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AHS FFA and 4-H clubs work to prevent coastal erosion

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Abbeville High School's FFA and 4-H clubs spent Wednesday, November 4, 2009 on the Gulf Coast planting grasses with intentions of extending the life of the Louisiana coast. In conjunction with the LSU Coastal Roots program, Mark Shirley from the LSU AgCenter, and 4-H volunteer Gwen Broussard, students planted nearly 1,000 bitter panicum cuttings on Cheniere au Tigre. Broussard is also an associate of the Youth Wetland Outreach and Education project. Cheniere au Tigre is a small ridge off the Vermilion Parish coast, sparsely inhabited in the past but home to only a few camps today. The students were educated on the history of Cheniere Au Tigre by descendants of settlers, and were shown where the hotel, church, and school once stood. They were also shown the cemetery, and told stories of how people from many states would visit Cheniere Au Tigre; soaking in the mud and gulf waters were said to be healing. The once thriving community was hit hard by Hurricane Audrey in 1957, and then Hurricanes Rita and Ike in recent years.

With projects like Coastal Roots and the Youth Wetland Outreach, Abbeville's FFA and 4-H Clubs hope to slow down or even reverse the erosion process.

"You have to preserve land to preserve culture," said Shane Theall, agriculture teacher at Abbeville High and FFA and 4-H sponsor. "We're making them aware of that." Theall hopes to continue making the trip regularly, as do the students

"I tell you what," said one student, "this was the best day of school I've ever had. It's fun, educational, and extremely important work."



Abbeville High School's group of FFA and 4-H club members that made the trip to Cheniere au Tigre.

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