



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
New Orleans District

News Release

Public Affairs Office, 7400 Leake Ave.
www.mvn.usace.army.mil

Tel. 504-862-2201
Fax 504-862-1724

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: John Hall, Corps of Engineers, 504-862-2201
Dennis McCain, East Baton Rouge Parish, 225-389-3121
Kristi Barnett, BREC, 225-273-6439

July 6, 2001

Corps, Baton Rouge will restore ecosystem, turning old dirt mine along Comite River into nature park

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the City of Baton Rouge/East Baton Rouge Parish, and the Recreation and Park Commission for East Baton Rouge Parish (BREC) are joining hands to transform an abandoned dirt mine into a 62.5-acre nature park on Comite River.

The Comite River at Hooper Road Ecosystem Restoration Project will cost \$974,000. The cost will be shared 65 percent by the Corps and 35 percent by the city/parish government and BREC. Construction will begin July 9 and be completed in three to four months.

The area is eight miles northeast of downtown Baton Rouge, north of Hooper Road (La. 408) between the Comite River and Blackwater Road.

The announcement was made jointly by Col. Thomas Julich, New Orleans district engineer, Mayor-President Bobby Simpson and BREC's Chairman J.W. Cocreham and Superintendent Eugene Young.

Almost 7,000 trees will be planted in 17 native species. Two lakes will be built, of 2.5 and six acres, to mimic the site's original bald cypress sloughs.

Public benefits will include the restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality, reduced erosion, maintenance of floodwater storage and the creation of educational and recreational facilities, said Barton Rogers, a Corps biologist.

“Without intervention, recovery to a natural forested ecosystem would take several centuries. Recovery is hindered by acidic soils, poor water retention for wetlands and the invasion of foreign species, such as Chinese tallow trees,” said Rogers, the project manager.

Clay was mined on the site in the 1970s and 1980s. Brush has grown over the site, but bald spots remain. In the restoration, trees to be planted include bald cypress, tupelo gum, cottonwood, river birch, red mulberry, persimmon, pine and oak. Invasive species, such as the tallow, will be removed. Organics and lime will be used to create soil conditions for optimum growth.

Recreation facilities will be blended into the natural scene. Walking trails, restrooms, information booth, and a parking lot will be built to allow recreational use of the area. Recreation will include bird watching, nature interpretation, exercise walking, nature education and fishing.

The area also provides floodwater storage for the Comite River watershed and was inundated by recent flood events. It is likely that the park would be closed for three to five days a year due to high water on the Comite. The impact of this flooding to the park would be minimal and would represent natural conditions.

The project’s base area of 57.5 acres will be supplemented by five adjoining acres that the city is restoring as mitigation for previously constructed drainage projects. The 62.5-acre park will be operated and maintained by BREC (www.brec.org).

Four other agencies also contributed to the project:

U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Soils data and recommendations to optimize soil fertility.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries. Project design advice and tree-planting recommendations.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. Technical environmental assistance.

Filename: BLACKWATERw_header.doc
Directory: N:\PAO\RELEASES
Template: C:\Documents and
Settings\b2imimp\m.MVN01\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: A 62
Subject:
Author: B2PMRBDR
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 7/3/2001 12:19 PM
Change Number: 2
Last Saved On: 7/3/2001 12:19 PM
Last Saved By: SirVive
Total Editing Time: 1 Minute
Last Printed On: 7/3/2001 12:22 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 2
Number of Words: 508 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 2,900 (approx.)