

LSU, area school children get involved in May Day projects

The facts on Louisiana's erosion problem continue to pile up nearly as fast as the coastline itself washes away. Since 1930, Louisiana has lost more than 1,500 square miles of marsh. In the last 100 years, it has already lost an area the size of New Jersey. Today, the state is losing 25 to 30 square miles each year, nearly a football field-sized area of prime wetlands every 30 minutes. But students and faculty at LSU, as well as area school children, are doing what they can to care for the state's coastal wetlands and environment.

May is National Wetlands Month and many are heeding Gov. Mike Foster's call to action. Some began as early as last month like students who took part in the Iberville Parish 4-H Achievement Day to plant seeds to help save Louisiana's coast. The seeds will be grown in the LSU Coastal Roots Back-Up Seeding Nursery. Students at St. Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge also planted nearly 200 cypress seedlings at Alligator Bayou and have volunteered their weekends to the project and to water monitoring at Alligator Bayou for the next two years.

This month, area schools from LSU to Harry Hurst Middle School in Destrehan will be involved in May Day activities.

LSU graduate student Brian Milan has organized two events in which the LSU Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences can participate. The department will make marine science presentations May 10 at Audubon Elementary, Terra High School, Woodlawn High and McKinley Middle Magnet. On May

11, at 9:30 a.m., the department will lead a beach sweep/clean-up effort around the University Lakes at LSU.

"We are only able to make presentations at four schools because the number of graduate students able to participate on May 10 limits us," Milan said. "But as many as 25 schools have expressed interest. We hope these presentations will act as a springboard for oceanography education outreach in the future.

"As the flagship school in this state, I feel it is important for LSU to take a step towards protecting and showing concern for the coast and the environment," he added. "These issues are not going away and by organizing projects for Gov. Foster's May Day 2002; I hope we can show the state and the nation that we understand the seriousness of our environmental problems."

Other schools participating in the May Day program are:

St. Louis King of France, Baton Rouge – May 2 – will help install their Coastal Roots can yard and irrigation system. They will also be planting nearly 1,000 cypress and waxmyrtle seeds as part of the Coastal Roots project. The seedlings will then be tended in the can yard until next fall.

St. Joseph's Academy, Baton Rouge – May 9 – will plant cypress seedlings at Alligator Bayou as part of a science field trip.

Pierre Part Middle School, Pierre Part – May 10 – will plant 200 cypress seedlings, along with the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program,

Continued on Page 3

May Day

Continued from Page 1

the Atchafalaya Basin Project and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, from their Coastal Roots nursery at Belle River Boat Landing.

Devall Middle School, Port Allen – May 13 – will help install a can yard and automatic irrigation system for their Coastal Roots nursery.

Harry Hurst Middle School, Destrehan – May 16 – will help install a can yard and automatic irrigation system for their Coastal Roots nursery.

While schools make up a large part of the participants in the May Day 2002 campaign, other groups are welcome to get involved as well.

Families are invited to do things that might be beneficiary such as building a birdhouse or

organizing a carpool.

Conservation groups are urged to plant trees, clean a beach or plant marsh grasses. Businesses are asked to match any funds employees earn toward a conservation project or even plant trees in their parking lots. In fact, two bed and breakfasts, Crochet House Bed and Breakfast in Houma and Naquin's Bed in Breakfast in Thibodaux, are offering free lodging for out of town reporters who come to their respective areas to cover May Day events. Naquin's is also including a local tour.

For more information on May Day or registering an event, contact the Coastal Activities Office at 866-MAYDAY or www.lamayday.net.

—Josh Duplechain