**Texas State Aquarium**

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[texasstateaquarium.org](http://www.texasstateaquarium.org).

**Media Press Kit and Fact Sheet – Texas State Aquarium**

**About the Texas State Aquarium**

* The Texas State Aquarium (TSA), the Official Aquarium of the State of Texas, is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) institution that is fully accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.
* TSA opened in 1990 on the shores of North Beach in Corpus Christi, Texas and attracts more than 500,000 guests per year.
* TSA’s mission is to engage people with animals, inspire appreciation for our seas, and support wildlife conservation
* TSA provides high-quality science education about marine conservation and the habitats and species of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean to families primarily in Texas.
* Recently, it was named the number one cultural attraction in South Texas and one of the Top 10 Aquariums in the nation by TravelChannel.com.
* TSA recently finalized its visionary master plan with the opening of Caribbean Journey, a 71,000-square foot, $60 million building that more than doubled TSA’s exhibit space.
* TSA is now the largest aquarium in Texas and one of the largest in the nation and includes:
  + Over 13,000 animals comprising 460+ species on exhibit
  + Over 171,000 square feet of exhibit space
  + 152-foot diameter skylight to provide natural sunlight to the jungle exhibit
  + Up to 1.5 million gallons of seawater in aquatic exhibits
  + The 100-seat Whataburger 4-Dimension Theater, the only venue of its kind in South Texas.

**Caribbean Journey**

* After nearly two years of construction, Caribbean Journey opened to the public on May 13, 2017.
* Caribbean Journey is the expansive, final phase of a visionary master plan for TSA that seeks to:
  + showcase Caribbean species including sharks, fish, birds and reptiles,
  + interpret the biodiversity of the Yucatan Peninsula and Caribbean Sea, and
  + Utilize immersive, interactive aquarium exhibitions and hands-on exploration.
* At 71,000 square feet, it doubles the size, species and programming of the existing facility and expands TSA’s conservation, education, and wildlife rehabilitation programs as well as guest services and catering capabilities.
* Caribbean Journey is modeled after the Sian Ka’an, a biosphere preserve of 780,000 acres located in the Eastern Yucatan Peninsula.
* Highlights include:
  + The jungle exhibit of Caribbean Journey, featuring free-flying birds, a touch pool, Maya Ruins, and an overlook into the reef exhibits below.
  + The H-E-B Caribbean Sea and Coral Reef overlooks, where guests can see sharks and fish swimming below.
  + The Whataburger 4-Dimension Theater, which uses state-of-the-art digital technology and special effects in films.
  + The 68-foot display window and walkthrough tunnel of the H-E-B Caribbean Sea exhibit, featuring sharks and a replica shipwreck.
  + The Coral Reef and Blue Hole exhibits, featuring tropical Caribbean fish and other species.
  + The CITGO Skyline Venue, a private event space overlooking the Corpus Christi Bayfront
  + Species of interest include sandbar sharks, goliath groups, Caribbean flamingos, a Linnaeus’s two-toed sloth, scarlet ibises, vampire bats, macaws, a keel-billed toucan, and several hundred species of coral reef fish.

**Education Programs**

* In 2014, the Texas State Aquarium (TSA) and Flint Hills Resources (FHR) united forces to create the Flint Hills Resources Center for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education at the Texas State Aquarium.
* The Center places a powerful emphasis on STEM practices and skills featuring the habitats and animals of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean that are featured at TSA.
* Learning opportunities include: onsite programs, outreach programs (Aquarium programs travel to schools, libraries, etc.), programs at TSA’s SeaLab facility, teacher workshops/professional development, overnight camp-ins, Aquavision distance learning programs, camps, and Seafood Wars.
* TSA reached 77,000 students in 2016 through its on-site, outreach and distance learning STEM programs.
* Caribbean Journey enhances TSA’s ability to educate more than 500,000 annual visitors about wildlife ecology and marine life conservation.
* On-site educational facilities include the Family Learning Center and the Flint Hills Resources Center for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education for students.
* TSA’s Aquavision Distance Learning program uses web-based technology to virtually reach students across the nation and has been awarded the Pinnacle Award from the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC) for three years in a row.
* TSA’s education team partners with underwater cave diver and conservation Sam Meacham, who serves as STEM Professional in Residence to help strengthen STEM process skills through student education programs, teacher development, and guest experiences.

**Conservation Programs**

* Wildlife Rescue and Recovery
  + TSA’s wildlife rehabilitation program started in 1995 and treats s approximately 350 injured animals annually, including ill, injured, and orphaned shorebirds, raptors, sea turtles, and marine mammals.
  + Rehabilitated animals are released into their natural habitat or, if unable to survive in the wild, are found new homes at partnering AZA facilities or at TSA.
  + Since 2005, over 3,100 patients have been treated, including marine mammals, 101 species of birds, and 2 species of sea turtles
  + 100% of donations to the wildlife rescue and recovery program go directly to the medical care of the animals.
* Green Initiatives
  + TSA is part of TSA Conservation Partnership (ACP), where partners are dedicated to eliminating single-use plastic, a major contributor to ocean pollution, from their everyday operations
    - TSA has phased out bottled water and sodas in exchange for boxed water
    - All single-use plastic has been eliminated from TSA’s restaurants; all straws, napkins, and cutlery are eco-friendly and are made of paper or plant materials.
    - The gift shop does not use plastic bags; instead paper bags are used or guests are asked to forgo the bag.
    - Recycling containers have been installed in public locations to encourage guests to recycle whenever possible.
  + TSA makes increasing us of eco-friendly energy and utilities including.
    - Electric golf carts and an electric car charging station
    - Automatic light switches, LED lightings, and programmable thermostats
    - A solar array to partially power TSA
    - Automatic faucets and waterless features in restrooms
    - Xeriscape landscaping beds with drought-tolerant species to reduce the need for watering
* Beach Cleanups
  + TSA is the North Beach Host for the Texas General Land Office’s Adopt-a-Beach program.
  + At least three times a year, TSA organizes staff and volunteers to clean up several tons of trash and marine debris from local beaches and coasts.
* Conservation and Research Support
  + Since 2015,TSA has contributed more than $250,000 to marine research and wildlife conservation projects through its Wildlife Care, Conservation and Research Fund (WCCR)
  + TSA gathers donations and promotes the Amigos de Sian Ka’an, an NGO that works to protect the biosphere which Caribbean Journey was based on.
  + To date, TSA as donated over $75,000 to saving the vaquita, a critically-endangered porpoise with few than 30 individuals in the wild
  + TSA hosts environmentally-focused events to call attention to wildlife and habitat conservation, including:
    - Party for the Planet
    - World Oceans Day
    - International Save the Vaquita Day
    - Green Halloween
    - World Wetlands Day

For media tours, high resolution photos or recent press releases, contact:

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