



## Bay Area News

Bud Solmonsson looks at a map of the Texas Coastal Watershed.

JIMMY LOYD: FOR THE CHRONICLE



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FACES IN THE CROWD

## Bud Solmonsson in a race against time

Galveston resident teaches others importance of watersheds

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When Bud Solmonsson took an early retirement and moved to Galveston a few years ago, he began volunteering with area conservation groups.

For Solmonsson, author of *Conservation for the Next Generation*, conservation was never just a job. It also was not a concern that he could turn his back on after spending 25 years teaching and traveling all over the United States working for national, state and regional parks systems.

He eventually came out of retirement to become program manager at the Dickinson Bayou Watershed Partnership.

"I wasn't really looking for a job," Solmonsson said. "But it was just perfect."

Since he took the position in October, he has been to more than 50 meetings, workshops and

conferences. Now he plans to concentrate on presentations to city councils.

Solmonsson calls his job both gratifying and frustrating. It is gratifying, he said, because in the years he spent working with conservationists all over the country, "there are no more dedicated, talented, qualified people than those I work with in Texas."

But it is also frustrating, Solmonsson said, because so many of the people he meets don't know what a watershed is, or why it's important.

Everyone lives in a watershed, which is an area of land that drains into a body of water.

Those who live in Alvin, Friendswood, League City, Dickinson, Santa Fe, Texas City and parts of Pearland and Manvel live in the Dickinson Bayou Watershed, meaning water from their homes drains into Dickinson Bayou.

Why watersheds are important is something the partnership is teaching all over the area: Whatever goes into the watershed goes into Galveston Bay, and whatever is wrong with the watershed ends up being wrong with the bay, Solmonsson said.

The partnership finds itself in a race against time because of the rapid growth the area is experiencing, he said.

"If everything is paved, the water will take the path of least resistance. If nowhere is left to absorb it, it will race to the bays, and it will be a great problem," Solmonsson said.

In its quest to teach the importance of the Dickinson Bayou watershed, the partnership encountered another challenge: diverging concerns, Solmonsson said.

For instance, he said, those concerned about flooding may not be concerned about the quality of the water, while cities eager for development may not be concerned with keeping open space.

To address all those concerns, the partnership includes six separate working groups that address habitat, water quality, land use, flooding and stormwater, recreation, and education and outreach.

Solmonsson points out that, in the field of conservation, water is paramount: "If there's no water, there's nothing."

*If you have a suggestion for a "Faces in the Crowd" profile, contact Richard Zagrzecki at [richard.zagrzecki@chron.com](mailto:richard.zagrzecki@chron.com) or send a fax to 713-362-7552.*