



DISCOVER DEQ

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER



September 2015 Issue Number: 44

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State agencies the first to embrace Geaux Ride app

On a sunny September day, in the green at Town Square in downtown Baton Rouge, a new ride-sharing app was unveiled to the public. The app, Geaux Ride, allows commuters to create profiles and find other people to carpool with saving stress and money. Four state agencies, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Department of Transportation and Development are encouraging their employees to use the application.

Jennifer Bounds, DEQ employee, is using Geaux Ride several times a week. At the kickoff, Jennifer was interviewed about her reasons for using Geaux Ride. "It makes things so much less stressful," Bounds said.

The app's website has online tools that will allow users to see how much they save by using the app, as well as the environmental benefits. For more information about Geaux Ride and how you can get it for your workplace, email Jtsukits@brgov.com at the Capital Region Planning Commission which hosts the program, or go the website: www.geauxride.com. Remember – Geaux Ride – it all adds up!



DEQ Employee Jennifer Bounds, left, is interviewed by WAFB's Greg Merriweather, center, at Town Square during the Geaux Ride ride-sharing program kickoff.



Attendees find a shady spot to talk about Geaux Ride during the kickoff event.



The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program celebrates its 25th anniversary

Everyone can play their part in contributing to a robust and sustainable coastline, and participation in the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) is a great way to get started.

The National Estuary Program was established by Congress through section 320 of the Clean Water Act, and BTNEP is one of 28 national estuary programs in the United States and its territories.

On Sept. 13, BTNEP celebrated its 25th year in operation as an organization whose goal is to protect and sustain the Bayou-Terrebonne estuary for current and future generations to enjoy. The estuary is a vital coastal area where river and bayou freshwater mix with Gulf of Mexico saltwater, thereby producing a rich and diverse biological and ecological area.

Founded as a group within the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, BTNEP currently falls under the guidance of the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), a group formed in 1979 to increase awareness in Louisiana's coastal and marine environments through research and education programs.

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary contains diverse wetland habitats that provide several benefits to Louisiana, such as residential living, commercial, and recreational activities, nurseries for fisheries, energy resources as well as its major role in coastal protection from tropical storms and hurricanes. One of BTNEP's missions is to develop and sustain Louisiana's coastal wetlands – areas that are disappearing on a daily basis predominantly due to man-made impacts on the land.

Land loss and the damaging effects of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike have left the estuary in need of ongoing restoration and debris cleanup efforts. BTNEP's efforts include volunteer projects that center on estuary cleanups, vegetative planting, water quality monitoring, and various education and outreach events annually. Several coastal and habitat restoration and scientific efforts are also underway, including vegetative planting projects, and monitoring of threatened or endangered bird nesting grounds. Additionally, their estuarine research endeavors have made an impact in protection of wildlife, marine life and water quality in the coastal region.

Events run by the group have occurred in the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary, Bayou Lafourche, Grand Isle, Jean Lafitte National



Photo provided by BTNEP
BTNEP volunteers plant trees as an erosion control method along the beach at Grand Isle State Park



Photo by BTNEP
BTNEP volunteers participate in a roadside cleanup project.

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Historical Park and Preserve, Cocodrie, Lake Fields Game and Fish Preserve, Port Fourchon and Lafitte.

BTNEP is supported in part by the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation. The Foundation uses tax-deductible donations to fund several activities related to wildlife, habitat restoration, documenting coastal impact and long-term coastal research. In fact, the program was recently lauded for its efforts by the EPA at the Gulf Guardian Awards held in Corpus Christi, Texas, on July 30.

Other BTNEP functions

The program also plays an active role in outreach efforts, such as hosting:

- Paddle Bayou Lafourche
- Bayou Lafourche Cleanup
- Tree plantings
- Teacher workshops
- Beach cleanups

Alma Robichaux, BTNEP's Education and Outreach Coordinator, won second place in the Partnership category for her work on the annual Bayou Lafourche Cleanup. Over the past four years, Robichaux has orchestrated a cleanup that has involved more than 3,000 volunteers and has removed more than 60 tons of trash from the bayou.

Assisting with the effort, BTNEP established partnerships with the Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District, Port Fourchon, Walmart, Shell and more than 30 local partners.

Matt Benoit, BTNEP's Habitat Restoration Coordinator; and Joseph Dantin, BTNEP's former Public Involvement Coordinator, were also recognized for their coastal restoration and preservation efforts. Benoit and Dantin were awarded second prize in the Youth Environmental Education category for the "Growing Restoration Roots" project.

Co-sponsored by Keep Louisiana Beautiful and other local supporters, the cleanup continues to raise awareness to the litter abatement and EPA's Trash Free Waters Program. Local residents rally to clean up the water body that provides drinking water to thousands of citizens who reside near the bayou.

BTNEP's volunteer program brings students from around the U.S. to study and grow wetland plant diversity in support of Louisiana coastal restoration. Volunteers learn about land loss, native plants, restoration techniques, plant potting and how to identify plant growth stages. Capping off their education is their participation in wetland restoration planting efforts.

Back in May, BTNEP volunteers cleaned up the beach at Elmer's Island along Barrier Island in Jefferson Parish; and last year, volunteers took part in an erosion control tree and shrub planting project at Grand Isle State Park.

While BTNEP is funded partially through federal funds under the Clean Water Act, donations allow BTNEP to implement their comprehensive plans for restoring and protecting the estuary. The long-term goal is to gather a team of volunteers that can be available for estuary restoration projects as needed.

BTNEP has a long history of helping to protect and preserve Louisiana's valuable coastal ecosystem, and additional efforts are ongoing. To learn more about the estuary as well as restoration and protection efforts, or to volunteer, contact BTNEP at 985-447-0868 or visit their website at www.BTNEP.org.



Photo by BTNEP
BTNEP members Alma Robichaux, Joseph Dantin and Matt Benoit are recognized at the 2015 Gulf Guardian Awards



DEQ inspects neighborhood wastewater treatment stations

DEQ inspectors are frequently out in the community inspecting, among other things, neighborhood waste water treatment stations. Don Weinell, DEQ environmental scientist, is often on the road in the Baton Rouge area inspecting wastewater treatment stations as part of his duties at DEQ. Weinell works in the Inspection Division, and he and other DEQ inspectors visit a variety of wastewater treatment plants, lift stations and smaller residential wastewater units on a rotating schedule. Standard minor facilities (defined as units with a discharge capacity of less than a million gallons per day) are inspected every three years, while major sources (facilities with a discharge capacity of more than a million gallons per day) are inspected every year.



Adequate fencing is needed around wastewater treatment units, as DEQ Environmental Scientist Don Weinell conducts a site inspection in Ascension Parish

Inspectors review the previous history of the site in question, taking note of the color, smell and consistency of the wastewater. If the system is working correctly, the wastewater is a chocolate brown color.

“Darker water usually will indicate a septic or borderline septic problem where anaerobic digestion of the wastes is generally the issue,” said Weinell. “Gray or blacker water typically will have solids or algae present which means that the treatment system is malfunctioning and improperly breaking down the waste materials.”

While highly complex, the treatment process varies from unit-to-unit and is based on the type, flow rate and capacity. Generally, the process involves several steps – starting with preliminary screening which removes large material (plastic debris, Styrofoam, etc.) from the influent water through screens. Inorganics (such as gravel or sand) are removed in order to protect downstream equipment from accumulating sediment and possibly causing damage. A clarification process then continuously removes most of the solids and biological nutrients from the wastewater.

Filtration and disinfection of the wastewater occurs next, as suspended solids are removed from the water. Chlorine is added to disinfect the recycled water. It is then pumped into a distribution pipeline network that delivers the recycled water to the facility for internal use, irrigation and groundwater recharge. Water not pumped into the network is de-chlorinated and discharged to an outfall point such as a creek, lake or river.

Solids removed from these treatment processes are pumped out into an anaerobic digestion process, and liquid is removed and subsequently reintroduced. In anaerobic digestion, oxygen is removed and heat is added as the microorganisms begin digesting the sludge and converting the solids into gaseous byproducts, thereby reducing the sludge volume.

After anaerobic digestion, solids are dewatered through filters. The removed liquid is pumped out of the treatment plant, because the liquid’s high concentration of ammonia would negatively affect the biology of the secondary treatment process.

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In addition to reviewing documentation and ensuring proper functionality of the units, DEQ inspectors make a note that proper fencing or safety measures is in place to prevent children, passersby or animals from entering the unit. Walls or fences typically surroundsuch units, and trees and bushes are added for the aesthetics as well as noise reduction measures. The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals is responsible for ensuring that proper fencing is in place, but DEQ will make a note in the file should such a safety problem exist.

The need for chlorination in wastewater treatment plants varies by parish, but DEQ sets bacterial limits to ensure that wastewater is meeting a treatment baseline. Normal conditions for bacteria would be considered less than 400 fecal coliform colonies per every 100 milliliters of water. Some plants have a state-of-the-art ultraviolet light system in lieu of chlorination, where sensors monitor the status of the effluent and signal if the light becomes degraded. These inspections are just part of the day-to-day activities of DEQ inspectors around the state.

Records Management finds hidden history in basement boxes of documents

According to Lemony Snicket, “those unable to catalog the past are doomed to repeat it.” The staff of Records Management at the Department of Environmental Quality is pretty confident that won’t happen here. Records specialist Ellen Peneguy is one of the people leading the charge onward and downward (to the basement) to find and scan historic records into the agency’s Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) so that records of environmental actions past will be available to everyone with access to a computer.

Records Management’s work has been rewarded The staff has located around 40 boxes of records from the Louisiana Stream Control Commission. The records date to the 1930s, ‘40s and on to the ‘70s when the commission was abolished and made part of the Office of Environmental Quality within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Eventually, the Office of Environmental Quality became an agency on its own – today’s DEQ. Along with the commission’s authority came its records, and so that is how the boxes came to be in the basement of DEQ’s Galvez Building headquarters.



Ellen Peneguy stands by basement shelves containing boxes of records from the Louisiana Stream Control Commission.

The Stream Control Commission originally comprised members from various agencies with environmental concerns, including the Department of Health. It had a chairman and met regularly to take action on permits, environmental complaints and issues. The commission had a secretary who kept records of correspondence and minutes of meetings, and those records are the ones Records Management found.

“We always knew about them,” Peneguy said. “They (the records) would have gone back and forth between DNR and whatever agency was the environmental agency. They (DNR) ended up with some, but we ended up with the biggest piece of the collection. They were just sitting on the shelf in the basement.”

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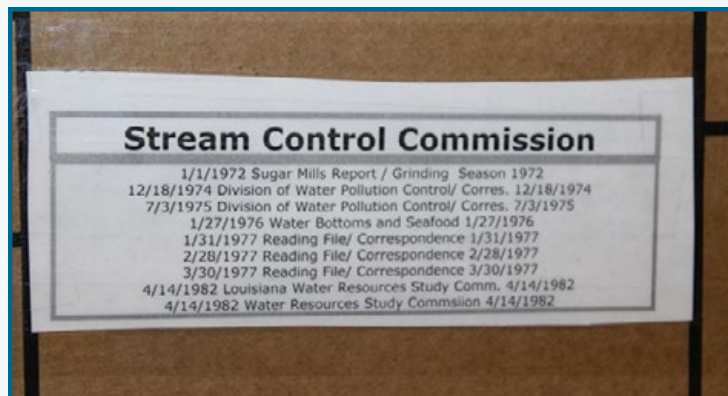
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"I reviewed our inventory database to see what older dates I could find. I knew that any date from the time period I was looking for would contain a string of characters such as 193 for anything in the 1930s, 194 for anything in the 1940s, and so on. Searching on those strings, I was able to comb through the results and identify everything in the basement that had an older date listed in the description."

There were about 30 boxes with an average 2,500 pages per box. "This is a lot of stuff," Peneguy said. "Initially we hadn't scanned it because of the age of the records and how delicate some of them were." But things change. Consulting conservators, Peneguy learned that the documents could be safely scanned – one time – without the high intensity light damaging the old papers. New equipment made it possible. "We had older scanners, and we've since gotten better scanners. We did scan the things we thought were of better quality about five years ago. Those were actually easier to scan."



The labels on the boxes reveal which records are contained in each one and the date of the event to which the record pertains.

About two and a half years ago, a researcher called to request access to the records. Author Jason Theriot, an energy and environmental historian and consultant and a former Energy Policy Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, was sure of the historic value of the records. Theriot is an LSU graduate who now lives in Texas. His book "American Energy, Imperiled Coast: Oil and Gas Development in Louisiana's Wetlands," was published by LSU Press in 2014. His research work focuses primarily on the historical dynamics of oil and gas development, environmental policies and restoration activities along the Gulf Coast.



Author Jason Theriot on EDMS: 'It took me a while to figure it out, but yes, it has been very helpful. Very, very helpful.'

Looking to follow up on a reference from a fellow researcher, Theriot called LDEQ. "I contacted the records office," he said. He was given directions to the EDMS system and hit pay dirt. "It took me a while to figure it out, but yes, it has been very helpful," he said. "Very, very helpful."

Using the transcripts of Stream Control Commission meetings, Theriot was able to complete a paper for an energy publication. "It has been accepted. It will be published next year," he said.

The actions of the Stream Control Commission concerning emissions, saltwater intrusion into freshwater streams and aquifers, agricultural runoff, disposal of plants' wastes and citizen concerns about threats to communities and wild habitats, foreshadow many present day functions of LDEQ, and provide a glimpse into the evolution of environmental policy in Louisiana, as Theriot knows. The records have a historical value. That's why the original records won't be going back to the basement.

"We are going to donate this whole collection to the State Archives so they can preserve it. They have trained archivists and people who will determine the value," Peneguy said. The entire collection will continue to be available online in EDMS under the Agency Interest number (AI) 168766. Anyone can type in the number online and view the records in an electronic form.



4-H Junior Leadership Club launches annual membership drive in Evangeline Parish

As an environmental research and service program under the extension office of the LSU AgCenter, the 4-H Junior Leadership Club of Evangeline Parish is a youth-driven service organization comprising parish students, grades eight to 12, who are members of their school's respective 4-H Clubs.

"Each individual school club is encouraged to take part in a service program during the year, and several of these clubs focus on some type of environmental issue that is geared toward ecological beautification and sustainment," said Tina Guillory, 4-H Extension Agent with the extension office of the LSU AgCenter. Service projects are designed to improve the community through eco-friendly endeavors such as tree planting, gardening, trash pickup and litter abatement, park beautification, crop and livestock clinics and other tasks that enhance Louisiana's environment.

Since those projects support the core principles of 4-H, it is their annual membership drive that recruits new members who bring with them a fresh infusion of ideas – ideas which set the upcoming projects into motion. "The membership drive begins in September and goes through Nov. 2, and the group meets each month to plan their activities," Guillory said.

With more than six million members in the United States, the bulk of 4-H's projects have historically centered on programs in agriculture, forestry and fishery sustainment. Over the last few decades, however, the organization has introduced leadership development, citizenship and service to the community into their programs.

To that end, projects that focus on those skills have become a part of 4-H's environmental friendly practices and experiential learning programs. Evangeline Parish's 4-H Club is no different. "For the 2015-2016 club year, the officers have decided to concentrate on a citizenship focus with emphasis on foster children/youth, homeless children and the elderly," said Guillory.

All of the 4-H Junior Leadership Club's endeavors are sponsored by the LSU AgCenter's extension office in Evangeline Parish, whose primary function is to cultivate young leaders through the 4-H concept of strengthening the four personal development areas: head, heart, hands and health. As projects are completed, the reward is typically an informative getaway for the club that acknowledges their hard work.

"The Junior Leadership Club ends the year with an educational trip that coincides with the project work they focused on during the year. This year, they participated in whitewater rafting and visited historic landmarks in the Chattanooga, Tenn., area." Supporting the idea of blending environmental enhancement with community reinforcement is the 4-H Clover Patch Newsletter, which is published monthly by LSU AgCenter Extension Agents Todd Fontenot and Tina Guillory. The Clover Patch is a



Photo by Tina Guillory
Evangeline Parish Junior Leaders Lily Deville, Alyson Fontenot and Hallie Daire participate in the 2014 Trash Bash at Chicot State Park in Ville Platte.

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publication that is sent out to inform parents and 4-H members of the projects and activities that are taking place each month. Each newsletter contains a calendar of events as well as a description of upcoming contests and projects that members can opt to participate in.

For the past few years, the “Trash Bash” has been a large part of the club’s service learning program.

Scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 14, the annual litter and debris cleanup event will take place at Chicot State Park and the Louisiana State Arboretum in Ville Platte. Volunteers will conduct a comprehensive trash sweep of the park grounds while enjoying the outdoors and knowing they participated in a worthy cause that makes a difference

More 4H fun

Some of the activities planned for the year include:

- September – Membership drive
- October – National 4-H Week celebration: business displays and radio spots on local radio station KVPI; National Science Day activity; and the Annual Cotton Cookery Contest and Pet Show
- November – Chicot State Park and Louisiana State Arboretum Trash Bash; Holiday Food Basked and deliver; Food and Fitness workshop; and Assist with the electric workshop
- December – Annual Fall Cookery Contest; visit area Nursing Homes; and Assist with Food for Families Food Drive
- January – Annual Cookery Contest; Parish Livestock Show
- February – Evangeline Parish Clothing Contest
- March – Evangeline Parish Achievement Day and Fishing Clinic
- April – Statewide AgMagic experience
- May – Annual Awards and Recognition Program

DEQ On The Move



John Blevins, EPA Region 6 Enforcement Director, presents a seminar on Next Generation Compliance at DEQ headquarters on Sept. 9. Topics included the new technology designed to ensure for environmental compliance, transparency in reporting and advancements in information technology. More than 145 DEQ personnel were in attendance.



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Louisiana Department Of Environmental Quality's 3th Quarter Summaries

3th Quarter 2014 Enforcement Actions:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/DIVISIONS/Enforcement/EnforcementActions.aspx>

3th Quarter 2014 Settlement Agreements:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/DIVISIONS/Enforcement/SettlementAgreements.aspx>

3th Quarter 2014 Air Permits:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2922/Default.aspx>

3th Quarter 2014 Water Permits:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2899/Default.aspx>

3th Quarter 2014 Solid and Hazardous Waste Permits:

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/divisions/wastepermits.aspx>

