

A Promising Horizon for Port Mansfield: A Partnership for Progress

*TPWD, East Foundation, and WCND
Partner to Build Coastal Education & Law
Enforcement Hub in Port Mansfield*

PORT MANSFIELD, TX, UNITED STATES, February 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Port of Port Mansfield](#), the jewel of Willacy County, stands as a testament to the enduring allure of the Texas Gulf Coast. Its strategic location and unique coastal landscape make it a vital hub for both conservation efforts and recreational opportunities. Recent discussions surrounding a proposed partnership between the [Texas Parks and Wildlife](#) Department (TPWD), The East Foundation, and the [Willacy County Navigation District](#) (WCND) signal a promising new chapter for this coastal community. While still in the initial planning phase, this collaboration holds significant potential to benefit Willacy County residents and reinforce the Port of Port Mansfield's role as a supporter of conservation and outdoor education. Core Elements of the Proposed Partnership

At the heart of the initiative is a proposal from TPWD—presented in partnership with The East Foundation's "Behind the Gates" program—to donate a dedicated lot for construction of a 150 × 80 ft metal barn-style facility. Mark Vela of the TPWD Law Enforcement Division presented the concept to the WCND on February 11. The multi-purpose facility is envisioned to:



Aerial view of the entrance to the Port of Port Mansfield



Port of Port Mansfield Harbor of Opportunity

- Securely house law enforcement boats and vehicles
- Include a bunkhouse for operational support
- Feature a community learning hall for education and outreach programs

This structure would serve as far more than a building; it would function as a cornerstone for community enrichment.

The project also includes provision of a dedicated 42-foot patrol vessel to strengthen marine operations, enhance collaboration with local agencies and the U.S. Coast Guard, and improve monitoring of waterways and public safety.

Aligning with TPWD's Mission

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's mission—to protect and manage Texas's natural and cultural resources while providing opportunities for public enjoyment—is directly advanced by this facility. It would operate as both a coastal law enforcement hub and a public resource center, offering a consistent platform for community involvement, volunteerism, and youth education programs.

TPWD already delivers a wide range of youth and community initiatives, including hunter and boater education courses, youth fishing programs, and outdoor skills workshops. A dedicated facility in Port Mansfield would provide year-round access for local and regional schools, 4-H clubs, FFA chapters, and other outdoor education groups. By establishing a permanent space for these activities, the partnership would promote environmental ethics and responsible recreation throughout Willacy and surrounding counties, fostering stewardship in the next generation.

Complementary Role of The East Foundation

The East Foundation, whose headquarters borders WCND property, brings additional depth through its "Behind the Gates" program. This initiative provides youth, educators, and the public with access to private ranchlands to learn about wildlife management, land stewardship, and conservation science.

The proposed TPWD facility would serve as a complementary coastal site, expanding the program's reach into the marine and bayside ecosystem. This collaborative model bridges classroom learning with real-world field experiences, positioning Port Mansfield as a gateway for young Texans to engage directly with statewide conservation efforts.

Broader Community and Economic Benefits

Beyond education and conservation, the partnership promises enhanced harbor safety and security through a stronger law enforcement presence. It also holds potential to support local industries tied to coastal tourism, fishing, and recreation, contributing to economic growth in the region.

Steve Kendrick, representing WCND District 3, described the opportunity as "once in a generation," adding, "Hats off to the East Foundation and all partners in this endeavor."

Alberto Treviño, Commissioner for Precinct 4, emphasized the initiative's value for South Texas families: "The partnership between TPWD and WCND is a great opportunity to expand and promote outdoor recreational access for our youth and families in South Texas. We look forward to strengthening these partnerships with TPWD and others to better serve our communities."

Eric Kennedy, Chairman At-Large of the Willacy County Navigation District, highlighted both

safety and access benefits: “The partnership between TPWD and the WCND not only adds another layer of law enforcement to the Port but gives TPWD direct access to the Bay and offshore waters of the gulf.”

Looking Ahead

As with any significant collaboration, thoughtful planning and due diligence remain essential to ensure alignment with the long-term interests of the community and the environment. Yet the potential benefits—strengthened public safety, expanded educational access, and deeper appreciation for the Gulf Coast’s natural resources—are clear and compelling.

This partnership represents more than bricks and mortar. It is an investment in young Texans and the enduring stewardship of Texas’s coastal heritage. By advancing community safety, outdoor education, and local collaboration, the project has the potential to transform Port Mansfield into a model for coastal conservation and regional partnership.

The leadership of the Port of Port Mansfield and the Willacy County Navigation District views this initiative as a meaningful advancement of their mission: to establish the Port of Port Mansfield as a true Harbor of Opportunity.

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