



PADDLE BAYOU LAFOURCHE

to learn about ecology, economy, and the estuary

PROJECT STATUS

Project Year:	2001 - Present
Status:	Ongoing
Category:	Outreach
Location:	Bayou Lafourche
Project Partners:	Various local business partners, groups and organizations



BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM ADDRESSED

In 2001, Paddle Bayou Lafourche was initially a project designed to help educate people about the value of the bayou as a drinking water source. Many people were unaware of the value of the source water. By encouraging the public to paddle or kayak down the bayou, with an organized BTNEP group leader, people are better able to understand the significance of this resource.

Bayou Lafourche provides drinking water to over 300,000 people in the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary system. Parishes that get drinking water from Bayou Lafourche include: Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche, and Terrebonne. The water is also used by offshore oil and gas communities as their potable water. Additionally, the bayou helps to replenish our coastal marshes with much needed freshwater.

The trip now also highlights the work of the Bayou Lafourche Fresh Water District (BLFWD) in partnership with the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) working for years to bring more fresh water down the bayou through a project called the Mississippi River Reintroduction to Bayou Lafourche Project (MRRBL).

While Paddle Bayou Lafourche still has water quality and wetlands education as a mainstay of its mission, the project has grown to include historical, cultural, and economical experiences. Paddle Bayou Lafourche also promotes ecotourism within the estuary.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Paddle Bayou Lafourche is a nearly 50-mile, 3-day adventure that winds its way through a number of rural communities and small cities. Paddlers are treated to scenic natural vistas, and a fascinating “backyard view” of this historic bayou from Donaldsonville to Raceland.

The goal of Paddle Bayou Lafourche is to help create a sense of stewardship and pride for the environment. The trip offers a unique approach to educating the participants about the great gift of Louisiana’s wetlands, and helps them recognize that Bayou Lafourche is historically, culturally, economically, and ecologically important to the communities along its banks. The first annual trip made in 2001 was designed to increase awareness of Bayou Lafourche as a drinking water source.

Paddlers can now choose between one to three days to participate in the event. Participants enjoy the bonding, camaraderie, and sense of accomplishment that comes from paddling together on Bayou Lafourche. Paddlers also get to experience the culture, music, and food the area is known to provide.

The event hosts paddlers who are locals, from out of state, and sometimes even from out of the country. Paddlers are given the chance to “Discover the Estuary” in a very up close and personal way. This experience is designed to provide first-hand knowledge and information about the value of the local ecosystem.

CCMP ACTION ITEMS ADDRESSED

SR = Sustained Recognition and Citizen Involvement

- SR-4: Public Engagement
- SR-6: Continuing Education Programs and Informal Education Programs
- SR-8: Cultural Heritage and Lifeways

