

The Courier

Growing program hopes to help coastline

Golden Meadow

A local coastal conservation program is growing - in more ways than one. Coastal Roots gives students the chance to grow native plants to be used for small-scale environmental protection projects. Originating in Lafourche Parish, the program now serves nearly a dozen parishes as far as Cameron Parish in southwest Louisiana.

Students participating in the program establish their own nurseries, care for the seedlings and plant them at approved locations.

Wednesday, students from Larose-Cut Off Middle School paid a visit to a local hurricane protection levee where students from local schools and from Jefferson Parish had planted black mangroves last year.

Program officials say the seedlings have taken root, with many sprouting one and a half feet from their original height of about six inches.

"We've got some nice looking ones out here," said David Bourgeois, a fisheries agent with the LSU AgCenter's Cooperative Extension Service and the



Louisiana Sea Grant College Program.

Bourgeois - with the help of the local Plant Materials Center in Golden Meadow and others - was instrumental in creating Coastal Roots.

After a grass-roots start, the program received funding from the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Sea Grant and the state Department of Natural Resources, with support from LSU AgCenter and the LSU Department of Horticulture.

In their greenhouses, students plant Southern bald cypress, southern wax myrtle, red mulberry, hackberry and black mangrove.

At the levee, maintained by the South Lafourche Levee District, program participants last year planted black mangrove along the shoreline.

Program leaders say the mangrove will help to stabilize the levee.

As it grows, the plant develops a root system that will collect sediment and, ultimately, help prevent the levee banks from eroding through wave action.

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