

### A "Can-Do" Attitude

With the rapid erosion of Louisiana's wetlands, scientists are predicting that New Orleans could be a coastal city in 10 years or less. However an initiative called The LSU Coastal Roots Program is working with schools in a grassroots effort to restore the wetlands, tree by tree.

Founded in 2001 within six Louisiana schools, The LSU Coastal Roots Program is an environmental stewardship program devoted to advocating community



partnerships and self-sustaining environmental coastal restoration projects. Today, it is active in 18 schools in 10 parishes, impacting 750 students every year.

The LSU College of Education, the LSU Department of Horticulture, the LSU AgCenter and the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program support the program.

Louisiana students from across the state plant and care for seedlings which will one day be transplanted into Louisiana's coastal marshland. Once the trees are fully grown, the roots will help hold the eroding soil of the coastline in place.

The Coastal Roots Program assists in the installation and maintenance of "can yards" in participating schools. A can yard is an area where plants are raised until they are large enough to be moved to their final planting location.

Students then watch over their wetland tree seedlings until the seedlings are between 9 and 12 inches tall. Once the proper height, the students then transplant half of the seedlings in state parks which have received significant damage from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The remaining half of the seedlings are repotted into one-gallon containers in the can yard, where they grow larger and stronger before they are moved to their final planting location the following year. Students keep the production cycle going by planting a new set of 1,000 seedlings each spring.

"The kids are learning how to take care of something that will make a difference in the environment," said Pam Blanchard, director of the LSU Coastal Roots Program and assistant professor in the LSU College of Education. "We believe that this project is a wonderful launching point for lessons to teach the kids about why we're losing our wetlands and why environmental stewardship is so important."

The program also helps to teach both life and earth science concepts as well as provide students a hands-on stewardship projects that makes the science content interesting, relevant and memorable.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to have a joint cooperative endeavor with local schools for projects we are already working on in our parks and to get students actively involved in restoring Louisiana's coasts and marshes," said Raymond Berthelot, chief of interpretive services at the Louisiana Office of State Parks. If you are interested in supporting The Coastal Roots program, please contact Georgia Scobee, director of development in LSU's College of Education, at 225-578-6684 or [gscobee@lsu.edu](mailto:gscobee@lsu.edu).