

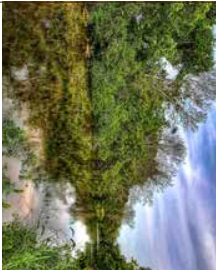
An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush, green forest. The water is a mix of dark and light brown, indicating a large sandbar in the center. Two people are kayaking down the river, one in the foreground and one further back. The text 'the TECHE PROJECT REPORT' is overlaid at the top in white serif font.

the
TECHE PROJECT
· REPORT ·

TECHE RENAISSANCE

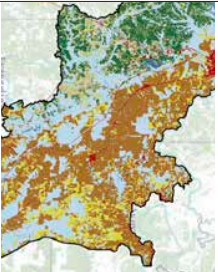
Turning our gaze toward the
water to continue the legacy of
the Bayou Teche and the Lower
Atchafalaya River

5 ENRICH IT



Watershed ecology, health and education.

3 TEACHE RENAISSANCE



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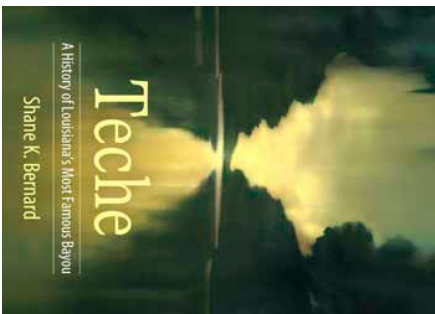
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Brown Water Stories Review:



Teche

A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou

Shane K. Bernard

Historian Shane Bernard tells the stories of Bayou Teche

By Sandra Sarr

The TEACHE Project Report
Summer 2016
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Executive Director's Letter

This report highlights the accomplishments you made possible, and the future goals we can only achieve together to fulfill the TEACHE Renaissance vision.

Over the past few years we turned to the bayou with a model promoting heritage tourism while enhancing quality of life using nature-based low impact recreation. The Bayou Teche Paddle Trail is that model.

With the prestigious naming of the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail as a national waterway by the National Parks Service, TEACHE Project took on the responsibility of Trail Manager while continuing to be Watershed Steward.

The Teche's rich history offers a rare opportunity to teach the ecology of a region through the biography of its people. As the title of Shane Bernard's new book suggests, Bayou Teche is "Louisiana's most famous bayou." Sandra Sarr's article about the writing of the book can be read on page 15.

The paddle trails success depends on the health and sustainability of Bayou Teche and the Lower Atchafalaya River. Together, we ensure the continuance of our cultural inheritance by continuing and expanding community-driven watershed initiatives outlined in ENRICH IT on page 5.

We witnessed Bayou Teche at its highest and lowest over the years, providing subsistence to early settlers, to becoming a glorified ditch before implementing water control management practices. Partnerships with Teche Vermillion Fresh Water District, the Sierra Club, and local government balance the increased and encouraged development in the watershed with water quality protection. The challenge requires vigilance and community participation.

To grow the nature-based economy the paddle trail supports, we leverage paddle trail assets and trailheads with smart growth development plans underway in Trail Town communities. You can read about how some of the fifteen Trail Towns are embracing their waterfront in EMBRACE IT on page 11.

While paddling on south Louisiana water, a boy scout realized, "water doesn't have to be blue to be beautiful." Being on the water, immersed in nature, instills an ecological consciousness and an individual responsibility. On page 7, read how EXPLORE IT encourages paddlers to get a personal, sea level view of the importance of the Teche corridor.

Our shared identity, community values, and the love and respect for the brown water flowing from Port Barre to Berwick gives us the will to keep paddling. The TEACHE Project thanks you for paddling with us.

TEACHE Project Council
Conni Castille, Executive Director

Jimmy Graviss, St. Mary Parish Liaison
Eric Martin, Government Liaison
Brent Miller, Trailhead & Youth Coordinator

Megan Smith, Iberia Parish Liaison
Trey Snyder, Paddle Trail
Dane Thibodeaux, Bayou Operations
Patti Holland, Watershed Coordinator

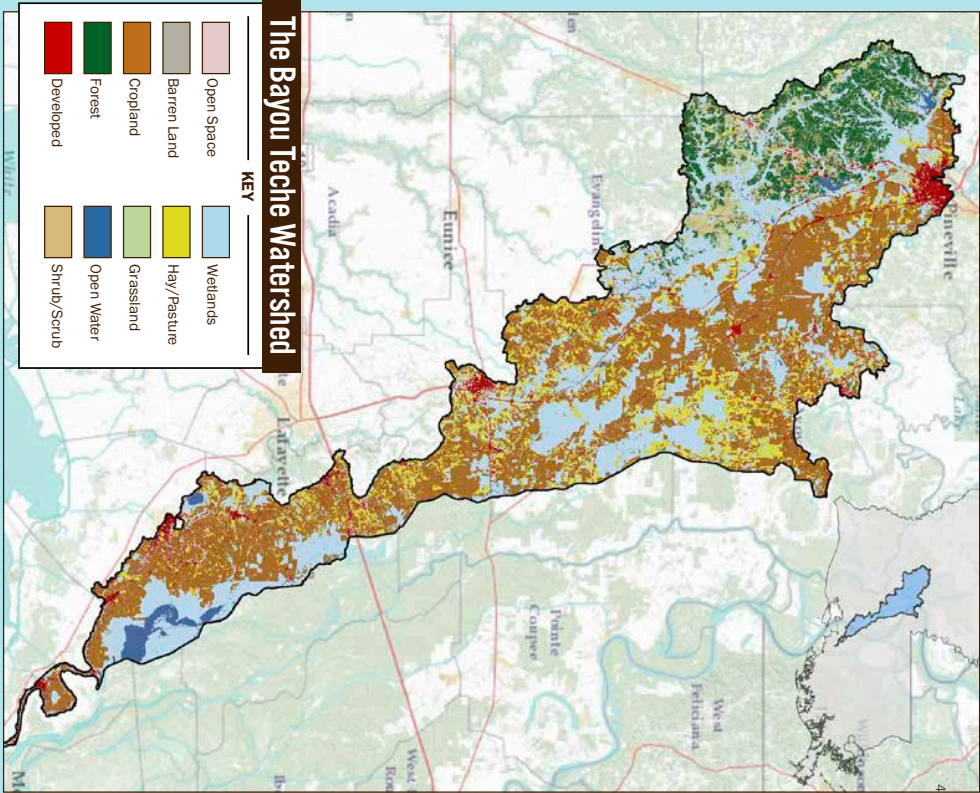
TECHÉ RENAISSANCE

The vision to enhance the quality of life for our communities by turning to the bayou to celebrate and continue its legacy.

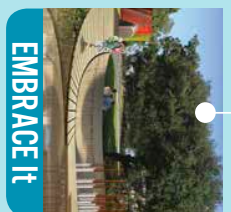
The Bayou Teche Corridor has always provided for the communities along its banks. Villages and towns settled on the water to access its abundant resources and transportation ability. Cotton and cane floated on barges to market. Boats were built, and trappers, fishermen, and hunters took to the water to feed families and friends. Homes were oriented facing the bayou ready to receive Sunday company for morning coffee.

In 2009, with community support, **TECHÉ** Project launched a bayou renaissance to restore the Teche as the focal point of our communities. The goal of **TECHÉ Renaissance** is to turn the 135 miles of the Teche and the Lower Atchafalaya River into a destination for residents and visitors through community-based initiatives. The vision has three distinct approaches: **ENRICH** It improves the overall ecological health of the Teche.

EXPLORE It enhances boaters' experiences on the Bayou Teche National Water Trail by investing in recreation infrastructure for nature based heritage tourism. **EMBRACE** It is designed to leverage the Bayou Teche Water Trail's assets for smart growth development, encouraging residents, businesses, and municipalities in its vibrant Trail Towns to face the bayou.



3 Facets of TECHÉ Renaissance



ENRICH IT

(Deany Culbert)

The vision of TECHÉ Renaissance is dependent upon the ecological health of Bayou Teche corridor.

Understanding the connection between economic development and a clean environment is a critical component in growing the nature-based economy designed in the TECHÉ Renaissance vision. Good water quality and diverse wildlife indicate a healthy bayou, and a healthy community. It demonstrates a community's values and priorities, revealing a quality of life that makes locals want to enjoy home and that attracts a workforce and their families to move here.

The 2015 Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) report classifies the Teche as an "impaired" waterway, a rating that can impact fish and wildlife propagation and swimming. We are working to rectify this situation through community-based projects and partnerships.



Waiting for the boat.

High Water Marks

ENRICH IT improves the overall ecological health of the Teche corridor through partnerships and community-based initiatives

Bayou Operations

We engage volunteers from our bayou communities to remove trash, debris, and noxious vegetation routinely. Twice per year, we host a **Trash Bash and Boogie** event with music and food. On a day-to-day basis, our diligent Bayou Operations Manager responds to calls and monitors hot spots. Some 52 tons of trash has been removed to date.



(Ron J. Bernall)

Watershed Health

Periodic water testing by our partners **Teche-Vermillion Freshwater District** and **Sierra Club Water Sentinel Program** (a group of bayou residents conducting water testing) aids in getting the Bayou Teche off the "impaired" rivers list while protecting the bayou's beauty and bounty. Sampling data is used by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette for longitudinal studies. St. Martinville and Iberia Parish **Project Front Yard** initiatives help trace the hotspot to its origins within the watershed to fix the problem area.

Education

Awareness and education are key components to a clean bayou. Through a **Keep Louisiana Beautiful** grant, 98 signs now sit at bridges across the Bayou Teche watershed as gentle reminders to protect our majestic waterway.

The Teche corridor's ecosystem is further protected through our partnership with **Leave No Trace**, an outdoor ethics program. TECHÉ Renaissance encourages responsible interaction with the bayou through **Leave No Trace** principles taught to our young and new paddlers.

Ecology Program

Retaining the bayou's natural ecological system is vital to its health, beauty, and enjoyment. **The Bank Management Workshop** for bayou landowners teaches erosion prevention

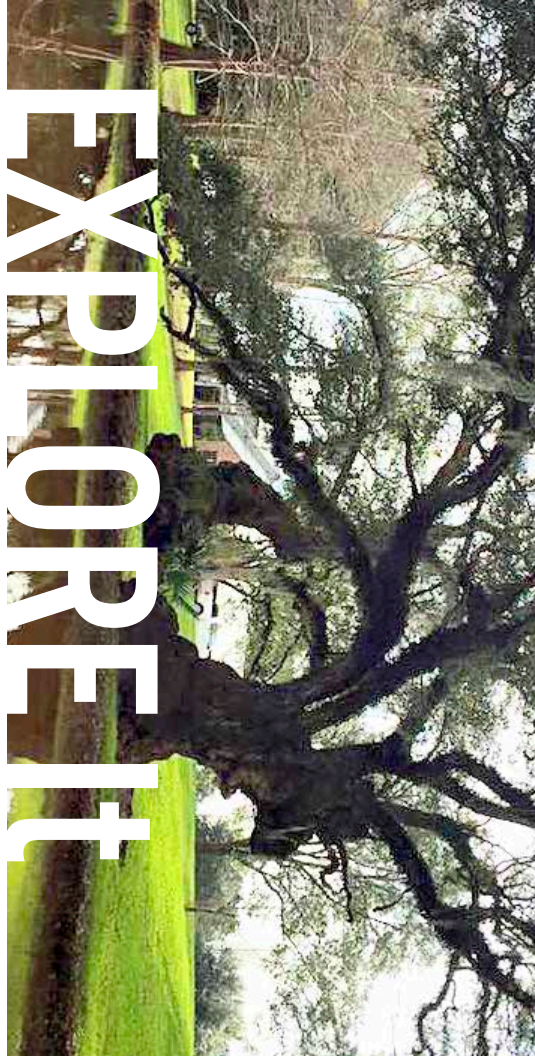
through indigenous vegetation methods that simultaneously create habitat for wildlife and fisheries. The **Wood Duck Nesting Box Program** assists landowners with their box to attract these beautiful birds.

Around the Bend

- TECHÉ Project will continue to work with our partners and the bayou communities to tackle poor water quality, debris, and water hyacinth issues on Bayou Teche and Lower Atchafalaya.
- Continue **Trash Bash & Boogie** events
 - Continue water testing with our partners within the Teche-Vermillion Fresh Water District parishes (St. Landry, St. Martin, and Iberia).
 - Develop a water testing program in St. Mary Parish, the only parish that sits outside the boundaries of the Teche-Vermillion Fresh Water District.
 - Expand **Water Sentinel Program** throughout the river.
 - Assist **Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana** with Teche watershed programming as part of the **Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund**.
 - Continue our **Education** programs to distribute **Leave No Trace** practices.
 - Continue ecological workshops along the bayou.
 - Install "Drains to the Bayou" markers on street drains in all Trail Towns.
 - Continue our partnership with **Project Front Yard** initiatives because we understand the connection between the land in our watershed and the health of our bayou.
 - Design a water hyacinth program that environmentally manages this invasive species.



Teche Queens trade their sashes for trash pickers.



EXPLORE IT

TECHÉ Renaissance envisions locals and visitors navigating ecology, history and culture by boat.

Active recreation that is the foundation of a nature-based economies is becoming more popular. Canoeing, kayaking, biking, hiking are some ways people are spending their time in nature.

As Louisiana's most historic and culturally significant bayou, the vision of the Bayou Teche Water and Paddle Trail capitalizes on its rare teaching opportunity: To learn about the ecology of a region through the biography of its people.



Annual 6th grade paddle at St. Bernard Catholic School. (Conant Cattell)



Loreauville, Louisiana. (Tony Broussard - thebayoujournal.com)

High Water Marks

EXPLORE IT enhances boaters' experience by investing in infrastructure that eases access and navigation for kayakers and canoeers making the Teche corridor a focal point for recreation, economic development, and cultural values.

National Water Trail Designation — Completed

After a rigorous application process, our beloved Bayou Teche became the 17th National Water Trail in the country as determined by the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior. The prestige of this non-regulatory status raises Bayou Teche and the Lower Atchafalaya River to a national and international level, boosting recreation for locals and visitors through development of a low-impact nature-based economy. This affiliation with the National Park Service offers **TECHÉ Project as Trail Manager** a network of consultants to develop Best Management Practices.

Water trails are routes suitable for human-powered boats like canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards, as well as for recreational motorized watercraft. Like pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trails, water trails connect destinations. Water Trail amenities can include access sites, boat launches, and camping areas guided by Leave No Trace principles.

Investing in Paddle Trail Infrastructure

To leverage this momentous designation, we are building infrastructure with significant support from the Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program, administered by Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (DORT), to encourage paddling by increasing access points on the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail. The trailhead also serves cyclists traveling on the Atakappa-Ishak Bike Trail.

Breaux Bridge Canoe & Kayak Access — Completed

Paddle Trail users near Breaux Bridge are now more comfortable with our first trailhead. Located in downtown, it includes a floating dock for canoes and kayaks to ease entry and exit, public restroom facility with boat tie-ups, and walking access to provisions and restaurants.

Trailhead made possible by Louisiana DORT, City of Breaux Bridge, St. Martin Parish Tourism, Glenn Angelle, Edward Cazavoux, and St. Bernard Catholic School.

Loreauville Canoe & Kayak Access — Completed

A floating dock has already hit the water in downtown Loreauville, thanks to the town's enthusiasm.

The Loreauville Trailhead sits on the same footprint as the future Al Broussard Commemorative Park, see page 12, EMBRACE IT for additional information. The floating dock was



(Tim Mueller)

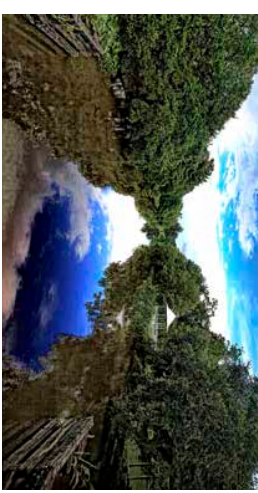
made possible through partnerships with Louisiana DORT, the University of Louisiana, and in-kind support from the City of Loreauville.

Mobile Floating Dock — Completed

Alan and Brenda Broussard earmarked their lifetime donation to **TECHÉ Project** for a mobile floating dock. Our partner and council member, Jimmy Gravois with Metal Shark, designed and built the dock that can be transported by trailer just about anywhere along the Teche in support of community events in Trail Towns without a permanent floating dock. Uses include providing access to Bayou Teche Brewery, Tour du Teche racers, and St. John Francis Regis Catholic Church Eucharistic Procession.

The Bayou Teche Paddle Trail Planning and Maintenance — Ongoing

Keeping an up-to-date inventory of access sites, signage, portages, camping spots, lodging and amenities is a critical base point to creating and maintaining a world-class Water Trail.



(Ivan J. Bennett)

• INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE Around the Bend

More Access Points — In Process
Continue our partnership with Louisiana DCRT for trailhead development in the following Trail Towns and more:

- Port Barre
- Cœlita
- New Iberia
- Patterson
- St. Martinville
- Arnaudville

Trailheads & Multi-Lingual Kiosks — In Process

As our trailheads increase along the 135-mile corridor, we aim to create a seamless experience for users and visitors that includes design standards detailed in our Trailhead Design Standards Manual to assist Trail Town developers.

- Colors
- Sign sizes
- Finish
- Logo placement requirements
- Each Access Point with a floating canoe and kayak dock includes a standard Informational Kiosk providing:
 - Town history
 - Flora and fauna
 - Boating etiquette - Safety information
 - Directional and interpretive information
 - Leave No Trace Principles
- To encourage visitors to venture out for cultural experiences and provisions, we are designing a locker system for each trailhead to protect boats, paddles, and vests.

Primitive Campsites — Planning

Although as of today, a Bed & Breakfast business sits on or near the Bayou for the first 75-miles, Port Barre to Franklin, primitive camping is in demand. We are working with municipalities, businesses, and private landowners to identify lands fit for creating official, small, Leave No Trace primitive campsites to ensure responsible outdoor recreation.



Black Friday Paddle Paddle with local outfitters Rock and Paddle, and Cajun Paddle. (copy Merit)

• PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION MARKETING High Water Marks

Shake Your Trail Feather Festival – Annual Event
Our annual October Paddle Trail celebration at Parc du Pont on the bayou banks of Breux Bridge includes live music, heritage and educational presentations, bike rides, paddle excursions, kids activities, a kayak raffle and more. In its 5th year, all proceeds benefit the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail committees. The St. Martin Parish Tourism Office and the City of Breux Bridge have been valued partners in this event.



Waterproof Map — Completed

Locals and visitors on the bayou can now navigate the Water Trail guided by a waterproof, wayfinding and cultural map, designed to indicate:

- Historic features
- Access Points
- Distances between Access Points
- Amenities & Hazards



Cœlita Bayou offers paddlers a location marker. Lacombeville, Louisiana. (credit Holland)

Bridge Mile Marker Signs — Completed

Navigating the Teche using the forty-plus mile marker signs posted on bridges and wood duck boxes help guide paddlers to their destination. Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water District and St. Mary Parish Government made this possible.

On The Road with TECHÉ Project — Completed

We bring TECHÉ Renaissance to hundreds of people at festivals and public events along the Teche corridor with our pop-up promotion booth to share educational watershed, cultural, and historic information and Leave No Trace principles.

Around the Bend Public Outreach and Education Marketing — In Process

In recognition of the global visitors our diverse cultural heritage attracts, we are developing multi-lingual rack cards, a Bayou Teche Paddle Trail and a Trail Towns brochure.

The Paddle Trail brand is in development and is aimed to make the Bayou Teche corridor a destination in Acadiana, Louisiana, the south, the country, and the world. EXPLORE It's goal is to market the Water Trail and make trip planning and navigation easy.



Teche Watershed and Leave No Trace education at Westside Elementary, Scott Louisiana.

Wayfinding Highway Signage — In Process

To indicate Access Points on highways, signs will be placed on existing, logistically relevant sign posts like those indicating the Accharalava National Heritage Area, the Scenic Byway, and Municipal signs.

Stories from the Bayou: An Oral History Project — Planning

The Bayou Teche Paddle Trail is a cultural tour. This project aims to collect stories about growing up on the bayou, and its agricultural history. The collection will be deposited in the Tabasco/Avery Island archives, and presented on various platforms including web app and radio.

Agritourism — Planning

Satsuma farms, cane fields, crawfish ponds, sugarcane mills are a few examples of living agriculture on the Bayou Teche corridor. We envision paddlers learning about our resources by paddling up to meet farmers to pick fruit or pull traps. The Agritourism model can provide an experiential education to visitors while supplementing a farmer's income.



Wayou Baton helps at Trash, Bush and Boogie. Lacombeville, Louisiana.

Single Day & Multi-Day Trip Planner — Planning

For web and app, various suggested single- and multi-day excursions will be available for trip planning.

For the Classroom — Planning

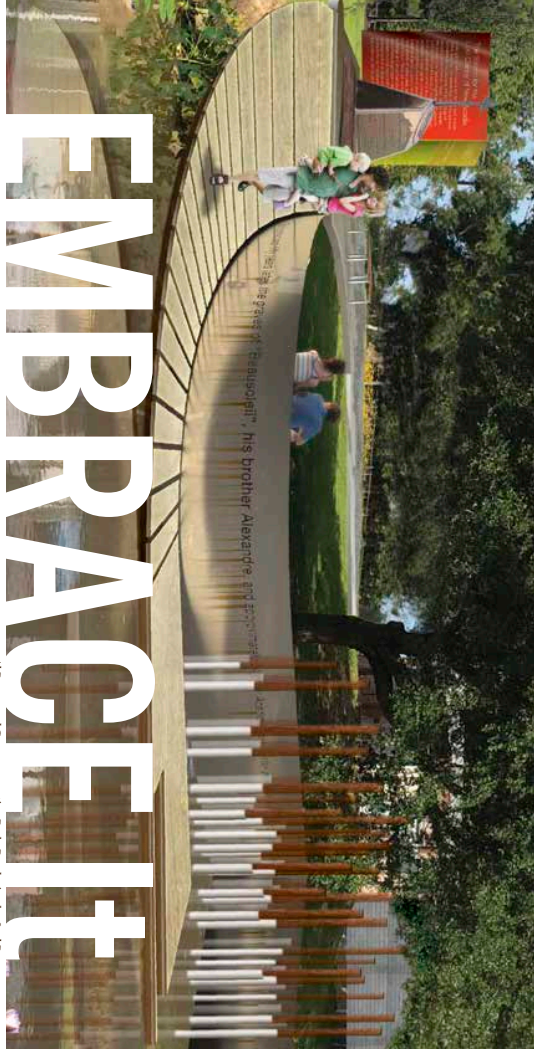
GeauxPaddler is an educational package for teachers that blends experiential learning with traditional pedagogical curriculum and encourage youth to learn paddle techniques, boat safety, and bayou ecology, history, and culture. GeauxPaddler encourages youth Paddle Clubs and Teams in public and private schools. To date, two active youth paddle clubs and teams train year round and participate in youth races: St. Bernard Catholic School and the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana.

Bayou Teche Paddle Trail App — Planning

Easily accessible information for navigation and exploration. This tool will aid paddlers with easily accessible navigation information with up-to-date information on history, cultural events, lodging, shopping, and safety features.



Black Friday Paddle Paddle with local outfitters Rock and Paddle, and Cajun Paddle. (copy Merit)



Al Broussard Commemorative Park, Rendering by Joel Breaux

EMBRACE IT

Bayou Teche and Lower Atchafalaya River communities turn to the water.

The Bayou Teche is a bayou of many uses. It has always provided for our ancestors through its resources and transportation ability. Fifteen communities settled on the Teche for these reasons. Today we are witnessing a return to the water as a focal point of our communities. Businesses along the bayou appreciate customers who arrive by water for a plate lunch or a beer, to stay the night, or to attend a festival. Businesses and town governments invest on the bayou to encourage locals and visitors to embrace the riverfront. Our goal is to work with businesses and government on the Bayou Teche corridor to leverage the National Water Trail status and the infrastructure supporting it with municipal investments to grow a bayou economy through smart growth development.



USCA Canal Corp. Meets with Cajun Paddle trikes the St. Bernard Catholic School Paddle Club for upcoming Petite du Teche youth races. (Brent Miller)

High Water Marks

EMBRACE It is a community initiative that celebrates the Bayou Teche and Lower Atchafalaya River for the benefit of local economies and residents.

What is a Trail Town?

Trail Towns are communities along the Bayou Teche and Paddle Trail (Bayou Teche and Lower Atchafalaya River) where Trail users can stop off for rest (hotels, B&Bs, camping), provisions, and to experience a cultural immersion. Such amenities as restaurants, grocery stores, shops, dance halls, and lodging serve to refuel the trail user.

Many businesses on the bayou offer authentic Cajun and Creole experiences and will be included in our upcoming **Trail Towns Brochure**. Some examples of communities turning to the river include:

City of New Iberia

A short board walk in downtown New Iberia, and the recent addition to City Park's boat launch, hints to a gradual reorientation to the water.

City of Franklin

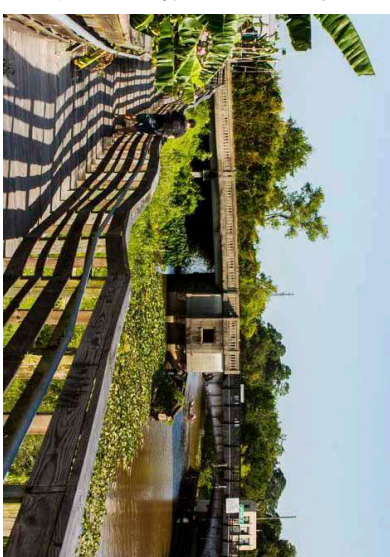
To protect the traditional wooden boats visiting Franklin annually for the Bayou Teche Wooden Boat Show, a floating dock suitable for motor craft, canoes, and kayaks has been installed along its boardwalk in downtown.

City of Berwick

Berwick is the finish line and awards ceremony for the annual canoe and kayak races, **Tour du Teche and 410 de Louisiane**. The City invested in a boardwalk, pavilion, and removed industrial debris. These improvements benefit locals and visitors and accent the lighthouse landmark that beckons to all traveling visitors.



Saturday morning Zydeco Breakfast, Walking distance from trailhead, Breaux Bridge, Louisiana.



New Iberia, Louisiana. (Phillip Lanzetta)

Around the Bend

TECHE Renaissance vision embraces:

St. Martinville – Planning

St. Martinville residents overwhelmingly voted to renew a \$1.5 million bond dedicated to parks and recreation with a large part invested into waterfront festival grounds.

Loreauville – Planning

The Al Broussard Commemorative Park is a stunning design by architect and Loreauville resident Joel Breaux that features a symbolic representation of the Acadians' arrival, their journey and resilience. It will include an Acadian Odyssey, the fourth in the world, and the Bayou Teche Paddle Trailhead.

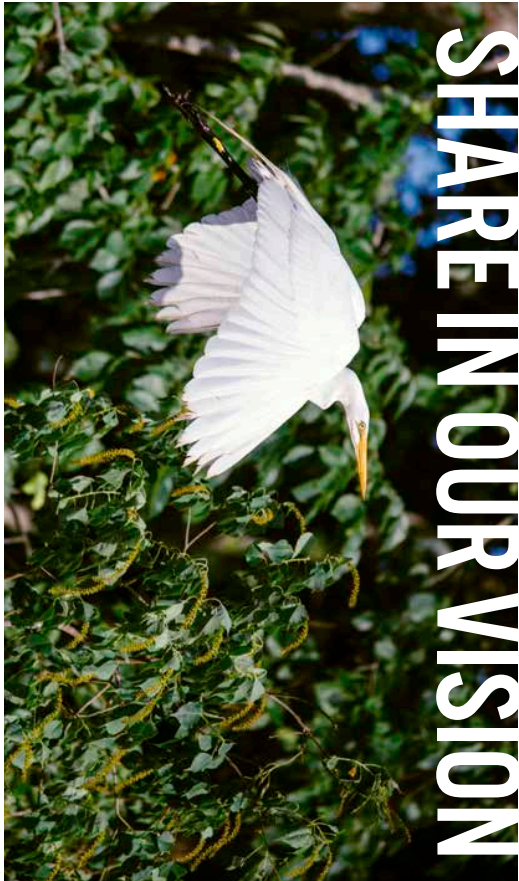
Patterson – Planning

The City Park Revamp Project improves Morey Park, with a wharf, pavilions, and restrooms on 200 feet of river access. TEICHE Project will situate the trailhead within the park in partnership with the City of Patterson, and DCRT.

Partnerships – Ongoing

The Bayou Teche Paddle Trail affords layers of collaboration: It is a National Park Service water trail that flows through much of One Acadiana's region and sits within the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area touching the banks of Bayou perishes and 15 towns along the Bayou Teche Scenic Byway. Through partnerships, we can build a Heritage Tourism economy by developing a world class paddle trail.

SHARE IN OUR VISION



(Denny Culbert)

The TECHÉ Project Council are volunteers. We operate through a membership-based community of folks who share in our vision.

Please consider joining TECHÉ Project online at techeproject.org or contact techeproject@gmail.com to let us know how you would like to help.

Ways to Help as Members

- Come to our trash pick ups.
 - Represent TECHÉ Project at festivals by manning our booth.
 - Volunteer at our annual Shake Your Trail Feather in October.
 - Serve on a committee.
- Tell us your expertise and we will find a way for you to help.



Leominster, Louisiana

Ways to Help as Private or Public Landowners

- **Primitive Campsites**
If you own land on Bayou Teche or Lower Atchafalaya River, and are interested in opening up your bayou bank to outdoor recreationists, we can share with you our **Primitive Camping Packet** detailing primitive campsite designs based on Leave No Trace principles, and State of Louisiana Statute for recreational liability protection.
- **Conservation Easements and Estate Planning**
We have had people paddle the entire length of the Teche corridor leisurely, taking four to six days, visiting Trail Towns along the way. Some like to mix up their overnight stay with Bed and Breakfast accommodations and primitive camping.
- **Conservation Easements and Estate Planning**
We can meet to discuss how you can leave behind a lasting legacy on the most famous bayou in Louisiana.



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

JAN 05 2015

Ms. Kristen Kordecki
Executive Director
TECHÉ Project
P.O. Box 165
Arnaudville, Louisiana 70512

Dear Ms. Kordecki:

I have designated the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail as a National Water Trail in the National Water Trails System. This recognition places the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail in a distinctive national network of exemplary water trails and is a commendation of the efforts of the local community and partners for promoting active involvement in the conservation of our water resources. The Bayou Teche Paddle Trail is a paragon in a growing movement connecting Americans to their rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

The expansion of water trails across the Nation is vital to a sustainable future, not just for the environment, but for our communities and economy. Culture, commerce, and our natural environment are inextricably connected by these trails. The effort to conserve and connect to these treasured waterways unites us to our natural and cultural inheritances.

The Bayou Teche Paddle Trail is a catalyst for the conservation of our national waterways. As more Americans explore the unique and vibrant waterways across the Nation, the conditions of our water trails will improve. With the outstanding management and accomplishments of the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail, your mentorship and guidance will undoubtedly contribute to the success of the National Water Trails System.

Sincerely,

Sally Jewell

BROWN WATER STORIES

Historian Shane Bernard tells the stories of Bayou Teche

By Sandra Sarr

The author of several books on South Louisiana history and culture, Dr. Shane K. Bernard serves as the historian and curator for Mellhenny Company, maker of Tabasco Sauce, located on Avery Island, La. His latest book, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou*, will be published in October by the University Press of Mississippi. He lives in New Iberia, La., not far from Bayou Teche, the subject of his forthcoming book.

"My goal was to write a book that people who lived along Bayou Teche their whole lives would read and say, 'I didn't know that.'"

—Dr. Shane K. Bernard

In preparation for writing the book, he paddled the entire length of the historically significant waterway. He divided the canoe journey down the 125-mile waterway into eight trips. Beginning in October 2011, it took him one and a half years to complete the whole length.

His blog, *Bayou Teche Dispatches*, is a collection of his writings about south Louisiana and its culture. On the blog, he explains, "How could I not paddle it? Had I not paddled it, someone, somewhere — at a book signing, during an interview — would inevitably ask me, 'Have you ever been on Bayou Teche?' to which I would have had to answer, 'No — but I drive across it every day on the way to work.'"

And that answer would be unacceptable to Bernard, who would push through murky waters to arrive at clear facts and compelling stories.

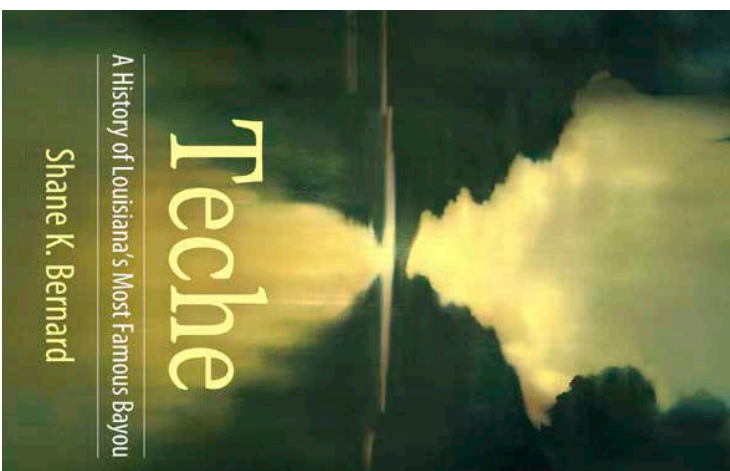
"There was no substitute for seeing for oneself, from a canoe, where the Teche springs from Bayou Courtableau, meets Bayou Fuselier, zigzags at Baldwin, juts out at Irish Bend," he writes.

He took photographs, made notes, and collected GPS coordinates.

Two recent archaeology graduates from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the father of one of them accompanied him on the journey.

It took him seven years to write the book.

His book examines the Teche from its geological formation through its prehistoric and colonial settlement to the



A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou

Shane K. Bernard

He knew the Spanish and French had written about the Teche in the 1700s and that it was a primitive central highway through the region. He knew that Union forces invaded the Teche in an attempt to pivot west at Cavenro and into Texas. He knew the Teche was viewed as a strategic entryway into other states and that it was settled before the Vermilion River was settled. He decided to investigate the life of the bayou, ultimately paddling the entire waterway, gathering material no amount of reading could reveal.

He began the first segment of his Bayou Teche canoe journey at the bayou's northernmost point, in Port Barre, La., paddling 25 miles over a five-hour period to Arnaudville, La.

"I thought it'd be easy," he says. "I've never been in such pain in my life. I felt the hurt down into my bone marrow for days." Paddling the Teche was hard for this wild indoorsman!

He said paddling the whole Teche was, by far, the most physically strenuous research he's ever done for a book. (He's got a glove with holes worn through to prove it!)

Once Bernard got into a rhythm out on the water, he started to look around. A sampling of things he noticed and documented were a boiler, steam pump, old rivers from a steamboat, solid red brick pilings with bolts and pumps rice farmers used ("they look like red brick tombs; clearly, there was once an abundance of rice growing along the Teche"), banana trees, bamboo, Chinese tallow trees, elephant ears, wild animals, such as nutria.

Bernard tells of seeing the invasive water hyacinth and Louisiana Congressman Robert Broussard's plan more than a century ago to bring hippopotamuses from Africa and put them in Louisiana swamps and bayous to eat the invasive plants. (Now, the TECHE Project is implementing an expert-recommended plan for the mechanical removal of the species.)

Back in the 1890s, a blue ribbon committee of doctors, chemists, and sugar cane industry leaders made a trip up Bayou Teche to study the major fish and plant die-offs. They analyzed the water and found the problem to be an acid used by the sugar cane industry. The report stated that "the poorest of the poor drink out of the Teche."

Today, experts and bayou residents regularly test the Teche's water for contaminants.

During his canoe trips, Bernard observed that the presence or absence of trash along the Teche varied by location.

"I could see a big difference between parts of the Teche where the TECHE Project has been most active and where it hasn't yet. Above Keystone Lock, between St. Martinville and New Iberia, it's cleaner than the lower Teche," he says. Since Bernard's paddle, TECHE Project has become more active down the bayou, conducting renewal activities in New Iberia and Franklin.

He believes the TECHE Project's efforts have made a big difference in Bayou Teche's environmental health, stating, "The Teche is cleaner than the highway that runs alongside it."

"The goal is for the Environmental Protection Agency to remove Bayou Teche from the federal government's impaired waterway list," Bernard says. "It's on the list mostly because of bacteria related to runoff from farmland and improper septic systems."

He said the Teche's recent national waterway designation "is another voice affirming the historic, cultural, and environmental importance of the waterway."

Book release on Wednesday November 2nd at the Teche Center for the Arts. Visit techeproject.org for details.

Sandra Sarr is a writer who lives near Bayou Teche. She helps people, businesses, and others tell their stories with heart. A poet with a career in communications marketing, Sandy holds a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing. She's missing her novel, *The Road to Indigo*, set along Bayou Teche and Avery Island. Her blog is at mascarsr2000.wordpress.com.

Major Partners and Sponsors



Cecilia High School Seniors create memories on their senior paddle trip.



We delivered to each Mayor and Parish President along the Teche corridor a framed National Water Trail Certificate. Here, TCH&E Project delivers one to Baldwin Mayor Donna Lavesell.



Our Beyond Wildlife Workshops teach how to create habitat for our wildlife neighbors.



Tom Holland and Donald Sgroves, Executive Director of Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water District, install a wood duck nesting box on the beyond.



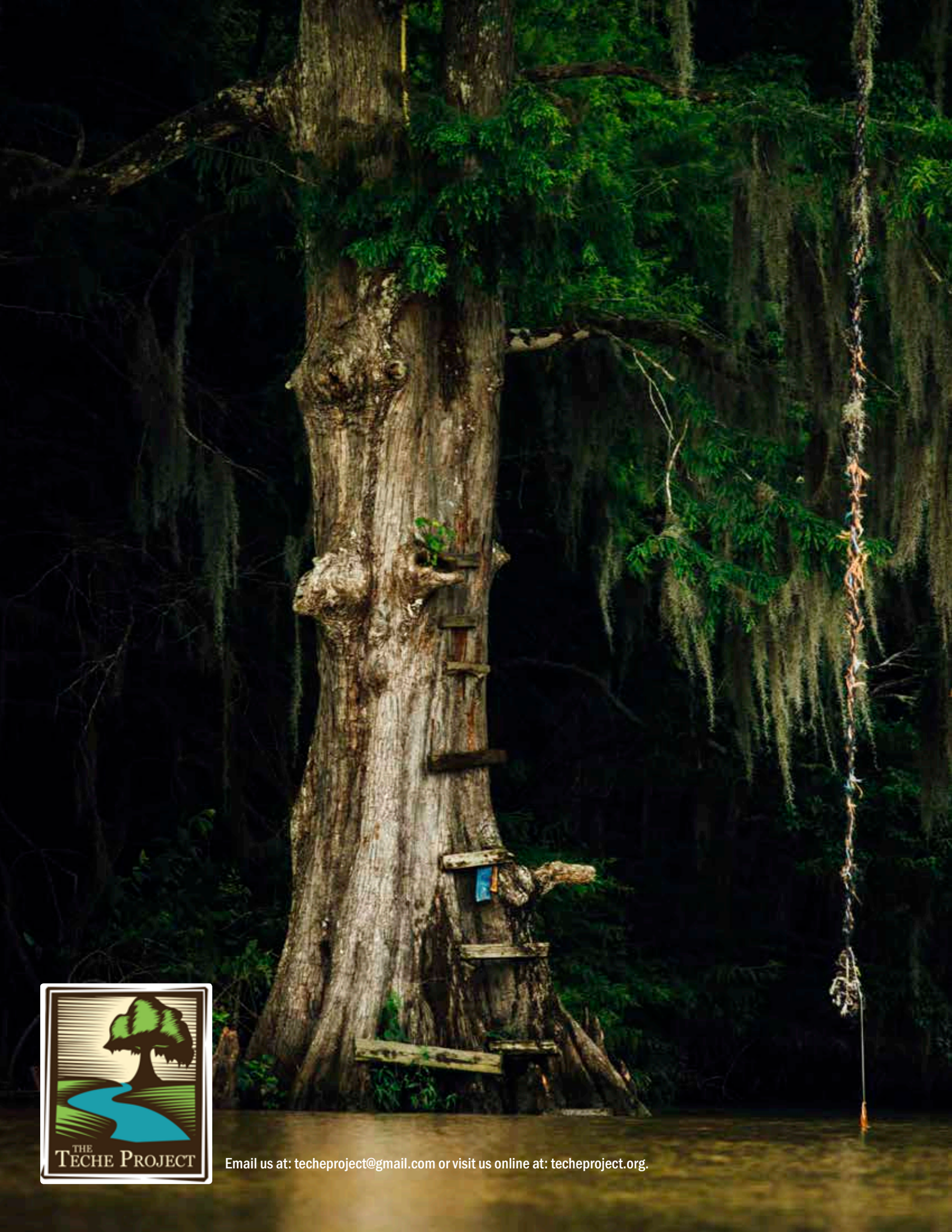
Our Leave No Trace partners Barrett Kennedy and Peggy Reilly launching from our mobile floating dock in search of trash.



Pravdin High School students and volunteers collected water hyacinth for a study with University of Louisiana at Lafayette as part of an American Canoe Association and LL Beam grant.



And they're off! Tour du Teche racers in Port Barre.



Email us at: techeproject@gmail.com or visit us online at: techeproject.org.