 2018. The event, the brainchild of the Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce, evolved into an initiative that brought together key stakeholders along the waterway including the Port of Beaumont, Port of Port Arthur, Port of Orange, Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce, Greater Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce, Greater Orange Area Chamber of Commerce, Orange County Economic Development Corporation, Beaumont CVB, Orange CVB, and Port Arthur CVB, among others, to showcase the region's assets. The goal of the event was to expose state legislators, their staff, and state agencies to three areas of the local economy that fuel growth on a state and national level- industry and the waterway, coastal restoration and the environment, and healthcare.

The Port of Beaumont was involved in the development of the event as a whole, with a specific focus on the industry & waterway and environmental components. For the opening reception of the event, the Port of Beaumont and Port of Port Arthur partnered to bring more than 200 attendees to the Port of Beaumont where Navigating the Neches kicked off. The event took place in the Port of Beaumont's woodpulp shed, which served as an opportunity to educate legislators and local elected officials on one of the primary cargoes handled by the Ports of Beaumont and Port Arthur. In partnership with Kirby Corporation, tours of the waterway were offered to attendees, where subject matter experts were on hand to discuss





# SUMMARY CONTINUED

expansion and development efforts along the waterway, which total more than \$54 billion. The Ports of Beaumont and Port Arthur are both designated strategic seaports, with operations managed by the 842nd Transportation Battalion. In an effort to showcase the strategic importance of the region, the 842nd put several pieces of military equipment on display and the Port had subject matter experts on hand to discuss the role of the 842nd at the Ports of Beaumont and Port Arthur.

The second day of the event focused on industry and the waterway and included a two (2) hour narrated tour of the Sabine-Neches Waterway aboard a vessel lent to the Port by Kirby Corporation, followed by a crabbing 101 workshop, led by Texas Parks and Wildlife representatives; kayaking through the marsh, with emphasis placed on the importance of coastal restoration; and bird watching, a primary driver of tourism in Southeast Texas.

The third day of the event focused on healthcare and the resources the region has available to deploy during a catastrophic event. A "disaster simulation" was provided as well as access to some of the equipment available to the region, much of which was used during Hurricane Harvey.

Over the course of the three-day event, more than 300 attendees participated, including representatives from 20 different legislative offices and agencies.

# COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Sabine Neches Waterway is a key link in the state and national economy and the primary challenge, over several decades, has been conveying the importance of this marine highway in a way that quantifies the benefits and shows the collaborative nature of stakeholders in Southeast Texas. The tri-city area, Beaumont, Port Arthur and Orange Texas, identified this as a challenge, especially as it relates to Texas state legislators. While each city has historically had a specific message to share, a unified vision had not been developed to specifically promote the importance of Southeast Texas as an economic engine to state legislators and agencies. The planning committee for Navigating the Neches wanted to bridge that gap to ensure Southeast Texans were doing two things:

- 1. Communicating the needs of Southeast Texas between legislative sessions.**
- 2. Giving legislators, staff members and agencies an opportunity to see Southeast Texas and some of the region's assets first-hand.**

The greatest challenge was unifying the voices of the three cities, and all involved parties, in a comprehensive way that made sense to attendees and represented each focus area adequately. This was a challenge because each city, and the organizations/entities within that city, had a specific set of interests. What the event allowed us to focus on was promoting the region as a whole.



# COMPLEMENTING THE PORT'S MISSION

The Port of Beaumont's mission is to act as an economic engine that fuels job creation and economic growth throughout the state of Texas. The Port of Beaumont takes a collaborative approach when it comes to growth and development.



With this in mind, it was important to the Port to help spearhead Navigating the Neches in an effort to raise awareness, among state legislators, of the importance of Port of Beaumont, Sabine Neches Waterway, and industrial partners along the waterway. The event focused on the three primary drivers of job creation and economic development in Southeast Texas: industry, healthcare and the environment. It was the hope of the group that a more broad audience of decision makers would be made aware of the significant impact the waterway has on the livelihood of millions of Americans every day and through that awareness, more informed decisions would be made when legislation involving Southeast Texas is introduced.



# PLANNING & PROGRAMMING COMPONENTS

## GOAL OF NAVIGATING THE NECHES

Create an experience that exposes state legislators, staff members, and state agencies to the areas of the Southeast Texas economy that fuel growth on a state and national level with a focus on industry and the waterway, coastal restoration and the environment, and healthcare

## OBJECTIVES

Collaborate with companies, organizations and entities in Beaumont, Orange, and Port Arthur, Texas to develop an event that showcases the collaborative nature of the region and the importance as an energy hub and economic driver.

Raise awareness of the Ports and waterway in Southeast Texas on a state level by reaching out to and encouraging attendance from legislators, their staff members, and agency representatives.

Reach 100 state and agency representatives over the course of the three-day event.

Arm state officials with the resources needed to speak in a comfortable and informed manner about the assets that exist in Southeast Texas including an informational booklet and one-page infographics.



Start a dialogue that promotes Southeast Texas as an interdependent region, rather than each individual city/entity that makes up Southeast Texas.

**Primary audience-** Legislative staff members

**Secondary audience-** State legislators and state agency representatives

In order to reach the goals set forth by the committee, defining the purpose of the outreach efforts, and what we hoped to accomplish from each, was imperative. Early in the planning stages the committee developed a series of efforts that focused on digital outreach and in-person outreach where 2-5 members planned "mini-events" in Austin, Texas. With the help of our local delegation, the committee was able to plan and execute three distinct efforts.





# OUTREACH EFFORTS

Outreach efforts were geared toward legislators, staff members and state agencies. Each effort showcased something unique to Southeast Texas.

## GUMBO AT THE CAPITOL- JANUARY

Committee members distributed Navigating the Neches (NTN) save the dates to house and senate offices and hosted "Gumbo After Hours" where legislators and staff members had an opportunity to ask questions about the event.

## GATORS AND PIE- FEBRUARY

NTN descended upon the Texas capitol with gators and pie. Representatives from Gator Country in Beaumont Texas brought alligators and snakes to the capitol, where legislators, staff members and visitors had an opportunity to hold and learn about the reptiles and Southeast Texas. In addition to the alligators, Representative Dade Phelan's staff members helped committee members pass out homemade pies made by former house member Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton. In tandem with these two efforts, committee members visited senate and house offices to distribute NTN invitations and collateral materials.

## WRITTEN OUTREACH- JANUARY THROUGH APRIL

E-mails were sent to legislators and agency heads on three separate occasions via Constant Contact, in addition to a hard copy of the invitation.



# ACTION & COMMUNICATION OUTPUTS

The Texas legislature is in session every other year, which leaves approximately one year in the interim when communications from Southeast Texas constituents to state legislators are limited. Stakeholders in Southeast Texas saw this as an opportunity to create an event that brought legislators to the region and showcased some of the things that make Southeast Texas important to not only the state, but visiting legislators' districts. The strategy was developed out of a desire to increase awareness and keep Southeast Texas top-of-mind for state legislators.

The primary focus of the event was to target staff members, as they are typically the point of contact for outreach efforts. To do this, the committee developed a strategy focused on blending education and entertainment in a way that would leave attendees with a lasting impression of Southeast Texas. The three-day event was developed by four sub-committees, comprised of more than 25 members. The four sub-committees focused on marketing, waterway and industry, coastal restoration and the environment, and healthcare.



# ACTION & COMMUNICATION OUTPUTS CONTINUED

The committee developed a marketing strategy, website, flyers, individual event invitations for each sub-event, e-mail templates and hard copy mailed letters to distribute to legislative offices and agencies. Committee members hosted three outreach efforts in Austin to ensure the message was being received via several different platforms. The committee did not focus on social media, as the efforts were targeted toward a very specific group of individuals.

The strategy to develop an event that took place in the interim proved to be successful, but not as successful, attendance-wise, as anticipated. The event welcomed approximately 20 legislative offices, bringing five state representatives, two senators, 30 staff members, and, over the course of the three-day event, approximately 275 local delegates (including several agency representatives). The committee had set an ambitious goal of having 50 offices represented and 200 visiting attendees, with a mix of legislators, staff members and agency representatives. After analyzing reasons why invitees were unable to attend, it was determined a last-minute legislative event was scheduled in Austin, which caused several members to back-out last minute.





# HANDOUT DISTRIBUTED TO LEGISLATORS



APRIL  
18-20

JOIN US FOR NAVIGATING THE NECHES

*We'll show you a side of Texas you never knew existed!*

RSVP  
TODAY



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT [NAVIGATINGTHENECHES.ORG](http://NAVIGATINGTHENECHES.ORG)



YOU'RE INVITED TO

# NAVIGATING THE NECHES

*Cajun Reception hosted by the Ports of Beaumont and Port Arthur*



## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2018

THE PORT OF BEAUMONT | 1225 MAIN STREET, BEAUMONT, TX 77701



*Welcome Reception | 6-9 pm*

**WHAT TO EXPECT**



LIVE MUSIC



RIVER TOURS



CAJUN FLAIR



A GOOD TIME

RSVP to [sc@portofbeaumont.com](mailto:sc@portofbeaumont.com) or call Sade Chick at 409-242-9117 by April 10, 2018

# TIMELINE

**June 2017:** In response to a Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce strategic planning meeting, a small committee proposed the idea of a collaborative event where legislators were invited to Southeast Texas to gain a better understanding of the economic impact the region has on the state and the nation .

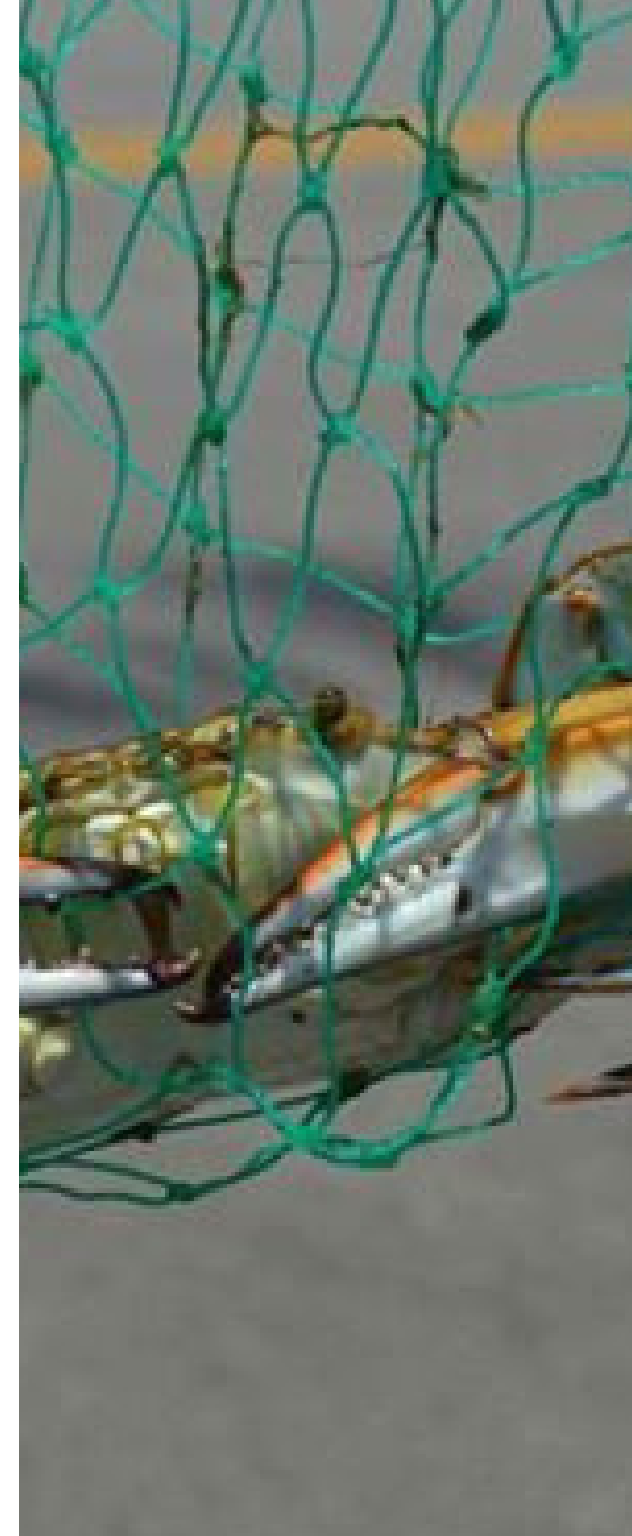
**November 2017:** A timeline was developed and sub-committees were created to include focuses on: waterway & industry, coastal restoration and the environment, healthcare, and marketing.

**December 2017:** Outreach efforts and a marketing plan were established.

An event logo was established and sponsors were secured.

**January 2018:** A website was developed to promote the event.

**February-April, 2018:** The event was promoted the event via outreach efforts including one happy hour in Austin, two gumbo socials in Austin, Gators & Pies event, digital outreach via e-mail, and mailing hard copies of save the dates and invitations.





**March 2018:** Activities for participants were finalized and a contingency plan for inclement weather was developed.

Navigating the Neches souvenir bags, stuffed alligators and Southeast Texas products were ordered for event goodie bags.

Sea Rim State Park secured supplies for crabbing 101 workshop and scheduled a "dry run" for committee members to run through the day's events.

**April 2018:** Volunteers and responsibilities of committee members are confirmed.

Signage for all sub-events is ordered (welcome reception, boat ride, coastal restoration activities and healthcare event).

Port of Beaumont and Port of Port Arthur put finishing touches on event plan of action. Event is executed, .

**Post event:** Press releases and follow-up interviews are held with local media outlets.





# OUTCOMES

Navigating the Neches brought more than 300 attendees together to celebrate all things Southeast Texas on April 18-20, 2019. Cumulatively, the Port of Beaumont Welcome Reception, waterway & industry tour, coastal restoration activities, healthcare event and Orange County event brought together more than 300 attendees, 40 of whom represented legislative offices or agencies.

Attendees were provided with several resources including a waterway booklet, an event overview, electronic handouts, and the Port of Beaumont followed up with the distribution of a quarterly update that goes to many of the offices that participated in Navigating the Neches.

The combined impact of the pre NTN outreach efforts and the event reached every house and senate office as well as 10 state agencies. While there is always room for improvement, the inaugural Navigating the Neches event was a great success. After following up with attendees with phone calls and/or e-mails, the consensus was that the event was informative and well-planned.

