

2003

# EstuaryLive' aims national spotlight on coastal wetland loss

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time it takes for viewers to watch their one-hour program on TV, two precious Louisiana wetlands are lost to the ravages and the mismanagement of man. Every year, the half-acre disappearance every 100 feet by land in the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary system is about to have its day in the national sun via the Internet. At 1:45 a.m. on September 26, 'Live from the Estuary' will air a one-hour interactive field trip. The program will highlight the beauty and benefit along with the potential disappearance of millions of acres of land between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers.

with Lovin to create Louisiana's segment. "Estuary Live encompasses eight sites," says Lovin. "Louisiana is definitely the most exciting." Featured are Pimlico Sound, in North Carolina; South Slough, in Oregon; Charlotte Harbor, in Florida; Galveston Bay, in Texas; Great Bay, in New Jersey; Puget Sound, in Washington; North Inlet, in South Carolina; and Elmer's Island, in Louisiana. "We're hoping educators statewide take advantage of this opportunity," says BTNEP program director Kerry St. Pierre. "Students are exposed from the classroom to estuaries around the country, including our own." National Estuaries Day began in 1988 as part of Coast Weeks, a three-week celebration of American coastal resources. That same year,

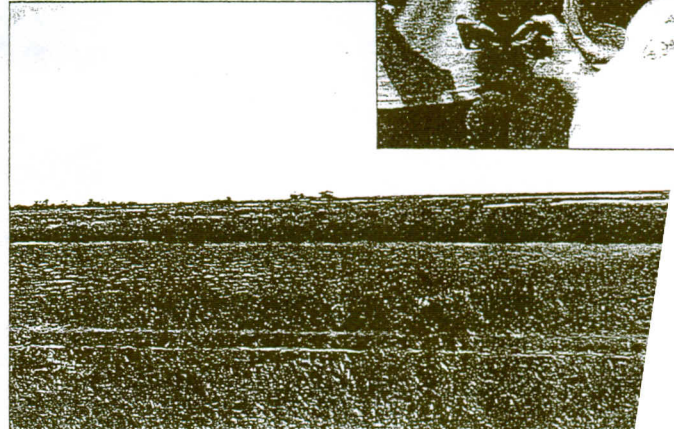


Photo by Celeste

inset: Gary LaFleur gives a biology lesson on blue crabs. Above: The site for live broadcast looking so levee in Golden Meadow.

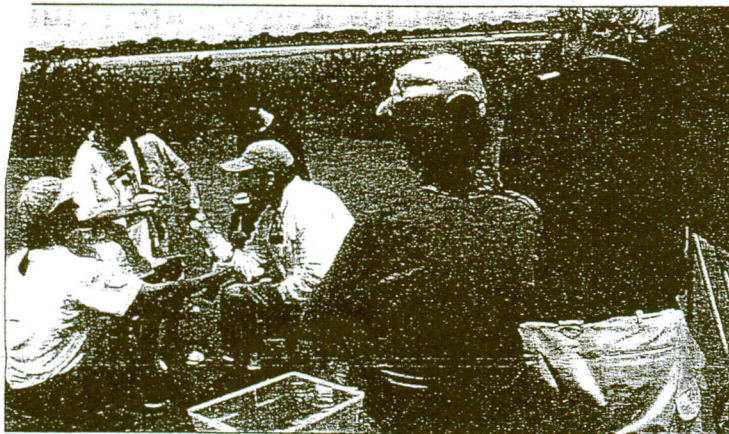


Photo by Celeste Regal - Tri-Parish Times

EstuaryLive producer Bill Lovin films Deborah Schultz interviewing Gary LaFleur for the Elmer Island segment.

"Louisiana is unique since wetlands are an integral part of culture and nature," says 'Live' executive producer, Bill Lovin from Marine Graphics of North Carolina. "This is our third year celebrating National Estuary Day in this medium." National Estuary Day is an annual celebration of the magical places where fresh water from rivers, streams and bayous mix with salt water from the ocean. The interagency campaign celebrates the importance of estuaries and the urgency to protect them. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Estuarine Research Reserves and the Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Program hosts most of the activities, including the live broadcast. Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) in Thibodaux is working

Lovin teamed up with educator Susan Lovelace to develop EstuaryLive as an education experience offered through the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve. "We got started on a local basis 5 1/2 years ago in Beaufort," says Lovin. "This year the people from Louisiana agencies have done a great job getting ready to make the most of their part of the program." From Nicholls State University in Thibodaux to the LSU AgCenter statewide, area professionals contribute their skills and expertise. "Nicholls' fish biologist, Dr. Gary LaFleur and the AgCenter's David Bourgeois are just a few," says BTNEP education coordinator Deborah Schultz. "Also bird expert David Muth and Earl Melancon, oyster biologist, are taking part." The program will explore many topics indicating the delights of south Louisiana and the

conditions threatening its future. Elmer's Island is accentuated because of its pristine beauty. Located directly across Caminada Pass in Grand Isle, its beachfront and wetland areas, marshes and dunes provide 1,700 acres of prime habitat for a wide variety of flora and fauna. The many fish species making it advantageous to sportsmen include speckled and white trout, flounder, redfish, channel mullet, black drum, croaker, Spanish mackerel and blue crabs. "This island was originally run as a concession with a small fee to access the incredible grounds," says Schultz. "Many area residents would like it re-opened so family and relaxation time can be enjoyed as it was in the past." LaFleur and Bourgeois are on hand with students from Montegut Middle School. The group dives into an impromptu biology lesson and 'Coastal Roots' planting session. "Whenever these guys (BTNEP) say so, I come running," says an enthusiastic Bourgeois. The AgCenter fisheries agent and coastal restoration participant says "the kids are our future and I'll do what I can to help them save the vanishing coast." Teacher Mary Lynn Levron is joined by four

of her students from Mor Middle School to Elmers Island black mangroves. "The kids had a wild time Bourgeois. "LaFleur had them also got to throw cast nets at Broadcasting from the Levee gate in Golden Meadow with general manager of the South district ties in the important port to local problems. "Due to rapid and continued last three storms in our history in the fall of 2004 year) which 50 years ago inconvenience, are not Currole. "There is now where communities are this much wetlands. Estuarine piece in the puzzle is not only we, but the coastal erosion." For the eight days visit <http://www.estuarylive.com> For additional information, visit [www.btnepp.org](http://www.btnepp.org) or call BTNEP at 985-4