

AMI Extended the Meaning of Christmas – Recycling Christmas Trees

It may appear a bit early to start thinking about where to get rid of this year's Christmas tree, but planning for the January Dunes Day event is already a month old.

Last year, AMI stepped up to help the Brazoria County Parks Department on the annual Dunes Day project and made a major difference. Between AMI's operations in the Pearland and Kingwood areas, more than 1,000 Christmas trees were recycled on local beaches in Brazoria County. The trees, securely staked in rows along the beach, trap windblown sand to strengthen existing sand dunes or establish new dunes as a defense against storm surge tides and to provide habitat for creatures that live along the shoreline.

Each mile of beach requires roughly 1,000 trees to effectively shore up the dune system. Volunteer labor is harvested in bringing the trees from inland areas to the beach, in laying them out, and in staking trees securely in place.

Does it work? In September 2008, Hurricane Ike destroyed almost all the dunes along Brazoria County's beaches. Trees were placed during 2009's Dunes Day and, by September (the month most major storms tend to strike our coast), the trees had trapped enough sand to form rudimentary dunes to help protect property, infrastructure, and habitat. By this year's hurricane system, the dune line was more robust and is able to withstand a greater degree of tidal action and surge activity. Reaching this point has required a great deal of effort and volunteer activity. Sand fencing has been installed to help reinforce existing dunes and further anchor carefully placed trees. When severe tides have moved trees or destroyed sand fencing, volunteers have been diligent in repairing the damage. But all the effort would be in vain except for one critical point - your old Christmas tree.

We encourage you to go out this year and pick out the grandest, nicest tree your family can afford. Enjoy it through the Christmas season and then, in early January when it's time to start the new year, take to one of AMI's collection points for transport to the beach where it can start the new year with a real purpose. When visiting the beach this summer, your family will know that their tree was a Christmas gift to your own stretch of Texas beach.

Dunes Day is Saturday, January 15, 2011. Join in to help re-cycle Christmas trees into beneficial sand dunes. Volunteers meet at Quintana and Surfside Beaches to rebuild, restore, and strengthen our dune line against future storm surges. For more information, call 979-864-1541.

