

Cool Off At Global Warming FilmFest



Delta Sierran

Inside The Sierran
Green Tie Pics
Earl's Back
Activist 1 LNG 0

Delta Chapter Newsletter www.louisiana.sierraclub.org June/July Profile of an Ac-

Barry Kohl

Wins Donald Bradburn Award

The Donald Bradburn Award - doctor of medicine, photographer, and environmental advocate from New Orleans - developed a passion for Horn Island and explored it since the early 1950s. Bradburn has staunchly defended the wilderness for years, and it is largely due to his passionate efforts that Horn Island is now federally protected as part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore. The Delta Chapter's award in his name honors a member with an outstanding record of leadership and dedicated service to the Chapter. The Green Tie Awards were presented on April 21, 2007 at Boutin's in Baton Rouge

The Bradburn Award is the Delta Chapter's highest award. It was presented to Barry Kohl, activist member of the Sierra Club since 1993. Barry and his wife Gayle have lived in New Orleans since 1966. Barry's history as an environmental advocate goes back to 1970 when he became active with the Louisiana Audubon Council. Barry is well known through out the Sierra Club as an expert on mercury and sediment contamination. He worked diligently toward banning shell dredging and preventing barge traffic on the Pearl River. Barry has been actively involved in wetlands conservation and coastal restoration providing expert testimony in many instances when we are faced with applications for corps permits that could harm our environment. Barry is currently representing Audubon and the Delta Chapter working with the Tulane Environmental Clinic on a lawsuit filed against a company that has leaking mercury manometers. Barry has worked

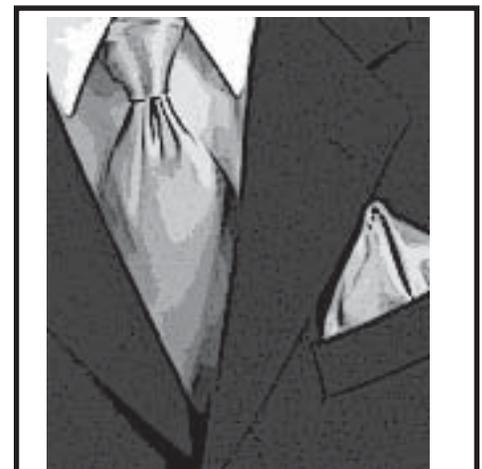


Barry Kohl accepting award from Adam Babich, Tulane Environmental Law Clinic

hard for years to take mercury out of the picture in Louisiana in order to protect our water supply and fisheries from mercury pollution. It is impossible for us to list all of the issues that Barry has weighed in on. His dedication to protecting the place we live in is overwhelming and I know that you will join me in congratulating him on this award. Oh and by the way in his spare time, Barry serves as President of the Louisiana Audubon Council, New Orleans representative to the Delta Chapter Excom and is an adjunct professor at Tulane Univ., in the Dept. of Earth and Environmental Geosciences.



Mark Schliefsstein is presented the Pelican Award for Exceptional Environmental Journalism.



Green Tie Awards
See complete list of award winners on web site.
www.louisiana.sierraclub.org



View From the Chair



Hey all,
I would like you to welcome our new editors Steve Poss and Kathleen Hastings from the Baton Rouge Group. We are collaborating on

this last issue so blame me for any mistakes. Things have been so busy that I can't possibly write about all of the issues that the chapter is involved in so I will touch on some highlights.

Save Our Cypress... the National Sierra Club Board of Directors passed this resolution "The Sierra Club supports a boycott of Cypress mulch produced from Cypress trees cut for that purpose," So we are officially in a boycott and will be asking all of the chapters and groups to join us in this fight.



Micah Parkin-Walker

Formaldehyde in FEMA Trailers, the national news organizations are finally giving this tragedy its due. A

congressional hearing is pending soon and FEMA will be asked to change how disaster housing is built in the future. Stay tuned. We have test kits so contact me if any of your neighbors or friends need their trailer tested.

Global Warming and Energy Conservation are in the news everyday. Gulf Coast communities are looking at building greener. The

Delta Chapter is partnering with the Alliance for Affordable Energy and the Holy Cross Neighborhood to maximize energy efficiency in rebuilding.

On a sad note, we need to bid farewell to Micah Parkin-Walker and her family as she is moving to Boulder, Co. We will sorely miss you!!!

Pictures on this page are of participants and award winners from the Green Tie Awards.

Thank you to all of our members for your support during this trying time for the environment and our state. Please do not hesitate to call if you have a concern or question. In the meantime,



Suzanne Haws



Mary Lee Orr and Adam Babich

enjoy your summer and don't forget to stop and smell the sunflowers. Plan to be involved in the Public Lands Day weekend, September 27-29th.

Hugs,
Leslie March
lesliemarch@hotmail.com
985-871-6695

The Delta Sierran is a bi-monthly publication of the Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club. Members of the Delta Chapter receive the publication as a membership benefit. Non-members may subscribe by sending a check for \$12.00 for one annual membership to the Delta Chapter at P. O. Box 19469, New Orleans, LA 70179-0469. Back issues of the Delta Sierran can be viewed on our web site at <http://louisiana.sierraclub.org>.

Address Changes: To change your address, send your name, old and new addresses and member number to:
Sierra Club Member Services
PO Box 52968
Boulder, Colorado 80322-2968

or email the information to:
address.changes@sierraclub.org

Submissions: Article and photograph submissions are always welcome. Please send submissions to the newsletter editor at lesliemarch@hotmail.com or mail to Leslie March, 67017 Dolan St., Mandeville, LA 70471

Earl's Pearls

Our beloved Earl Higgins is back.

DELENDA EST QUERCUS!

(The Oak Tree Must Be Destroyed!)

In ancient Rome there was a senator who was a great orator and a great war-monger. He finished every speech on the senate floor with a call for war against Rome's archenemy, Carthage. Cato the Elder's cry of "Delenda est Carthago" (Carthage must be destroyed) rallied the Romans to do just that. They not only defeated their enemy in battle, they razed their city to the ground. Never again would Carthage sprout up to challenge Rome's superiority in the ancient world. It was gone forever.

Near my home in River Ridge is a small strip shopping center. I remember when it was built 45 years ago or so. The developers respected existing live oaks and built the parking lot to accommodate them. Several were left along Jefferson Highway, and one was left inside the parking area. These trees were not small saplings; they were already shade trees about 20-30 years old then. The builders simply worked around the tree in the parking lot, leaving an open circle of earth in the concrete so that the tree could receive water and had room to expand. The tree's presence made parking in two of the designated parking slots somewhat difficult, but with a little patience, a shopper could park in a shady spot. Over the years some vehicles bumped into the tree, scraping bark off, maybe damaging a fender or a bumper or two, but nothing serious. The oak remained healthy, full of shiny, green leaves that shaded that end of the lot.

The builders also erected a guardhouse at the edge of the lot, near the entrance to the apartment complex behind the shopping center. It was also close to the oak in the parking lot. The guardhouse was apparently for show, to make the place look like an early version of a gated community. No guard ever occupied it. It remains there, functionless and empty.

Live oaks (*quercus virginia*) are inspiring in their resilience to abuse. They seem to thrive along St. Charles Avenue as well as in parks throughout the state. Their density, low center of gravity, and intricate root system give them the strength to stand up to major hurricanes. So it was with the oak in the parking lot. Katrina's high winds toppled crape myrtle trees on the other side of the lot, but the live oak lost only some leaves and small branches. It stood in healthy testimony to nature's ability to maintain



Aaron Viles Presented National Environmental Alliance Award by Charlie Smith

Profile of an Activist

Aaron Viles, New Orleans Group, member at large for the Delta Chapter Excom, new father, winner of the 2006 Environmental Alliance Award from the National Sierra Club answers questions.

Who are you?

Aaron Viles, I'm currently the secretary for the Delta Chapter, and serve on the Smart Energy Solutions national Conservation Initiative Committee, helping plot the national Club's energy strategy. My day job is as the campaign director for the Gulf Restoration Network, a collection of local, region, and national groups and individuals committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico – it's a 501 C (3) non-profit that the 5 gulf-state chapters of the club helped start 12 years ago.

What is your background?

I grew up in a suburb outside Seattle Washington, and started organizing around environmental issues while pursuing my BS in Conservation Biology at the University of Washington. I'm a graduate of Green Corps, the field school for environmental organizing, and have worked for a national environmental group in slew of different positions, from lobbyist to citizen outreach director to regional field director.

How did you get involved in the Sierra Club? I joined for the first time in the winter of 1999, when I was directing a citizen outreach office for the Club in Washington, DC. I figured it was a little hypocritical to train a team of activists to hit the pavement and sign up new Sierra Club members if I wasn't willing to sign on the dotted line myself.

How long have you been active?

I got involved as a volunteer after running summer citizen outreach office (canvass) here in 2001. We had a great summer, signing up a ton of new members and talking to a huge amount of the public her and throughout the Gulf about energy policy and the Arctic Refuge. Though there could have definitely been an easier issue to knock on doors about! A lot of folks in Louisiana still have an attitude that treats anything that's good for the oil industry as good for Louisiana. Even after mountains of research shows that we're losing our coastal wetlands in no small part due to irresponsible oil and gas exploration and development along our coast. The best thing about that summer was the fantastic group of student activists we recruited for the campaign, folks who learned a lot about how to run a grass roots environmental campaign, and have an impact on an issue that you feel strongly about.

Why are you passionate about our environment?

I think it stems from growing up in the Northwest, hiking in the national parks there, like Olympic and the North Cascades and Mt. Rainier. Pretty much every national park is ringed by national forests, and driving into a park, I would see devastating clear cuts. I learned pretty early on the difference between a national park and a national forest, and remember being pretty outraged at an early age that lands that were supposed to be managed "for the most good, for the greatest number, for the longest possible time" were being clear-cut by big timber corporations like Boise-Cascade. The fights around old-growth and the spotted owl were heating up when I was going to school out there, and I was pretty active.

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Chapter News

Next Chapter Quarterly Meeting will be hosted by the Honey Island Group. Date and Location not available at press time.

Have you ever considered getting involved with the Sierra Club on a state level? Do you live in an area where there isn't an active group? Here is your chance to get more involved with the club. We are looking for volunteers in a variety of roles.

We need activists to serve on all of the chapter issue committees. A list of committees and contact information is on the back of the newsletter.

Chapter Outings Leaders

Would you like to share your love of the outdoors with other Sierrans? Work with the group outings leaders to revitalize our state-wide outings program. We will provide all necessary training you will need, both leadership and medical.

Membership Chair

We need someone to contact new members by mail or email to welcome them to the club. The membership chair is also responsible for planning events to encourage active and informed members.

Volunteer Coordinator

Assists the chapter and groups in recruiting volunteers for tabling and other club related events. Works with the Membership Chair to help members find volunteer opportunities that match their conservation and outing interests

Activity Section Organizer

Would you like to contact other Sierrans in your community to start a small group to do conservation activities and outings with or maybe just want to meet with like-minded folks for coffee, pot lucks or for a movie night. Do you want to start a Sierra Singles Group? We can help...

If you are interested in any of these positions or want to get more involved in another capacity with the club, please contact Leslie March, 985-871-6695 or lesliemarch@hotmail.com.



Volunteer

Opportunities

This summer use some of your free time to help your community and the environment. Contact the members below or check the chapter web site for current opportunities.

Be an Environmental Justice Volunteer. Work with the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association to help make their rebuilding sustainable and energy efficient. Help restore Bayou Beinvenu to a healthy eco system. Work with the citizens of New Orleans East to prevent illegal dumping and help with their recovery. Contact Darryl Malek-Wiley for more information at 504-427-1885. darryl.malek-wiley@sierraclub.org.

Volunteer to help with the GreenZone Taskforce, a community based coalition working to create viable solutions for reducing the amount of waste going to landfills by developing a green economy. Volunteers are needed to attend meetings, do research, table at community events, write letters etc. Contact Leslie March at 985-871-6695 or lesliemarch@hotmail.com.

Volunteer with the Save Our Cypress coalition. Volunteers needed to table at local events, take part in legal demonstrations at local stores, write letters, make presentations to local groups, help plan events and more. Contact Dan Favre at 401-965-7908.



Sierra Club Outings

Hiking, Canoeing,
Campfires
Great Company and Good Food.
Come join us!
Check your local group
web site or the Chapter Blog

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Acadian Group

ACADIAN GROUP BOARD & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Acadian Group of the Sierra Club holds its' Board and Conservation Committee meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at the Acadiana Symphony Building (412 Travis St., Lafayette, LA) at 6:30 PM.

ACADIAN GROUP GENERAL MEETING & LECTURE SERIES

Acadian Group of the Sierra Club has a general meeting and hosts a guest lecture on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Acadiana Symphony Building at 6:30 PM.

The Acadian Group of the Sierra Club is always looking for speakers. Past speakers have talked about wildlife, native plants, invasive species, reforestation, environmental education, the news media, and environmental concerns of local or global nature. If you would like to volunteer or suggest a speaker for the general meeting please contact Harold Schoeffler, Acadian Group Chairman at 337-234-4042.



Acadian Group Chair Harold Schoeffler receives Acadian Group award from Heywood Martin

Sierra Club Energy

Film Festival

Location: Lafayette, LA

All screenings are at 6:15 PM at Pack & Paddle, 601 E. Pinhook Rd., Lafayette, LA 70501. You can find out more about the individual movies at <http://www.sierraclub.org/scp/filmfest>.

ALL FILM SCREENINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

THURSDAY, June 14th: OUT OF BALANCE (60 minutes); OIL ON ICE (50 minutes)

THURSDAY, June 21st: CRUDE IMPACT (98 minutes); NOBELITY (18 minutes).

THURSDAY, June 28th:
Shorts Night
FRENCH FRIES TO GO (15 minutes)
BRINGING DOWN THE MOUNTAINS (12 minutes)
KILOWATT OURS (38 Minutes)
WIND OVER WATER (15 Minutes)

THURSDAY, July 5th:
SUV CITY (8 Minutes); THE TRUE COST OF FOOD (15 minutes); SUNDANCE SUMMIT: A Mayors Gathering on Climate Protection (8 minutes); THE POWER OF COMMUNITY (50 minutes)

ACADIAN GROUP OUTINGS

The Acadian Group has an active outing program. Check their web site at <http://louisiana.sierraclub.org/acadian/> or call Harold Schoeffler at 337-234-4042 for more information.

SUMMER GARDEN TIP FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS USE CYPRESS MULCH

PROTECT OUR COASTAL FORESTS BY USING ALTERNATIVES LIKE PINE STRAW AND EUCALYPTUS

SAVE OUR CYPRESS.ORG



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892



*Greetings from the
Baton Rouge Group*

The Baton Rouge group is located in and around our State Capital. Our members have been active in the Save Our Cypress Coalition, alternative transportation and trying to get East Baton Rouge signed on to the Cool Cities campaign. Our group is going through a reorganization and needs your volunteer help. If you would like to become more active on conservation issues or lead an outing or just want to come to a meeting check out our web site at <http://batonrouge.sierraclub.org/> or call the chair, Sandra Thompson at 225-767-6384

Excom Meetings are where our group sets our goals and plans and are open to all members. They are held at the Sierra Club Office on the first Monday of the month at 7 PM 4521 Jamestowne Ave, Suite 12-13 in Baton Rouge.

We are planning a summer potluck. Details coming soon.

The next general meeting will be on August 29th at 7 PM. Mayor Kip Holden will be the guest speaker. Contact chair at 225-767-6384 for location.



Sierra Club

Monthly Bag Lunch

4521 Jamestowne Ave

Suite 12-13

in Baton Rouge

Call Maura Wood

For Details

225-925-8650

ECO Group Steps Up For The Earth



Serving St. Tammany, Washington, Tangipahoa and Livingston Parishes.

Meets on the third Thursday of the month, alternating between Excom meeting and General meetings. All members welcome at all meetings.

General meetings are at 7PM at the Mandeville Community Center, 3090 East Causeway Approach, Next meeting is June 21st. Dr Charles Reith will be speaking about sustainable landscaping. Check web site for more information.

Excom Meetings are on the alternate Thursday where we plan events and determine policies. All members are always welcome. Please contact the chair Warren Zimmermann, 985-871-6695 for location.

Sierra Club Energy Film Festival is Coming to the Northshore.

Come in out of heat and enjoy the movies. Dates and location to be announced soon. Check the web site or your newsletter for more information.

**Kisatchie Group Needs Volunteers
Contact**
Jeff Wellborn at
318-868-5243
or
jwellborn@sport.rr.com



Honey Island Award presented to Diane Casteel and Therese Kwiecien

Hammond Wetland Assimilation Project

The City of Hammond has embarked on a pilot project to use waste water from its sewage system to “rebuild wetlands.” There are approximately 26 other sites within the state that are contemplating doing the same thing under the guise of saving money and coastal restoration. A group of scientists and Environmentalist went on a field trip to the site recently. Maura Wood, our regional staff person coordinated the trip. Representatives from the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, the Sierra Club , the Gulf Restoration Network, The Louisiana Audubon Council, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and local community members participated. We were given a hearty welcome by the mayor of Hammond and his staff. The staff made a presentation about how the project was designed and the challenges that they are facing.

The visitors were sympathetic with the feeling that city officials expressed of not being able to get assistance with the problems that they were facing. Given that many cities in Louisiana, both large and small, are facing a

similar challenge to bring municipal wastewater treatment into compliance with existing laws on a relatively short time frame and with limited financial resources, we would assume that DEQ would be assisting cities in planning and in accessing potential sources of funds. It is surprising that the City of Hammond was apparently not able to receive assistance from the Municipal Facilities Revolving Loan Fund. The Sierra club representatives, Maura Wood and Leslie March, chapter chair were concerned that decisions about wastewater treatment should be made based on the best scenario and best science for that particular location. “While cost is certainly a factor, we are hopeful that resources are available to allow cities to plan properly based on a range of choices, and to avoid forcing cities into making less than optimal decisions based on cost alone” stated Maura Wood.

A major complaint from the neighboring residents is that the treatment ponds smell. “We appreciate the City’s effort to address the odor problems in the vicinity of the treatment plant by adding additional aerators and placing a cover

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*Green Zone
Promotes
Debris Solutions*

The New Orleans Group is the largest group of the Delta Chapter. It's membership area includes the greater New Orleans region and Jefferson Parish. The group has been very involved in the recovery efforts in New Orleans. Members of other groups and concerned nonmembers are welcome at all of our meetings.

The Sierra Club New Orleans Group meetings are now held at the Carrollton United Methodist Church 921 S. Carrollton Ave. (Corner of Carrollton and Freret) use door on Freret St. side. Doors open at 6:30, program begins at 7 p.m. The programs are open to the public and are free of charge. To get the latest details, call 1-504-836-3062.

Mark July 8 in your calendar for the annual picnic. Check web site for details.

The New Orleans Excom meets periodically. All members are welcome to attend. Please email neworleans-chair@louisiana.sierraclub.org for info.

Help the Sierra Club Bring Back the Blue Bins!

20 months after Katrina, the city is facing massive challenges: Rebuilding, crime, little affordable housing, expanded landfills, and not enough classes for school-children. Despite these problems, the city is signing fat contracts for automated twice-weekly garbage pickup and a Disney-fied French Quarter. Meanwhile, the city has done nothing to reinstate curb-side recycling, despite the energy savings, and reduced need for landfill space that recycling provides.

Please visit this web site to send a message to the Mayor and City Council leaders Oliver Thomas and Arnie Fielkow and demand *action*:

Web campaign tool provided by the Gulf Restoration Network

Recycle Beads

The New Orleans Group of the Sierra Club has once again volunteered to partner with The Arc of Greater New Orleans to help recycle Mardi Gras beads. This is a good way to help a good cause and clean out your attic in time for the Krewe of Oak.

For more information call:
Jane Wilson at The Arc 504-897-0134
jwilson9189@juno.com
Vance Levesque with the Sierra Club
504-416-8710

Outings

Outings are subject to change. You must register for all trips in advance by contacting New Orleans Group Outings Chair Jeff Grimes at nola.outings@gmail.com or calling (504) 525-1528 x205.

June 16 Blueberry Picking, Poplarville, MS

Dig up your favorite recipe for blueberry pie or cobbler. We'll head over to Mississippi to tour an organic blueberry farm and learn about their operation, and get a chance to pick one of the finest treats nature has to offer.

July 2007

Nothing scheduled yet for this month. If you are interested in leading an outing or need information about an outing please contact New Orleans Group Outings Chair Jeff Grimes at nola.outings@gmail.com or by calling (504) 525-1528 x205.



The GreenZone Taskforce is looking for help from members like you. The GreenZone Task Force membership is composed of Church Organizations, Environmental Non-Profit Groups, New Orleans Neighborhood Organizations University faculty and residents of Orleans Parish.

We have been meeting in person, by e-mail and phone conference call since the fall of 2005. The concerns that brought us together were how the handling and disposal of the debris from Katrina had a negative effect on recovering neighborhoods in Orleans Parish. The handling of the debris in our view seemed to be very short sighted. FEMA and the local governments had failed to remember our past environmental problems caused by debris removal from Hurricane Betsy including the public health disaster of the Agriculture Street Landfill.

The members of the GreenZone Task Force knew that there were better ways of handling the debris from Katrina that could create jobs and a recycling economy in Orleans and neighboring parishes in Louisiana. An economy which would better prepare Orleans Parish and Louisiana for the handling of future Hurricane debris problems and the daily garbage in Orleans Parish.

It seemed to us that the Corps of Engineers and others "in charge" of the debris removal were still using 19th century thinking "dig a hole in the ground and dump the stuff into it" rather than the 21st century thinking where there are many new and creative ideas in operation around the United States that could have been put into operation quickly to lessen the need for landfill disposal and future liability for Orleans Parish.

Continued next page

Pilot Project Makes Sense

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On this page is a simple model neighborhood recycling center plan that we have submitted to the New Orleans Office of Recovery. We are proposing this for Holy Cross but it could work for any neighborhood.

All of the members of the GreenZone Task Force are working and will continue to work for creative solutions to deal with the problems created by Hurricane Katrina. We feel that there needs to be an informed public debate on debris / garbage and its management. How can you help? Participate in our meetings, write letters to legislators and city council people, make phone calls, write letters to the editor. Help get your community organization, church or school group involved. We want to have statewide commitment to putting less in our landfills, create jobs in the recycling industry and have a safe plan to dispose of future hurricane debris.

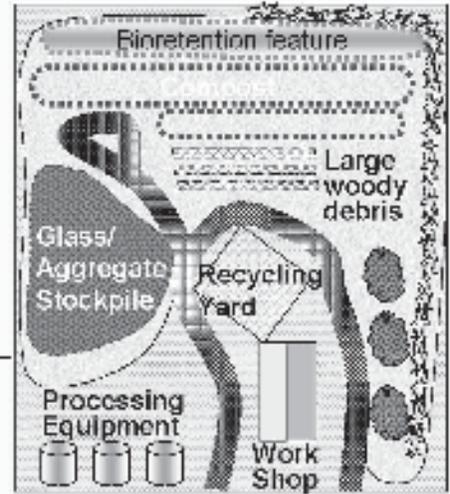
New Orleans Contact Darryl Malek-Wiley to volunteer at 504-865-8708
 Northshore Contact Leslie March at 985-871-6695
 Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Monroe we need interested volunteers to start their own groups.

Holy Cross Green Zone Demonstration Project



Operating Schematic →

VISION: An eco-industrial green zone that practices and demonstrates *integrated waste management* for terminated building stock, using deconstruction, reuse, and recycling, to create jobs, improve the environment, and greatly reduce material sent to landfills



Plant Stock

ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES
• Training	• Skilled Workforce
• Deconstruction	• Building Materials
• Recycling	• Materials Sales
• Composting	• Bulk and Bagged
• Wetlands Cribes	• Bayou Bienvenue
• Aggregate Grinding	• Products Sales
• Horticultural Stock	• Eco-functional Park
• Permaculture	• Real Life Example
↑	↓
Investment And Jobs	Revenues and Environmental Improvement

Environmental and Economic Benefits

- Quality jobs
- Architectural treasures
- Organic products
- Ecological restoration
- Outdoor recreation

Financial scenarios begin at \$50,000. Revenues and returns on investment are improved with larger capitalization

- GreenZone Taskforce Members
 All Congregations Together
 Alliance for Affordable Energy
 Citizens for a Strong New Orleans East
 PaxChristi New Orleans
 Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club
 LEAN
 Global Green
 Holy Cross Neighborhood Association
 Liz Davey
 Kristen Ardani
 Mercy Corps

Wastewater Assimilation

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and gas collection system over the headworks. As we asked during our meeting, we are also curious about how the odor impacts to the nearby community might be addressed if these measures fail to solve this ongoing problem.” said Leslie March. The Hammond wastewater staff indicated that the smell may be caused by clandestine dumping indicates that, and that even if one such “dumper” is apprehended, the system will respond in a similar way to future episodes of clandestine dumping that are almost sure to occur. Nearby residents are currently suffering from intolerable smells coming from this new treatment plant, and they have been told by the city to simply wait until July 30. “Frankly, it stinks now and I understand from people who live nearby that the plant did not stink until they started this new process.” says Leslie March. “The city of Hammond needs to put more resources to find the “culprit”.

This also brings up the effect of permit violations to the receiving wetland. As was noted on the “new plant final effluent data,” there have been quite a few violations of BOD, Fecal Coliform, Zinc, and Copper since the new plant went on-line in December. This entire wetland assimilation project was designed with the assumption that Hammond would be meeting its permit requirements. It seems that if they aren’t meeting their permit limits, the mathematical and scientific assumptions in the Use Attainability Analysis might not hold.

The city claims that the system brings nutrients and fresh water can bring to marshes and swamps that are overwhelmed with saltwater intrusion. However, there is a concern about the generalized enthusiasm for “wetland wastewater assimilation as wetland restoration” which may not be warranted in every instance and at every location. The fact that DEQ is in the process of permitting 26

Continued from previous column

additional wetland assimilation sites indicates that this is a popular tool of the moment that surely offers (as in the case of the City of Hammond) cost benefits to the municipality. We are concerned, however, that if the project is not carefully matched to a clear-eyed assessment of the needs of the location, the end result will not be a “restored” wetland, but rather just another overgrown wastewater treatment pond.

The Sierra Club and others are arguing for a clear guidance document from DEQ that avoids a “one-size-fits-all” approach, that spells out clear criteria for site assessment, and that recognizes that wetland assimilation may not be appropriate in every instance. Since we realize that DEQ is in the process of submitting a guidance document to EPA for approval, but the thought is that this document must be more robust—clearly delineating when these projects are appropriate, how they will be monitored, how toxicity will be addressed (heavy metals and other toxins, such as ammonia), and so on.

We are also concerned with the by-products flushed into our sewage systems such as household cleaners and prescription drugs.

If you are interested in following the permit process for wastewater assimilation projects in your community, contact Maura Wood at 225-925-8650.

Volunteers Needed

Continued from page 4

Public Lands Day, September 27-29th. We hope for 50 out of state volunteers to come to New Orleans to do two days of public service. We need local volunteers to help with planning, food, entertainment, day of event site help, registration and volunteer recruitment, Contact Leslie March at 985-871-6695 or lesliemarch@hotmail.com. 225-767-6384

Earl's Pearls Continued From Page 3

stability and to repair itself. One day workmen started to upgrade the parking lot. It had not been redone since it was built about 1960, and the end of the lot away from the oak tree had succumbed to subsidence, leaving huge cracks and bumps that impeded parking. It was work that needed to be done; no trees were removed to do it. But when they finished there, the workers attacked the lone oak at the other end near the faux guardhouse. I could watch the continuation (I almost wrote “progress”) of the operation from the coffee shop I visit every day. But I was glad that I was not present when the chain saws ripped through the fine, sturdy tree and brought it down. I saw only the aftermath, the cutting of the tree into pieces, the deposition of those pieces into a truck with a front-end loader. I thought I was watching some ghouls and grave-diggers taking pieces of a corpse away for burial.

The stump was ground away, and the masons covered the spot where the tree had lived with a whitish concrete that obliterated the life site. The finished concrete is the color of a new tomb. I had the urge to vandalize the concrete before it dried by scratching something like “R.I.P. Quercus Felicis” (Rest in Peace, Happy Oak Tree) but I’m too far along in life for that sort of protest.

What compulsion drove the owner of the shopping center to destroy a tree that it had gone to the trouble of preserving almost a half-century earlier? The same company still owns the real estate that had built it in the 1960s. The destruction of that one tree and the paving of the place where it had lived for 70 or 80 years must have cost several thousand dollars. What demon whispered in the manager’s ear, “Delenda est quercus, the oak tree must be destroyed”? The destruction of the oak tree did not create additional parking places; its removal simply made parking in existing spots easier but destroyed the shade while doing it. Had they left the tree and removed the empty guardhouse, they could have created at least one additional parking spot there. But no, the tree had to go.

Looking out from the coffee shop every day, I saw what may be a clue. Across the narrow parking lot from where the tree once stood, a white Hummer is parked almost every day, leading me to believe that it belongs to a rent-paying tenant. That monster vehicle probably was insulted by the oak getting in its way when it wanted to back straight out rather than maneuver to avoid the tree. How dare that tree impede progress! Did the

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tenant ask the owner to remove the tree? I can't say. Is the manager someone who thinks trees in parking lots are evil because vehicles sometimes back into them? I was tempted to go ask, but restrained myself, realizing that I'd probably get inane, stupid, or nonresponsive answers.

The live oaks of coastal Louisiana are part of our defenses against the fury of nature. They break the force of hurricanes on barrier islands, which were named "chêniers" because of the "chênes," oaks, that grow there. They keep the fierce summer sun away. They add enormous value to our properties. And yet this one in the parking lot had to be destroyed.

Madness.

– Earl Higgins

Portrait of an Activist

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What is it like to be a professional and a volunteer environmentalist?

I think it's great. I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to put my passion to work, to get a paycheck from it, and to have the time to volunteer on top of that. For quite a while I worked for a group that had been founded by Ralph Nader, and there was a Nader work ethic that pretty much precluded me having the time to share my passion or my expertise with any groups other than those I worked for. The GRN is a nice change from that, and since working with them I've been able to serve on the board of a great forests group based in Asheville, NC, the Dogwood Alliance and also get more involved with different levels of Club volunteer leadership.

What campaigns have you been involved with?

Professionally, I've worked on the roadless rule, protecting 60 million acres of wild national forestland across the country. That was a huge campaign that I was involved with at every level, grass roots, federal lobbying, and I even got to shake President Clinton's hand when he agreed to put in place the rule to protect these amazing lands. Of course, it was the first thing that President Bush undid when he came into office. I also worked on efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, defend the New Source Review component of the Clean Air Act, protect ancient redwoods of the Headwaters Forest of Northern California, rebuild the red snapper populations in the Gulf of Mexico, and fight the fish-killing, open-loop LNG terminals proposed for off-shore in the Gulf.

Activist Continued

Tell us about the LNG Campaign.

The LNG campaign is a highlight personally and professionally. It marks one of the first times that the environmental community was able to push back against the energy industry in the Gulf and win a very clear victory for marine wildlife and a healthier Gulf. Energy corporations like Exxon, Freeport MacMoRan, Shell and others were looking at importing liquefied natural gas from countries like Nigeria, Russia, Qatar as the next-big opportunity to make money off our addiction to hydrocarbons, and naturally saw the Gulf as their sacrifice zone, proposing off-shore terminals to turn the super-cold, imported liquid natural gas back into warmer, gas vapor. The original plan was use the relatively warm water of the Gulf and run it through a radiator like heat exchanger that would have had the downside of killing all the marine life in 100-200 million gallons of Gulf seawater daily, per terminal – destroying billions of eggs, larva and zooplankton that make up the building blocks of life in the Gulf. There was an estimate that one terminal alone could have destroyed as much as 5% of Louisiana's redfish catch. All this marine destruction was to save the energy companies 1% of their imported LNG!

What were the highlights of the campaign?

The best part was the amazing coalition of groups that came together to work on it. We created the Gumbo Alliance for Safe LNG that consisted of the Sierra Club and the GRN working side by side with the Louisiana Shrimp Association, the Louisiana Charter Boat Association, and the sportsman web site RodNReel.com. It was a great example of what can happen when diverse groups put aside differences that could easily keep them apart, and focus on the common ground that they agree on. Another fantastic piece of the campaign was helping design a local, Sierra Club citizen outreach campaign, so that young activists could spend their summer on the canvass working on an issue that had widespread public support, more local relevance and offered an opportunity to play a significant role in securing a victory.

What mistakes did you make?

Early on we assembled a really big, diverse coalition, but as the campaign wore on, I really focused my energies working just with the central steering committee of the Gumbo Alliance, and didn't spend enough time with the more peripheral groups, keeping those folks engaged. The upside was that the Gumbo Alliance steering committee worked really well together, but the downside was that when we won, not all the supporting organizations felt as invested in the victory.

What did you learn that makes you a better organizer?

Two things: One, that if you really want to win on conservation issues in the Gulf, you need to work with about every viewpoint that agrees with you, even if it takes you out of your comfort zone. Two, if you want to win, you need to go big. We were fortunate enough to have the resources to do fun things like hire three Green Corps organizers to work on the campaign with us for a couple months, run full page ads in the Baton Rouge Advocate and the Louisiana Sportsman thanking the Governor for her veto, and hammering Shell, as well as tabling outside JazzFest when Shell was the 'world sponsor' last year, handing out stickers and beer coozies that read "Thanks for the music, don't kill our fish - Stop the LNG Shell game." We also hired a plan to tow that message over the crowd.

What advice do you have to average Sierrans about getting more involved with the club?

It's like the old Nike slogan, "Just do it." The club needs you, your interests, and your passion. Don't be held up by some sense that you're not an expert, or don't know enough to have an impact. There are monthly program or excom meetings that you can go to and meet the folks who are currently leading your group – go! Meet the current leaders and offer your assistance. Don't wait for someone to ask you. Or if you were waiting for someone, count yourself asked – please get involved!

What are you working on now?

We're actively engaged in the Save Our Cypress campaign, we are just putting the finishing touches on a web-based "Flash" animation that features the voice of Harry Shearer, a part-time New Orleanian who has been in the Christopher Guest 'mockumentries' This is Spinal Tap, and A Mighty Wind, and is the voice of Smithers, Mr. Burns and Ned Flanders, and features a character reminiscent of the Wal-Mart smiley faced guy running amuck turning the U.S. Constitution into post it notes, the liberty bell into paper clips and Gulf coast cypress forests into Mulch. By the time you read this you should be able to see it on <http://HealthyGulf.org>

How can members of the Sierra Club help you achieve your goals?

My goal is to leave a world to my daughter Zola Grace that has a stable climate, healthy waters and intact wildlands that still harbor wildlife that inspires humanity. I think we all need to work together to make that a reality.

