



## BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### UNIVERSITY OF BUFFALO STUDENTS VOLUNTEER TO RESTORE LOUISIANA'S COAST

**THIBODAUX, LA** – During the week of January 23-27, students from the University of Buffalo in New York State joined the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) and Bayou Grace, a coastal outreach organization, to take part in educational and volunteer activities in an effort to restore the Louisiana coast.

Twelve students from the university spent the week with BTNEP staff participating in a variety of activities. During their stay, the students attended an education day where they toured the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) facility and listened to a presentation by Seth Moncrief, BTNEP Volunteer Coordinator, about BTNEP and Louisiana's coastal land loss. The students also joined in on a project organized by the Terrebonne Parish government to help protect the Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge near the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway by loading wooden retention fences, or "cribs" with 150 recycled Christmas trees from residents of Terrebonne Parish. These cribs, filled with trees, help protect the refuge by reducing wave erosion along the waterway.

On the third day, students spent six hours at the BTNEP Native Plant Production Facility located on the Nicholls State University Farm, where they conducted plant propagation for ridge restoration while also learning about the importance of ridge habitat along Louisiana's coast. At the Plant Production Facility, the volunteers were also educated about how BTNEP works partially through partnerships with the organization and the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation (BTEF).

The students also visited the Barataria Preserve at the National Park Service where they toured the Visitor Center and walked the Bayou Coquille Trail. During the tour, the students were able to walk through forest, swamp, and marsh on the Barataria Preserve. They were able to view live oaks and bald cypress trees and learn first-hand about Louisiana's disappearing wetlands, alligators, and the preserve's flotant marsh.

On the last day, the students took part in a restoration activity on the Fourchon Ridge. Shell Oil Company, through a partnership with BTNEP called SMART (Saving Marsh and Ridges Together), designated funds to BTEF specifically for ridge restoration along Louisiana's coast. With help from the Greater Lafourche Port Commission, the students planted 500 native trees that included 350 Live Oak, 50 Sand Live Oak, 50 Yaupon and 50 Honey Locust. During this planting and the educational day, students learned of the importance of coastal ridge restoration, and they were reminded how the SMART program with Shell allows BTNEP to restore this vital habitat and protective resource.

The University of Buffalo has been a partner with BTNEP for many years, bringing dozens of students down to be educated and take part in many restoration activities. “It is nice to know people from outside of Louisiana care about what is happening to our land and culture,” said Seth Moncrief.

For more information on BTNEP and its volunteer program, visit our website at [www.BTNEP.org](http://www.BTNEP.org).

**BTNEP is one of the 28 national estuary programs in the United States. All or parts of sixteen Louisiana parishes are located in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary system. The organization was established under the EPA Clean Water Act to protect coastal resources. BTNEP is a partnership of government, businesses, scientists, conservation organizations, agricultural interests and individuals for the preservation, protection, and restoration for the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary in southeast Louisiana. For more information on BTNEP, visit our website page at [www.btnep.org](http://www.btnep.org) or like us on Facebook.**

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