

BAYOU ST. JOHN



QUICK FACTS

Location: Bayou Saint John,
Orleans Parish, Louisiana

Date: April 2014

Project Attributes

- Urban Planting
- Active floodway
- Habitat creation
- Sediment stabilization
- Collaborative Partnerships
- Coastal science in action

BACKGROUND

Bayou St. John was the original route taken by French explorers in 1718, who camped on its banks before settling in what is now the French Quarter. Though it has lost its original wild beauty, it is a vital part of the urban landscape and an official 'scenic waterway' next to City Park. There is an ongoing movement to restore the bayou's ecology, and several recent projects have re-established some water flow and fish migration from Lake Pontchartrain.

Most of the bayou is within the levee system of New Orleans, with a flood gate installed where the bayou meets Lake Pontchartrain. In the spring of 2013, the Orleans Levee District dredged a channel from the flood gate to the lake to improve water flow. The LPBF beneficially used some of the dredged sediment to create a half acre of wetland along the banks.



BEFORE – 2013



AFTER – 2014

Sheltered from the waves and accessible to the public, the mouth of Bayou St. John is an ideal place to create wetlands. Half an acre of vegetation in the 10-mile concrete seawall improves habitat and water quality while beautifying the urban lakeshore. A pocket of marsh where the bayou meets the lake will have big benefits for the fish, crabs and birds it attracts. Creating an urban wetland is a positive step on the road to saving Lake Pontchartrain and protecting communities adjacent to the Lake. Its location and ecological functions also provide a great learning opportunity - with greater public access, this project functions as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for observing coastal dynamics and the importance of wetland buffers close to home.

PARTNERS

Restore the Earth Foundation and partners the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF), received funding from the Harrah's Foundation and Orleans Levee District for this project. These partners, joined by volunteers from Harrah's HEROS, Timberland and Entergy Corporation worked together to create a wetland at Bayou St. John, a historic bayou off Lake Pontchartrain.

OUTCOMES

Sand from the lake side of Lakeshore Drive Bridge was moved into the bayou, providing the foundation for the wetland creation concept. The sand was piled into berms adjacent to the channel. Muddier sediment from inside the bridge was placed behind the berms to a final elevation near mean water level.

Restore the Earth's Gulf Saver bags were placed by volunteers on the constructed mudflats and planted with marsh vegetation. The Gulf Saver bags accelerated the plant growth and establishment of marsh vegetation that stabilizes the new wetland. The result is a successful constructed wetland abundant with fish and native wildlife. To date, over 37 plant species have been surveyed and since 2015, over 75 bird species have been observed at or around the mouth of Bayou St. John.

The creation of marsh habitat in patches or in fringes, as seen along Bayou St. John, provides habitat for fish, aquatic life, birds and animals. The marsh also attracts a variety of birds and other marsh prevalent species. Increasing the amount and/or length of these fringing marshes can enhance storm surge protection functions of the bayou. Additionally, creating marsh in urban areas provides improved opportunities for public use and recreation.

GULF SAVER BAGS

Gulf Saver Bags are biodegradable, self-contained packages of native plants with their own site specific, custom mixed composted humus with natural nutrients to support, feed and protect the plants. This bag is a stability kit that jump starts plant survivability and growth.



Gulf Saver bags are 14"x22" and weigh approximately 22lbs

