Seedlings planted to help restore wetlands

By CHARLENE LEGE
school editor

Students in Wayne Mouton’s agriscience class at Abbeville High were able to take a close look at a Vermilion Parish wetlands area, and were able to be a part in restoring and preserving it for future generations.

Tuesday, 13 students, Mouton, County Agent Mark Shirley, a couple of scientists, and others were in a marshy area south of Henry, planting baldcypress and southern waxmyrtle seedlings.

The planting was on National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetland Reserve Program lands.

“These seedlings were grown by the students at school,” explained Mouton. “It’s actually been a bad year, but we have 100 cypress plants and around 250 of the waxmyrtle.”

The trees were planted approximately 20 feet apart along a strip which serves as a levee between farm land already affected by salt water intrusion, and a marshy area with fresh water.

Abbeville High is one of nine schools in Louisiana participating in the ongoing school nursery program sponsored by the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program and the LSU AgCenter.

The project is designed to help students learn first hand about wetlands issues, and also aids them in learning horticulture and nursery production techniques while growing the plants.

“This project and the location of this planting combine to make a perfect, real-world learning experience for students in the program,” said Dr. Pam Blanchard, Louisiana Sea Grant Marine Education Coordinator.

Henry Hebert, owner of the property where the planting took place, welcomed the students’ plants to help diversify the habitat on the 700 acres of land he recently enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Project.

Hebert explained to the students the damage caused by salt water, and why he became involved with the program.

“Parts of it can be used for hunting and fishing, but can’t be used for cattle or crops anymore.” said Hebert. “I (See SEEDLINGS, Page 3)
Rachel Somers (left) and Jessica LaBorde (right) demonstrated planting a cypress seedling, as students from Abbeville High prepared to plant nearly 500 seedlings of baldcypress and waxmyrtle.

Abbeville High students (from left) Matt Soucy, Brittany Hopper and Ryan LaPoint prepare to plant a baldcypress along a strip of wetlands property, south of Henry.