

LA Wetland Education Coalition

Wetland News, #21, February 24, 2005



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1. Wild Iris Weekends at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve--Barataria Preserve, MAR 16-APR 17

Please join us for the annual celebration of Louisiana's state wildflower blooming in the Jean Lafitte Park. On the weekends there will be bus shuttles running visitors to the Coquille trail, where there will be park staff manning a touch table, and volunteer experts walking the trails giving short talks on their topics (alligators, water, & geology of the park), and park staff roving the trails to answer visitor questions. There will also be daily talks by park rangers on a myriad of subjects, including the history of south Louisiana and this area (Barataria), wildflowers, and bird talks, plus 9:30 morning canoe treks every Saturday. Visitors need to call the park to make reservations for the canoe treks at 504/589-2330 ext.10. Visitors will need to provide their own canoe. Canoe rentals are available outside the park at Bayou Barn - 504/689-2663. *There will also be an educational Junior Ranger Program - where the kids can earn a Junior Ranger Button while they're here. A wildflower program for school groups (Grades 1-4) is currently under development. Call Allyn at 504/689-7611 ext.14 for more information.

When: Start Saturday, March 26 and run every weekend until Sunday, April 17. The park opens daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The shuttle bus runs begin at 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: At the Barataria Preserve of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve located at 6588 Barataria Blvd. Marrero, LA 70072, call 504/589-2330 ext.25 for more information, or on the web at <http://www.nps.gov/jela/Barataria%20Preserve.htm>

How: All of these activities are FREE and open to the public, simply come to the park.

Who: Contact Jack Henkels, Wild Iris Weekends coordinator at 504/589-2330 ext.10

2. The Long Road to Conservation *by Kimberly Solet, YT Regional Newspaper*

HOUMA – When coastal-erosion discussions emerged in the 1970s, some novel ideas to restore Louisiana's shores were quickly put to the test. In the latter part of the decade, the state spent \$500,000 to install chicken wire along barrier islands and funnel the mineral that forms oyster shells through the artificial device.

The idea was to fill deteriorating beaches with oyster shells, foster oyster beds and prevent island erosion.

But before the "cybernetic architecture" pilot project could get under way, the chicken wire rusted.

Such marked the beginning of the state's decades-old conservation saga.

Coastal erosion actually began centuries ago with the transformation of marshes and wetlands into established towns. But most scientists agree the current land-loss trend really took off in the 1890s and peaked in the 1960s and 1970s.

In those hundred years, more than a million acres of wetlands, or 20 percent of the state's fragile shoreline, eroded. It took 5,000 years for the Mississippi River to make the delta that holds Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes, but in a century the state lost 1,000 years' worth of land.

Fishermen and local lawmakers saw what was happening to the coast long before the state caught on. Erosion became a buzzword in the 1960s, but the first study documenting South Louisiana land loss was not published until 1970.

That Army Corps of Engineers report traced erosion from 1890 to the rise of oil exploration through the 1950s.

For many activists and scientists, the 1970s marked the beginning of the restoration movement. It was a time of many firsts.

The first congressional hearing to gather testimony on coastal erosion was held in 1979. Shea Penland, a geologist and coastal activist at the University of New Orleans, gave his first public testimony at that hearing and inadvertently launched a career as an advocate.

Two years later, the first government report on coastal Louisiana land loss was published by the two Senate and House committees on natural resources.

That 1981 report mentions the chicken-wire scheme as a line item on a list of recommended projects to “resolve coastal problems.”

The total cost of those early efforts: \$38.3 million.

The report justifies the spending in terms of land loss – 25,000 acres of shoreline a year – as well as economics.

Allowing the state’s shores to erode would displace homes, businesses and industries as well as wipe out hurricane protection for hundreds of miles around, the report states.

“The urgency of these problems of erosion, subsidence and saltwater intrusion demands immediate action,” the 1981 report states.

The 37-page report was considered a breakthrough for its time, but it took another decade of studies, publicity and activism groups for coastal erosion to really get the state’s attention.

Passage of the Breaux Act in 1990 was the boldest piece of legislation to combat coastal erosion. The act dedicated \$50 million annually to save Louisiana’s shores, and as scientists, environmentalists and government officials came together, many hoped a new era of coastal oversight would begin.

Several projects were approved and constructed in the early years of the Breaux Act, otherwise known as the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, and as they got under way, more studies documented land loss. A 1993 plan by a federal task force envisioned rescuing as much as 70 percent of the state’s wetlands in 20 years. A year later, the governor’s Office of Coastal Activities published an ambitious blueprint to restore Louisiana’s coastal zone.

All this led to the Coast 2050 strategy in 1997.

The plan was adopted in 1998 with 80 restoration strategies, and is considered the state’s most ambitious reaction to coastal erosion.

However laudable the plan’s restoration goals, its \$14 billion price tag sent shock waves through Baton Rouge and Washington, D.C.

The federal government said the forward-looking plan was too hard to swallow all at once, so last year officials decided to abandon it in favor of a 10-year, near-term approach. The Bush administration announced it would support up to \$1.9 billion in federal and state spending in the next decade.

Earlier this month, Gov. Kathleen Blanco and the Army Corps of Engineers chief signed a document committing the state to making the new study the master plan.

Link to this article in the Thibodaux Daily Comet: <http://www.dailycomet.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2005502160310>

3. **Gerald C. Corcoran Education Grant for Native Fish Education**

Attention ichthyologists, educators, and Ichthyological Educators - If you have been considering any kind of outreach project involving native fishes, you might be interested in the following grant. The North American Native Fishes Association (NANFA) is accepting applications for its 2005 Corcoran Education Grant. The grant is named for Gerald C. Corcoran, a biologist and aquarist who actively promoted native fishes during his career as a curator and educator. It is awarded in amounts up to \$1000 for projects that support awareness and conservation of native fishes.

Previously funded projects include:

- Streamside interpretive sign explaining riparian zones, depicting local fishes (2000);
- Field survey and museum program conducted by teenagers (2001)
- Videographic studies of desert fishes by high school students (2001)
- Field surveys and promotional posters of stream fishes (2002)
- Photo exhibit at an environmental education center (2004)

Money can be used for a variety of projects, though, including production and distribution of educational materials, lecturing expenses, nature center displays, school materials and displays, field and laboratory supplies, and teacher training workshops.

Deadline for applications is **31 March 2005**. Funds are provided by 01 Jun 2005 so that projects may begin during the next academic year. Information can be found at: <http://www.nanfa.org/grants.shtml>.

Proposal guidelines are available at: <http://www.nanfa.org/education/corcoran/corcoranaapplication.htm>

4. LAWEC-L LISTSERVE INFORMATION

- **Description of this listserve:** A listserve serving educators interested in LA wetlands.
- **To send a message of your own to the listserv:** email LAWEC-L@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU and type your message into the body of the email. The message will be distributed to ALL PARTICIPANTS subscribing to the listserve. As a participant, you are welcome to send messages to educators subscribing to the LA Wetland Education Coalition listserve. We ask that participants focus their emails on educational opportunities and materials *directly related to wetland education*.
- **To UNSUBSCRIBE from this listserve:** email LAWEC-L@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU and enclose the following single line in the body of the email
unsubscribe LAWEC-L
- **To SUBSCRIBE to this listserv:** email LISTSERV@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU, with only the following line listed in the body of the email:
subscribe lawec-l YourFirstName YourLastName

For example:

subscribe lawec-l John Doe

NOTE: You should not put anything in the subject line and should remove any automatic signatures from the email, otherwise the signup process will not work. You will get a return message indicating that you have been subscribed to the listserve along with information on other listserve operations you can perform (such as unsubscribe, etc.). If you have trouble, email Dr. Pam Blanchard at <pamb@lsu.edu>.

Please do not reply to the entire list unless you want everyone to read your message!

