THE BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

EXPLORING OUR ESTUDATION CALENDAR



We are all one with the **ESTUARY**.

Over thousands of years, determined and persistent waters shaped, channeled, carved, and contoured the Mississippi River Basin. For this year's tidal graph calendar, we explore the breadth of our estuary and describe some of its defining elements. These are familiar names, but ones perhaps not often considered in the context of the role they play in our estuary.

In fact, it's probably fitting we start this exploration with "estuary," a term for coastal areas where saltwater from the ocean meets and mixes freshwater from rivers, rainfall, and upland runoff. In our case, the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary describes the basins where the Mississippi River and its tributaries in south Louisiana meet the Gulf of Mexico. Estuaries are verdant areas with a variety of habitats supporting some of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on Earth.

The BTNEP staff thanks Earl Higgins, a retired ranger from the Barataria Preserve of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, for his years of service and for suggesting this year's calendar topic. Earl believes that the unique landforms and waterways of our estuary are worthy of celebration. We couldn't agree more!

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THE BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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he Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) encompasses the 4.2 million acres between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers in southeast Louisiana. BTNEP works to protect and nurture the land, water, habitats, people, and unique culture that is so productive and valuable to the United States.

Our estuary produces a host of resources for the nation, including oysters, shrimp, fish, oil and gas and their related infrastructure, and ports through which we ship goods across the globe. Our estuary offers one-of-a-kind cultural and ecotourism opportunities.

Most importantly, our estuary is home to extraordinary people and their one-ofa-kind cultures, rich resources, and the diverse plants, animals, and birds that live here.

Since 1990, BTNEP and its stakeholders have made a concerted effort to improve the estuary, protect its resources and tackle tough environmental problems. This public-private partnership allows diverse interest groups to

work together to promote, and in some cases, reestablish the physical, chemical, and biological balance critical for a healthy estuary.



MAP OF THE BTNEP AREA

BTNEP practices a sciencebased, consensus-driven stewardship approach to protecting the land, water, and resources of the estuary focusing on:

- Pollution abatement to protect the health of plants, animals, and people
- Environmentally just and responsible economic activity



- Environmentally compatible infrastructure (such as roads, bridges, levees, and railroads)
- Comprehensive, integrated watershed planning
- Harmonious use of the resources by many interests
- Public education and informed citizen participation

DELTA LOBES

The Mississippi River deposits sediment from 31 present-day states and two Canadian provinces at its mouth, creating new land in the form of a delta lobe. Over years, a delta lobe eventually builds up enough sediment to form visible wetlands – and in doing so, advances the Louisiana coast south into the Gulf of Mexico.

This deltaic system is dynamic due to the river's natural tendency to seek the shortest path to the Gulf of Mexico. The river will continue to deposit sediments to the lobe forming at its mouth only until the time comes when it finds a shorter route to the Gulf. When this happens, the river "jumps", relocates its mouth, and begins to deliver sediment to the new location and begins to build a new delta lobe. The abandoned lobe loses its fresh water and sediment, eventually resulting in land loss due to compaction, subsidence, and erosion.

The deltaic cycle that built coastal Louisiana began more than 6,000 years ago, depositing sediment in a series of 16 distinct delta lobes when the river changed course. These delta lobes were grouped into five major complexes named the Teche, Atchafalaya, Lafourche, St. Bernard and Plaquemine delta complexes. And for the last 1,200 years, the Plaquemines-Balize delta lobe describes the area we refer to as the Mississippi River Delta, or the Bird's Foot Delta.



Diagram by Wikipedia, D.Boutte Sediment Gulf of Mexico Photo by Norman Kuring, NASA Ocean Color Team







BAYOUS

The word "bayou" originates from the Choctaw word 'bayuk' meaning small stream. A bayou is a slow moving distributary waterway usually found in the coastal plain of the southeastern United States. Louisiana bayous are formed from the outlets and inlets of the Mississippi river and can be freshwater, intermediate, brackish, or salt water. This range of water types supports ideal habitats for American alligators, egrets and herons, shrimp, white-tailed deer, catfish and many other species.

Bayou Lafourche, originally called the Chetimachas River, is a 106-mile-long bayou through our estuary that provides drinking water for approximately 300,000 Louisiana residents of Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes. Bayous served as the primary means of transportation long before roads and railroads were constructed.

Native Americans, such as the United Houma Nation, plied the waters on pirogues and relied on the bayous for their subsistence. Later, in the 1700's, French Canadian Acadian settlers called Cajuns migrated to the bayou region to escape persecution, explore new lands, and preserve their culture. Cajun and Creole settlers adopted many of the lifeways of the Native Americans and also relied on the bayous for their livelihood.

Because they lie low in the coastal plain, bayous are susceptible to runoff pollution from farm land, home sewage, and oil spills. We must be vigilant in protecting our bayous as they are fundamental to the formation of our land, culture, ecology, and our estuary.



NATURAL LEVEES

N atural levees form along the banks of natural waterways from the deposition of sand, silt, and clay. Sands are the coarser and heavier sediment particles, and clays are the finest. Before man-made levees were built throughout the Mississippi River Basin, the river flooded its banks during high pulses that usually occurred in the springtime when the river received high volumes of snowmelt and runoff.

High volumes of water within river channels can generate high velocities, which enable the river to carry high sediment loads. When the river overflows its banks during flood stage, sediment-laden water overflows the channel and spills over into the surrounding land. During overflow, the river loses the energy that suspends sediment in the water column when it hits the banks. The water may flow far away from the banks but the coarse, heavier sediments fall immediately adjacent to the river, building natural levees.

Natural levees have determined the pattern of ecological and human development in Southeastern Louisiana from prehistoric times through modern times. Cajuns referred to natural levees as cheniers, meaning "place of the oaks," because live oaks thrive on this higher, dryer land. Natural levees are the ridges

where we build roads, build houses, and grow crops. As a vital part of our landscape, they keep our feet dry and make south Louisiana a place where people can live.



Graphic by David Rogers



A portion of Harold Fisk's famous 1944 map of the Mississippi River's meander belt over time.

CREVASSE

"You could not step twice into the same river." – Heraclitus

his famous ancient Greek quote speaks of the constant presence of change in the larger world. But it also works at face value describing how flowing water in a river is in a constant state of flux.

In our part of the world, rivers reach their highest stages early in the year, with the annual cycle of melting snow and spring storms. Springtime river flooding means that streambanks are full, and threaten overtopping natural levees. Full rivers are fast and energetic, and can scour the banks. Erosion can lead to a breach at a weak spot in the levee, resulting in a catastrophic blowout that can cause large-scale flooding. This is known as a crevasse.

Crevasses usually occur when the river is full and fast, carrying much more sediment than usual. As raging flood waters spill out and slow down, huge amounts of land-building sediment - silt, sand, and clay – can be spread over the river's floodplain in a short time. These "crevasse splays" can take the form of a fan or create a small delta.

While crevasse floods can be catastrophic in the short term, crevasse splays contribute a lot of sediment and are an important component of landbuilding in the estuary over time.



Photo by Google Earth, TerraMetrics

APRIL 2024



The famous Hymelia Crevasse of 1912 formed from a mere "crawfish hole" and grew to a 500-foot wide gap in the levee near present-day Killona, sending water rushing for hundreds of miles across the Barataria Basin.

19 20 21 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

MAY 2024 S M T W

Т F S 19 20 26 27 28 29 30 31

> High Tide: April 11 11:30 a.m. • 1.4 ft.

Low Tide: April 2 3:17 a.m. • -0.3 ft.

12:35 am

-0.2

1:39 pm 1.4 1:37 am

-0.2

2:38 pm

12:44 pm

GEOLOGICAL FAULTING

Geological faulting is the fracturing of rock in Earth's crust that results in displacement of the rocks and sediments on either side of the fault. South Louisiana has many geological faults and is very tectonically active, meaning the crust actively shifts. However, rock in south Louisiana is sedimentary to deep levels, and releases energy more slowly and less dramatically compared to harder rock of the western United States where earthquakes can be catastrophic.

Faulting in south Louisiana can be caused by a combination of factors. Over geologic time, the Mississippi River built southeastern Louisiana in sedimentary layers, similar to the layers in a cake. As the layers stacked on top of one another, some areas compressed more than others and caused faulting (think of it as pushing down on one side of a layer cake). Additionally salt domes push up through the sedimentary layers from below and cause faulting (think of pushing your fist up through the bottom of a layer cake).

Faulting in Louisiana is an important geological process that has a dramatic effect on oil and gas production, the stability of our infrastructure, and increases coastal land loss. Geological faulting will be a critical factor in the success of future coastal restoration and

Eric C. Broadbridge @ 2015

sustainability of the Louisiana coast.

A

Fault Illustration by McLindon Geosciences LLC

MAY 2024 SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

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FRIDAY

SATURDAY

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3 4 5 6

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May 8

Low Tide: May 8

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8

15 14

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TIDE ADJUSTMENT TABLE CAN BE FOUND ON THE BACK COVER

-0.3

-0.1

-03

15

MAN-MADE LEVEES

"...If it keeps on rainin', levee's goin' to break, When the levee breaks, I'll have no place to stay" – Memphis Minnie Led Zeppelin

he landscape of our estuary is lined with manmade levees designed to strap and contain our waterways and prevent flooding. Our ability to live, work, and thrive in our estuary, as in much of Louisiana, is possible only because of the protection that man-made levees provide. In addition, the containment of our rivers makes them navigable in many stretches.

Archeologists have confirmed that construction of man-made levees is a technology fundamental to human civilizations dating back thousands of years. Long before European colonization, Native Americans constructed raised earthen embankments along the Mississippi River.

In the aftermath of the Great Flood of 1927, the U.S. government began a determined effort to contain the river and waterways of the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys that continues today. The technology behind building a levee may seem simple, but keeping the power of a river in check requires engineering and vigilance of the highest degree. Man-made levees are our constant reminder of the eternal struggle between nature and technology.

Photo by USACE, Pictured: Lake Borgne Surge Barrier, an important feature of the Greater New Orleans Hurricane & Storm Damage Risk Reduction System.

JUNE 2024

Photo by USACE, Pictured: Lake Borgne Surge Barrier, an important feature of the Greater New Orleans Hurricane & Storm Damage Risk Reduction System.

Alt domes are one of the most interesting landscapes to rise up out of Louisiana's coast. Hundreds of these natural formations dot the coastal landscape providing upland habitats of trees in otherwise wet and low lying areas. This higher ground provides crucial stopover points for migratory birds, like the Scarlet Tanager and Painted Bunting, during their long journeys and refuge for animals during storm surge events. Native Americans utilized this resource for thousands of years for food preservation, trade, and cultural practices.

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SOUTH LOUISIANA COAST ANEA

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In more recent times, salt domes have been instrumental in the growth and economic prosperity associated with Louisiana's oil and gas industry. As the salt dome pushes up to the surface, it bends the rock strata above. This causes empty pockets that often trap hydrocarbons, and create valuable reserves. The salt acts as a natural seal allowing these domes to serve as secure repositories for storing strategic reserves of oil and natural gas and even as underground storage of hazardous materials.

2000

-3000-

Born from salt deposits accumulated over 150 million years ago when the Gulf of Mexico stretched further inland, these deposits were buried beneath layers of sediment. Over eons, the immense pressure and geological forces caused some of these lighter salt beds to rise to the surface. In Louisiana, they are primarily composed of halite, or rock salt, and can rise thousands of feet beneath the surface.

> Salt Dome Illustration by: Louisiana State Exhibit Museum Shreveport, Photographer Brian Lewis

Scarlet Tanager photo by: Natalie Waters

JULY 2024

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23 24

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BOTTOMLAND HARDWOOD FORESTS

Bottomland hardwood forests generally precede marsh habitat, and encompass low lying areas that are periodically inundated or saturated. These habitats do not experience permanent flooding like many swamps, and instead they alternate between wet seasons and dry seasons. Soils and nutrients deposited by seasonal flooding create a rich and nourishing environment in which a multitude of species thrive. Bottomland hardwood forests support the largest number of tree and shrub species of any habitat in the system and include hackberry, American elm, green ash, overcup oak, water hickory, water oak, swamp dogwood, sweetgum, red maple, and dwarf palmetto. These forests sustain Louisiana black bear and provide nesting habitat for Bald Eagles and migratory songbirds. They also are prize hunting areas for deer, squirrel, and Wood Duck. Bottomland hardwood forests not only provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, but also aid in carbon storage and filtering and purifying water as it moves through the environment.

SWAMP

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m A}$ swamp is a type of wetland ecosystem characterized by mineral soils with poor drainage and plant life dominated by trees. Swamps can be classified as forested, shrub, or mangrove swamps. The soils are inundated or saturated by water on a nearly permanent basis throughout the growing season except during periods of extreme drought. The hydrology of swamps along rivers, bayous, and streams is characterized by annual cycles of flooding and dewatering. Reduced flooding can result in a conversion of swamps into bottomland hardwood forests. Excessive flooding, either in depth or duration, can result in the conversion of swamp to open water, emergent, or scrub-shrub wetlands because of the lack of growth of new trees and the drowning of existing trees. Louisiana's swamp habitat shrouds the abundance of life below its muddy waters and within the towering cypress and tupelo trees that dominate this wetland. Numerous species of fish and aquatic invertebrates live in this rich and diverse habitat. It supports more than 270 bird species, from the majestic Bald Eagle to the tiny bright yellow Prothonotary Warbler. The number of reptiles and amphibians found within the swamp is also exceptional,

from the well-known American alligator, to snakes, turtles, and the many species of frogs that call the swamp home.

Prothonotary Warbler photo by Natalie Waters

MARSH

Much of south Louisiana is covered by various marsh habitats. A marsh is a wetland that is dominated by grasses or other herbaceous vegetation, or plants that do not produce a woody stem. Several kinds of marshes exist along a salinity gradient that is produced where freshwater flowing from inland meets and mixes with salt water from the Gulf. Furthest north, and with a constant freshwater supply, are freshwater marshes. This habitat is commonly dominated by maidencane and bulltongue. Frequently, freshwater marshes can create a unique floating habitat, called "floatant" marsh, which are buoyant mats of vegetation that break away from the soil and float during periods of high water. Due to saltwater intrusion, freshwater marshes are the fastest declining marsh type.

Freshwater marshes transition to intermediate and brackish

marsh as salinity levels increase. Common plants of intermediate marshes, which receive periodic pulses of salinity, can include bulltongue, giant bulrush, common threesquare, and deer pea. Brackish marshes,

which reliably have a saline influence, are dominated by marsh hay cordgrass, bulrush, leafy threesquare and widgeon grass.

Mexico, saltwater marshes have the highest salinity levels and the least diversity of the marsh habitats. Salt marshes are characterized by smooth cordgrass, saltgrass, black needlerush, and saltwort.

Closest to the Gulf of

(top right) Marsh photo by Ashleigh Lambiotte (bottom left) Photo by USGS.

BARRIER ISLANDS

Louisiana's barrier islands were formed by the Mississippi River's process of sediment deposition and abandonment of six deltaic complexes from the Holocene epoch (11,700 years ago to present). The Mississippi River changed its course in cycles to access a shorter route to the Gulf of Mexico, creating new deltaic lobes. When the river shifted and abandoned a delta to create a new one, subsidence and erosion formed productive estuaries with a barrier arc separated from the mainland. Over time, the barrier islands continued to sink and erode, migrating until the land mass was altered into a shoal. This process continued until levees and structures were built along the Mississippi River to reduce flooding and maintain the current river channel position for shipping. Levees and structures have been maintained to the present day and constrain the Mississippi River, forever altering the deltaic building system.

Barrier islands provide critical ecological services. They buffer waves to decrease storm impacts to protect infrastructure, protect wetlands that provide suitable reproductive habitat and nursery grounds for fish and shellfish, and provide critical habitat for birds and sea turtles. Restoration efforts continue to sustain these essential landforms for Louisiana's coast.

BAYS AND OPEN OCEANS

Traveling southward through the diverse array of wetland habitats and vibrant communities of our estuary, the diminishing land elevation and freshwater supply eventually give way to the low, salty shores of the bays and open ocean of the Gulf of Mexico.

Sheltered by barrier islands, the brackish waters of the bays are characterized by their ragged, marshy coastlines and scattering of intertidal salt marsh islands. The bays provide habitat for a variety of species, including wading birds and waterfowl, oysters, shrimp, crabs, and hundreds of species of finfish. Bays play a crucial role as nurseries for juvenile fish, and support the life cycles of numerous aquatic organisms.

Beyond the barrier islands are the near-shore open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Nutrients from the Mississippi River mix with saltwater and fuel the growth of plankton which provide the foundation for a diverse and productive food web. Oil and gas production platforms dot the horizon while snapper, grouper, sharks, and jacks prowl the rigs' legs. Numerous sea birds such as the Magnificent Frigatebird and the Brown Pelican ply the skies, while bottlenose dolphins and five species of threatened or endangered sea turtles cruise the gently sloping depths.

The bays and open ocean of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary contribute to the complex web of life in this

ecological system, emphasizing the need for their preservation and careful management to ensure the longterm health and sustainability of our estuary.

Birds photo by Mudbug Photography

Jean Lafitte Portrait credited to Rosenberg Library, TX

TIDE CORRECTIONS

To find the best time to fish your favorite locations, find a location that is closest to your area and add or subtract the time from the corresponding daily prediction.

AREA	LOW (Hours:Minutes)	High (Hours:Minutes)
Shell Beach, Lake Borgne	+5:10	+4:01
Chandeleur Lighthouse	+0:38	+0:05
Venice, Grand Pass	+1:28	+1:06
Southwest Pass, Delta	-0:29	-1:29
Empire Jetty	-1:35	-2:03
Bastian Island	+0:22	-0:19
Quatre Bayou Pass	+0:27	+1:18
Independence Island	+2:09	+1:29
Caminada Pass	+1:44	+1:14
Timbalier Island	+0:33	-0:41
Cocodrie, Terrebonne Bay	+2:50	+1:10
Wine Island	+1:12	+0:08
Raccoon Point	-0:10	-1:03
Ship Shoal Light	-1:40	-2:54

Charts in this calendar are intended for use solely as a reference guide to Louisiana fishing. It is not intended for navigational use. BTNEP makes no warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in these charts. BTNEP assumes no liability with respect to the use of any information contained in this document.

*Grand Isle is used to determine the tides used throughout the calendar.

BTNEP THANKS...

Design and layout: Otey White & Associates/Angela deGravelles

New Moon

First Quarter

2024 Moon Phase Calendar Icons

Full Moon

Third Quarter

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Front cover and intro photos by Lane Lefort

FISHING REGULATIONS

This is not a comprehensive or official copy of the laws in effect and should not be utilized as such. Size and creel limit regulations are presented for selected species only. These species as well as other species may be managed by seasons, quotas and permits. Different regulations for bass, catfish and crappie may apply within specific areas. Contact the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) for specific information.

FRESHWATER SPECIES

SPECIES	SIZE LIMIT	DAILY LIMIT
Large mouth and Spotted Bass***	None	10
Crappie (Sac-a-lait)	None	50
Striped or Hybrid Striped Bass	None: 2 over 30" (TL)	5 (Any combination)
White Bass	None	50
Yellow Bass	None	50
Channel Catfish	25 less than 11" (TL)	100 100 total of
Blue Catfish	25 less than 12" (TL)	100 – these three
Flathead Catfish (Spotted, Yellow or Opelousas)	25 less than 14" (TL)	100 _ species
Freshwater Drum (Gaspergou)	12" Minimum (TL)	25

SALTWATER SPECIES

SIZE LIMIT

13" Minimum (TL), two over 20"	15
16" Minimum (TL), one over 27"	5
16" Minimum (TL), one over 27"	5
None	10
State & Federal Reg. 34" Min. (FL)	1
State & Federal Reg. 36" Min. (FL)	1
State & Federal Reg. 24" Min. (FL)	3
State & Federal Reg. 12" Min. (FL)	15
State & Federal Reg. 16" Min. (TL)	***

*Red Drum (Redfish) and Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout): LDWF local and statewide fishing regulations are subject to change.

**Southern Flounder: Season closed October 15- November 30.

SPECIES

Black Drum

Red Drum (Redfish)*

Southern Flounder**

Greater Amberjack

King Mackerel

Red Snapper***

Spanish Mackerel

Cobia (Ling or Lemon Fish)

Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout)*

***There are specific regulations for Bass, Red Snapper and Shark. Check LDWF regulations for more information.

FORK LENGTH (FL): Tip of snout to fork of tail. TOTAL Length (TL): Tip of snout to tip of tail.

LA. Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

DAILY LIMIT

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