



SCENIC RIVERS REVIEW

Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808
www.wlf.louisiana.gov/scenic-rivers

Stream Spotlight:

Amite River

By Kyle F. Balkum and Chris Davis

The East Fork and West Fork of the Amite River originate in southern Mississippi. The two streams flow in a southerly direction and eventually join together in Louisiana approximately 0.5 miles below the state line. From this point the Amite River meanders for more than 115 miles through East Feliciana, St. Helena, East Baton Rouge, Livingston and Ascension parishes before emptying into Lake Maurepas. The Amite River drains an area of approximately 2,200 square miles.

The Amite River from the state line to La. Hwy. 37 has been a Louisiana designated Natural and Scenic River since the System's inception in 1970. This river segment is approximately 27 miles in length.



Amite River segment designated Natural and Scenic

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This April, Chris Davis and I surveyed the Amite River in a 15' canoe. We launched into the East Fork of the Amite River near the state line and paddled over 14 miles before disembarking downstream of the La. Hwy. 10 bridge. Because it was often very shallow, especially in the upper reaches, a canoe was ideal for this stretch of river.



East Fork of Amite River (Credit: Chris Davis)

The Amite River meanders through upland hardwood forests, bottomland hardwood forests, mixed pine hardwood forests and managed pine forests. Paddling the Amite River, especially the upper reaches, you experience a sense of seclusion and peace. You can enjoy the true wilderness quality and scenic beauty of a place seldom traveled.

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Wildlife viewing, especially bird watching, was spectacular. Great Blue Herons were observed along shallow shorelines. Green Herons were seen perched in toppled tree tops. Sandpipers ran along the edges of sand bars. Wood Duck pairs occasionally flushed, heading for cover in adjacent backwaters. Belted Kingfishers fished along the water's edge and sounded their rattling call as we paddled by. Striking Indigo Buntings flittered among dead tree branches and brush piles. Northern Rough-winged Swallows seemed to follow us for most of our journey. Their nest openings were frequently seen along most vertical banks. While foraging for insects, the swallows swooped overhead and skimmed the water's surface in an impressive aerial display. Raptors, including Mississippi Kites, Red-tailed Hawks, Osprey and Turkey Vultures, were often seen circling overhead. Most fascinating and memorable was a close encounter with a Bald Eagle. This magnificent bird glided over the water and directly in front of our canoe. So stunned by the nearness of the flyby, we failed to capture the moment on camera!

In addition to birds, other wildlife was occasionally observed. Several turtles and an occasional water snake were spotted from a distance. Signs of beaver activity were apparent where the river was narrow. Empty mussel shells sometimes littered the sand bars (we know from our Natural Heritage Program that the Amite River is home to several species of mussel, many of which are considered imperiled because of rarity). Wildlife viewing was certainly a highlight of our trip.



Amite River north of Hwy 432 (Credit: Chris Davis)

The Amite River offers excellent fishing for a variety of species. In the upper reaches of the Amite River a simple cane pole equipped with an earthworm or catalpa worm can yield a solid catch of panfish and occasionally a prized rock bass. Find them in the slower currents around log jams. Further downstream between La. Hwy. 10 and La. Hwy. 37 fishermen regularly float the river tossing spinner baits in hopes of snagging feisty spotted bass. Local residents set out hoop nets, throw lines, and trotlines to catch flathead (known to locals as a "tabby cat" or "spotted cat"), blue or channel catfish. The flathead can specifically be targeted by setting a single drop hook with a small mud cat or "red-bellied" perch in deep water along a riparian bankline. Also, with the abundance of submerged logs in the river there is excellent habitat for fish grabbing, a hobby that has been ongoing since the Great Depression. Fish grabbing is a form of fishing in which the fisherman locates large catfish within sunken logs and catches them using his bare hands. April and May are the best



West and East Forks of the Amite River (Credit: Chris Davis)

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months for fish grabbing. If you wish to try your hand at fish grabbing, beware of snapping turtles!

The Amite River meanders back and forth throughout most of its course. A recreational user will notice that the outside bends of the river are typically steep eroding banks (some areas are experiencing severe erosion) and the inside bends are deposited sand and gravel bars. Viewed from overhead, this repetitious pattern of bends resembles a snake. This stream formation is a classic example of the southerly serpentine (snake-like) movement of streams that is typical in this part of the State. Meanders or river bends slowly migrate downstream. This natural process must always be considered when any development is planned near streams.



Amite River north of Hwy 10 (Credit: Chris Davis)

Our float down the upper Amite River was certainly scenic! The river offers high quality canoeing and fishing. However, access to the upper reaches is limited. Entering and/or exiting at bridge crossings can be difficult and even dangerous. With proper planning and approved access, we enthusiastically encourage users to canoe, bird, fish, photograph and enjoy the scenic Amite River.

If you have enjoyed time on a Scenic River and want to share your experience, please submit your story and pictures to us and it may be included in future issues of this newsletter.

Bayou Manchac Celebrates Explorer Iberville

By Jonathan Scott, The Bayou Manchac Group

Eighteen paddlers participated in The Bayou Manchac Group's paddle down Bayou Manchac on March 24, 2013 to celebrate the 314th anniversary of Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville's first exploration of Bayou Manchac. Iberville, a French-Canadian explorer, arrived in Louisiana in 1699 and is credited with founding the first permanent French settlement in Louisiana.

Paddlers put in on Bayou Manchac at the Frog Bayou lock west of I-10 and paddled 11 miles to the bayou's confluence with the Amite River. They then continued down the Amite River for an additional three miles until reaching the La. Hwy. 42 bridge in Port Vincent (a short paddle considering that Iberville entered Bayou Manchac from the Mississippi River and continued to Mobile, Alabama). Conditions were very favorable, with a northwest wind and a moderate current to aid paddlers. There were no major obstructions along the 14 mile route.



Launch at Bayou Manchac (Credit: The Bayou Manchac Group)

Three members of the oldest and most active paddling club in southeast Louisiana, the Bayou Haystackers Paddling Club, participated. Having never paddled Bayou Manchac, they were very impressed with the navigability of the bayou, but

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disappointed with the lack of suitable canoe launches. They hope to bring additional club members to future events.



Bayou Manchac paddlers (Credit: The Bayou Manchac Group)

The Bayou Manchac Group is planning events in October and November to celebrate the anniversary of the celebrated naturalist William Bartram's exploration of Bayou Manchac in 1775 during his historic survey of the southeastern United States. Other States have turned Bartram's route into official State Paddle Trails. For more information locate The Bayou Manchac Group on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BayouManchac.



Bayou Manchac paddlers (Credit: The Bayou Manchac Group)

Bayou Manchac from the Mississippi River to the Amite River has been a Louisiana designated

Historic and Scenic River since 2009. The bayou is approximately 19 miles in length and flows through East Baton Rouge, Iberville and Ascension parishes. Be warned, if you plan to paddle scenic Bayou Manchac, you will not be able to enter the bayou from the Mississippi River as Iberville's expedition did. Today, the Mississippi River levee separates the two waterbodies.

Bayou Teche Nomination Update

By Keith Cascio

During the 2012 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, Bayou Teche in St. Martin, St. Landry, Iberia and St. Mary Parishes was nominated for possible inclusion as an Historic and Scenic River. The Department's Scenic Rivers staff conducted the physical and historical study of Bayou Teche and, given the 135 mile length of the Bayou, conducted three separate public hearings in our effort to collect input from the public. We were quite fortunate to get a lot of participation in those hearings as well as an impressive number of written comments. We also received a lot of questions and considerable opposition along certain segments. Throughout this process, we recognized a number of misconceptions about the Scenic Rivers Program which is understandable given that there are no designated Scenic Rivers in that part of the State.

With the concurrence of the legislator who authored the original nomination, it was decided to take another year focusing on reaching out to citizens along certain segments of Bayou Teche, specifically in St. Martin and St. Landry Parishes, where support for such a designation was considerably greater than in other downstream parishes. Later this year, we plan to conduct one or more public meetings in those vicinities where support was presented to us with the intent of providing members of the public who have concerns and questions with a better understanding of what such a designation would

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mean for them and their communities. We expect to be able to provide the Legislature with a well-informed recommendation by the start of the 2014 Regular Session.



Bayou Teche (Credit: Chris Davis)

Community Conservation:

Tangi Clean

By Ian MacKinnon

Tangi Clean is a community group organized by E.J. Forgotson in 2008 to promote and organize efforts to clean up the litter problem in Tangipahoa Parish. The group meets on the second Tuesday of every other month where they plan trash clean-up events, report the results of past events, and coordinate their efforts with Parish and State officials.

Tangi Clean has organized a number of cleanup efforts along the Tangipahoa River. Cleanup sites have included under the bridges at Highways 38, 440, 22, and at Carpenter's Landing and Lee's Landing. In the aftermath of the flooding caused by Hurricane Isaac, the group persuaded the Parish to place a dumpster at Lee's Landing for the use of residents who were cleaning up camps accessible only by water.



Tangi Clean's August 2011 river clean-up (Credit: Garnett Bedenbaugh)

They will be holding a clean-up event on the Tangipahoa River on Saturday, June 8, 2013 from 8–Noon. They will be targeting three sites: the Highway 22 bridge near Ponchatoula, the Highway 16 bridge near Amite, and the Highway 440 bridge near Tangipahoa. If anyone is interested in participating, please contact E.J. Forgotson (ej@forgotston.com) for the Amite area, Garnett Bedenbaugh (garnettb2@charter.net) for the Ponchatoula area, and Joey Mayeaux (rockysbodyshop@hotmail.com) for the Tangipahoa area.

The Tangipahoa River from the state line to Lake Pontchartrain is a Louisiana designated Natural and Scenic River. The Tangipahoa River in Louisiana is approximately 79 miles long.

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