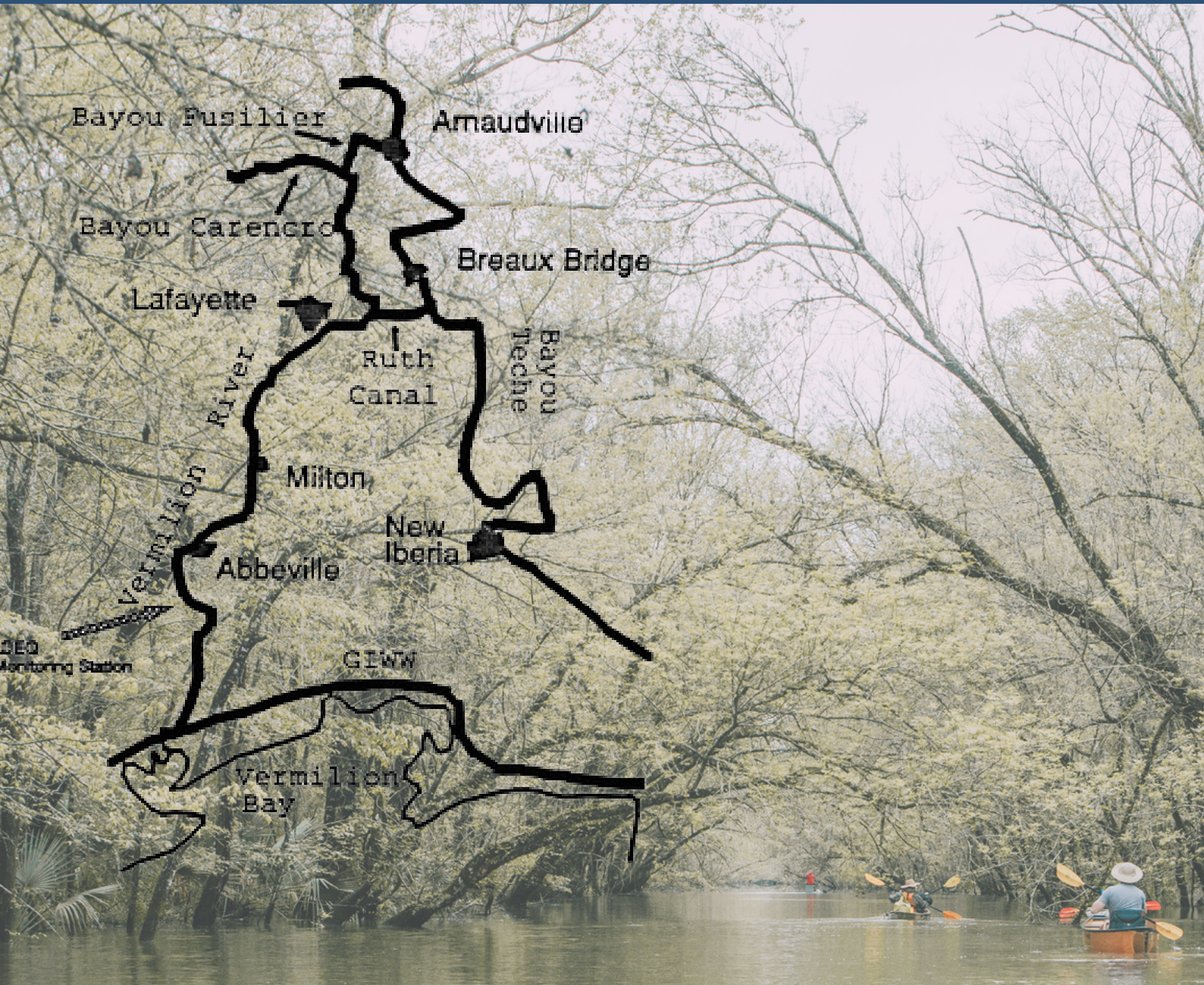


9th Annual River Symposium

*A River's Journey: Connecting
Communities and Habitats*



March 15, 2024



BAYOU VERMILION
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

EST. 2013



ABOUT THE BOARD

Founded in 2013, the Bayou Vermilion Preservation Association (BVPA) board is comprised of community advocates, public servants, outdoor enthusiasts, and other leaders just like you!



**WE ARE A NON-PROFIT 501(C)(3)
ADVOCATING FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT AND
PROTECTION OF THE BAYOU
VERMILION WATERSHED.**

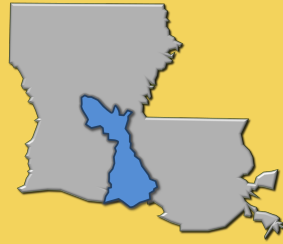


The mission of the Bayou Vermilion Preservation Association is to create awareness of our natural environment by providing education and outreach to the general community about ways to *conserve, protect, and enjoy* the Bayou Vermilion Watershed.

WELCOME TO THE BVPA!

By registering for this event you have been added to our mailing list. You will receive newsletters and other communications about events hosted by BVPA. The public is welcome to attend board meetings and serve on committees to support our mission.

ABOUT THIS EVENT



This year's speakers are experts from the private, public and non-profit sectors who work tirelessly to obtain native and/or disturbed land, advocate for development with nature in mind and/or innovate to restore those landscapes to their native, resilient origins with input and aid from the communities in which the restored landscapes are located. Seth Blich, the Louisiana Coastal Director of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will serve as this year's honorary chair, opening the symposium with the important work TNC has done not only in Louisiana but across the nation. Conversations regarding land acquisition, funding mechanisms, engineering and landscape design, ecological, financial, and anthropogenic benefits, community engagement and examples of creative nature-based projects will be explored during the remainder of the day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank our *generous sponsors* and those who have provided resources for our programming and given their time and expertise to make this event possible.

BVPA'S GOVERNING BOARD

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Sarah Schoeffler

Heather Warner-Finley

Babette Werner

Brac Salyers

Kelia Bingham

Dr. Whitney Broussard

Ariel Dauzart



BVPA, founded by Jan & Charlie Wyatt et al., had its first "core group" meeting in July 2012.

We became a not-for-profit in August 2013.

AGENDA

A River's Journey: Connecting Communities and Habitats

8:00 - 8:30 Breakfast from Edies and coffee from REVE Coffee

8:30 Welcome from BVPA President : Jenee Dansdill

8:40 Mayor-President Proclamation : Rachel Godeaux

8:50 Lafayette Soil and Water Conservation Representative

9:00 - 9:35 (including 5 minutes for questions)

- **Keynote Speaker:** Seth Blich: Connectivity Within and Among Communities

9:35 - 10:05 (including 5 minutes for questions)

- **Christina May :** “Go Big, And Go Home: Techniques, tools, and why both big and small projects matter on the landscape”

10:05 Break - Lobby

10:30 – 11:00 (including 5 minutes for questions)

- **Chris Adams and Amber Robinson:** Catalyzing Change in Local Government: Where Infrastructure Priorities, Community Needs, and Ecological Services Intersect.

11:00 – 11:30 (including 5 minutes for questions)

- **MaryAnne Piacentini :** Grow it and they will come: A guide to growing a prairie movement.

11:30 - Presentation of Awards

11:40 - 12:30 Lunch from a Lafayette favorite, Joey's

12:30 - 1:00 (including 5 minutes for questions)

- **Jill Andrew :** The Nature Who? Connecting People to Nature at Cypress Island Preserve

1:00 – 2:00 Panel Discussion - How communities connect to address watershed conservation issues.

- **Scott Brazda - Moderator**
- **Seth Blich - Director of Conservation for Louisiana, The Nature Conservancy**
- **Danica Adams - Senior Consultant and National Funding Lead, Arcadis**
- **Christina May - Project Manager, RES**
- **MaryAnne Piacentini - President and CEO Coastal Prairie Conservancy**

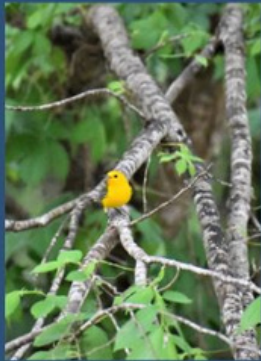


9th Annual River Symposium Presents:

A Bird Walk at The Nature Conservancy's Cypress Island Preserve

March 16 from 8:00 - 10:00

Cypress Island Visitor Center
1264 Prairie Highway, St. Martinville, LA 70582



Join us for a bird walk the The Nature Conservancy's Seth Blich. The preserve's unique forested wetlands fosters a spectacular rookery that supports thousands of nesting birds each spring, including White Ibis, Anhinga, Neotropic Cormorants, Cattle Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Little Blue Herons, Green Herons, Great Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons and Yellow-crowned Night Herons. The preserve's walking levee trail is also an ideal place to observe trans-gulf migratory songbirds.

Car Pooling is highly encouraged as there will be limited parking. Registration is encouraged.

Moncus Park Walk : Resilient Landscapes Connect Communities and Nature

March 17 from 1:00 - 3:00

2913 Johnston Street, Lafayette, LA 70503



Join us for a walk at Moncus Park where BVPA Board members and Advisors will share how Moncus Park is connecting the community with nature. We will explore the Cajun prairie, the watershed connection and the importance of native plants alongside removal of invasive species.



Car Pooling is highly encouraged as there will be limited parking. Registration is encouraged.



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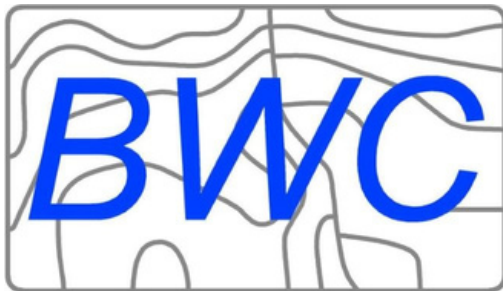
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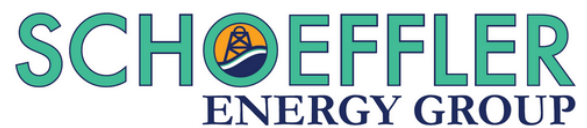
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SUPPORTER SPONSORS



**Bill & Heather
Finley**

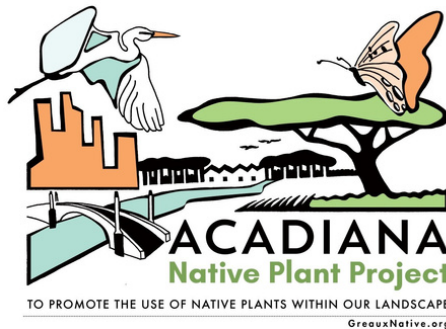


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A River's Journey: Connecting Communities and Habitats

FRIEND SPONSORS



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Seth Blicht

Honorary Chair

Director of
Conservation for the
Louisiana chapter of
the Nature
Conservancy



Connectivity Within and Among Communities

Seth Blicht is a Floridian who moved to Louisiana in 2011 to take a position with The Nature Conservancy. He began as the Director of Coastal Conservation and currently serves as the Director of Conservation for the Louisiana chapter. He is involved regionally (Southeast) and beyond in the recovery of oyster resources as a habitat and fishery through restoration projects, convening stakeholders and policy and management engagement. He manages these, and other natural infrastructure projects, and the development and application of decision-support tools aimed at coastal resiliency. Additionally, he works with colleagues in the freshwater sphere to develop and implement projects that account for and improve the connectivity among freshwater resources and their impact to coastal processes and ecosystems. He also works on upland projects like longleaf pine restoration and migratory bird habitat improvement. Prior to coming to TNC, Seth was the director of the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve located in the Florida panhandle. While there he oversaw efforts to characterize how changes in water supply from the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint basin were expressed in the natural communities of Apalachicola Bay. Additionally, he oversaw and participated in prescribed burning efforts and selective timber harvests to maintain and restore pine flatwoods habitats.

Christina May



**Project Manager for
RES in Louisiana.**

Go Big, And Go Home: Techniques, tools, and why both big and small projects matter on the landscape

Christina May serves as Project Manager for RES in Louisiana. Her work includes permitting, design, installation, construction oversight, and monitoring of proposed and on-going stream and wetland mitigation projects and coastal restoration design and implementation. She is experienced in tailoring nature-based projects to clients needs. Examples include incorporating nature-based solutions on-site to minimize wetland impacts and subsequent implementation/operation costs in solar developments and developing off-site solutions to deliver desired ecological benefits. Christina is experienced in Clean Water Act permitting, Volumetric Water Benefit Accounting, Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act compliance, Natural Resource Damage Assessment, and garnering agency concurrence for uncharted regulatory cases. Christina grew up on the water and in the woods with her family and looks forward to sharing the same experiences with her two young daughters. Her childhood passion turned to studies at Louisiana State University and continued at the University of Georgia where she finished a Masters of Forest Resources. Habitat management is key – for fisheries and wildlife as well as us.

Chris Adams



**Farm and Food
Statewide Organic
Agriculture Director**

***Co-presenter: Catalyzing Change in Local Government:
Where Infrastructure Priorities, Community Needs, and
Ecological Services Intersect.***

Chris Adams holds undergraduate and master's degrees in sustainability, with a focus on community development and local food systems. He has been on the board of the Bayou Vermilion Preservation Association since 2019, helped establish and operate Earthshare Gardens, a small-scale vegetable farm in Lafayette, and Acadiana Food Alliance, a food-system policy and support organization and for many years worked for the city-parish government of Lafayette in the Community Development & Planning Department. He provides support and capacity building for sustainability topics ranging from stormwater management to bike transportation planning to small-scale agriculture in Louisiana. Chris excels in collaborative initiatives, relationship building, comprehensive and strategic planning, and effecting change. He is a native of Baton Rouge but has lived in both the Pacific Northwest and New England and has traveled extensively in South Africa. Currently he is residing in Lafayette with his daughter and enjoys the thriving live music scene, shared meals with his friends and family, and the house-made hot chai latte at the local coffee shop.

Amber Robinson



**Environmental
Lead for HDR
Engineering, Inc.**

Co-presenter: Catalyzing Change in Local Government: Where Infrastructure Priorities, Community Needs, and Ecological Services Intersect.

AMs. Robinson, a native of southwest Louisiana, is an Environmental Scientist and Project Manager for HDR Engineering, Inc. With over 10 years of experience in ecological field assessments, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation, and a broad range of environmental and regulatory permitting, specializing in Clean Water Act and Louisiana Coastal Zone Management Regulations. Over her tenure with HDR, Amber has become best known for her ability to collaborate with clients and permitting agencies to develop project specific permitting strategies that meet permit requirements while maintaining project goals. She currently serves as the Louisiana and Texas Gulf Coast Environmental Lead, leading 10 environmental consulting professionals in Louisiana, Houston and Corpus Christi. She is a graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette with a BS in Business Management and a BS in Environmental and Sustainable Resources. Amber is an active member of the Society of Wetland Scientists South Central Chapter and National Chapter, having served as Co-Chair of the Webinar Sub-Committee and is certified as Professional Wetland Scientist by the organization. In her spare time, Ms. Robinson also is an active member of the Bayou Vermilion Preservation Association, having served as board member and President for five years. She currently serves as Co-Chair of the Symposium Committee and a technical advisor of the executive board.

MaryAnne Piacentini



**President and CEO ,
Coastal Prairie
Conservancy**

Grow it and they will come.

Mary Anne Piacentini, President and CEO , Coastal Prairie Conservancy, is responsible for coordinating the Conservancy's land protection programs and conservation assistance to private landowners, establishing community partnerships and relationships with diverse stakeholders, and overseeing the operations and programs of the agency. In 2018 she was awarded the Flo Hannah Prairie Career Achievement Excellence Award from the Coastal Prairie Partnership and Native Prairies Association of Texas as well as the Bayou Preservation Association's Terry Hershey Bayou Stewardship Award . She received the AIA Houston's Civic Vision Award in 2016 and was one of inaugural winners of Audubon Texas's Terry Hershey Texas Women in Conservation award in 2014. In 2005, she received the Army and Sarah Emmott Conservation Award from the Citizens' Environmental Coalition. She currently serves on the Board and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee of the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, on the steering Committee of the Coalition for Environmental, Equity, and Resilience, and a significant member of the Harris County Community Flood Resilience Task Force . She received a Master of City Planning from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of New Hampshire.

Jill Andrew



The Nature Conservancy at Cypress Island Preserve

The Nature Who? Connecting People to Nature at Cypress Island Preserve

Conservation and Geographic Information System (GIS) Specialist – Jill has worked with The Nature Conservancy since 2013 and has over fifteen years' experience in GIS. She provides technical leadership and support using GIS and plans and directs management in conservation, outreach, and volunteer programs. Working closely with staff, she provides static and web maps and web applications, geospatial analysis, data processing, GIS training and cloud-based data collection services. She also serves as the Cypress Island Preserve and Volunteer Program Manager where she coordinates, manages, and tracks volunteer workshops, events, and visitor center operations.

PANEL DISCUSSION

How communities connect to address watershed conservation issues.

Scott Brazda, Panel Moderator

Scott Brazda is a news anchor/reporter for KATC-TV in Lafayette and hosts the station's popular "Spirit of Acadiana" segment. He co-founded the St. Jude Acadiana Dream Home Project and has won seven Associated Press awards for his reporting and storytelling.

For 13 years, he served as executive director of The Stuller Family Foundation and created a Junior Philanthropy program which laid a foundation of giving with the future leaders of Acadiana.

Scott has been a member of the adjunct faculty of the Communications Department at the University of Louisiana since 2000, and is a freelance writer for a number of regional publications.

Scott is a graduate of Teurlings Catholic High and the University of Louisiana. He and his wife Suzanne are the proud parents of 22-year old Sophia and 15-year old Nick.

PANEL DISCUSSION

How communities connect to address watershed conservation issues.

Panelist: *Seth Blitch- Director of Conservation for Louisiana, The Nature Conservancy*

Seth Blitch is a Floridian who moved to Louisiana in 2011 to take a position with The Nature Conservancy. He began as the Director of Coastal Conservation and currently serves as the Director of Conservation for the Louisiana chapter. He is involved regionally (Southeast) and beyond in the recovery of oyster resources as a habitat and fishery through restoration projects, convening stakeholders and policy and management engagement. He manages these, and other natural infrastructure projects, and the development and application of decision-support tools aimed at coastal resiliency. Additionally, he works with colleagues in the freshwater sphere to develop and implement projects that account for and improve the connectivity among freshwater resources and their impact to coastal processes and ecosystems. He also works on upland projects like longleaf pine restoration and migratory bird habitat improvement. Prior to coming to TNC, Seth was the director of the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve located in the Florida panhandle. While there he oversaw efforts to characterize how changes in water supply from the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint basin were expressed in the natural communities of Apalachicola Bay. Additionally, he oversaw and participated in prescribed burning efforts and selective timber harvests to maintain and restore pine flatwoods habitats.

Panelists: *Danica Adams-Senior Consultant and National Funding Lead, Arcadis*

Danica Adams is (first and foremost) an alum of UL Lafayette, College of Applied Life Sciences with a Bachelors degree in Environmental and Sustainable Resources. She also graduated from the UT Austin School of Architecture, with two Masters degrees - one in Sustainable Design and a second in Community and Regional Planning. While living in Lafayette, she worked here at the Bayou Vermilion District as the Watershed Coordinator supporting the non-point source pollution grant. Throughout her career, she continued to focus on storm water, ending up working for the State Office of Community Development and developing the Louisiana Watershed Initiative.

After spending a few years in Puerto Rico helping administer federal disaster funds, Danica now works with Arcadis, a global engineering and consulting firm that focuses on resiliency and climate adaptation. There, she provides support to the Office of Community Development for the Louisiana Watershed Initiative and manages the Planning, Policy, and Funding Team. This team supports local and state jurisdictions in developing resilience plans, doing community engagement, finding federal funds for their resiliency and climate adaptation projects, and managing federal grants.

After quite a bit of traveling, Danica has settled back in New Orleans with her Puerto Rican cat named Diego, and commutes to Lafayette to see her family and friends

PANEL DISCUSSION

How communities connect to address watershed conservation issues.

Panelist: *Christina May- Project Manager, RES*

Christina May serves as Project Manager for RES in Louisiana. Her work includes permitting, design, installation, construction oversight, and monitoring of proposed and on-going stream and wetland mitigation projects and coastal restoration design and implementation. She is experienced in tailoring nature-based projects to clients needs. Examples include incorporating nature-based solutions on-site to minimize wetland impacts and subsequent implementation/operation costs in solar developments and developing off-site solutions to deliver desired ecological benefits. Christina is experienced in Clean Water Act permitting, Volumetric Water Benefit Accounting, Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act compliance, Natural Resource Damage Assessment, and garnering agency concurrence for uncharted regulatory cases. Christina grew up on the water and in the woods with her family and looks forward to sharing the same experiences with her two young daughters. Her childhood passion turned to studies at Louisiana State University and continued at the University of Georgia where she finished a Masters of Forest Resources. Habitat management is key – for fisheries and wildlife as well as us.

Panelist: *MaryAnne Piacentini- President and CEO Coastal Prairie Conservancy*

Mary Anne Piacentini, President and CEO , Coastal Prairie Conservancy, is responsible for coordinating the Conservancy's land protection programs and conservation assistance to private landowners, establishing community partnerships and relationships with diverse stakeholders, and overseeing the operations and programs of the agency. In 2018 she was awarded the Flo Hannah Prairie Career Achievement Excellence Award from the Coastal Prairie Partnership and Native Prairies Association of Texas as well as the Bayou Preservation Association's Terry Hershey Bayou Stewardship Award . She received the AIA Houston's Civic Vision Award in 2016 and was one of inaugural winners of Audubon Texas's Terry Hershey Texas Women in Conservation award in 2014. In 2005, she received the Army and Sarah Emmott Conservation Award from the Citizens' Environmental Coalition. She currently serves on the Board and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee of the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, on the steering Committee of the Coalition for Environmental, Equity, and Resilience, and a significant member of the Harris County Community Flood Resilience Task Force . She received a Master of City Planning from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of New Hampshire.

JUMP ON BOARD!

TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

- Pick up litter
- Use a rain barrel
- Pick up pet poop
- Bag and compost yard waste
- Properly dispose of chemicals
- Wash vehicles over grassy areas
- Plant natives to reduce pesticide use
- Install a rain garden to slow stormwater down

TO STAY INVOLVED

- Visit a Riverside park
- Check out regional paddle trails
- Participate in community programming
- Attend events focused on resource conservation
- Follow BVPA and our partners on social media
- Join the Embrace-A-Space program through LCG



The Vermilion, and all Louisiana waterways, are ours to enjoy and protect!

WHY SHOULD WE PROTECT AND IMPROVE OUR WATERSHED?



**Watershed conditions
impact our lives.**



**Clean Watersheds
support our economy.**



Watersheds provide:

- Clean surface water
- Fisheries
- Outdoor recreation
- Eco-tourism





Programming

VERMILION RIVER ALLIANCE

The Vermilion River Alliance (VRA) was founded by BVPA in July 2014 and is managed by the BVPA President. The VRA is comprised of multiple agencies across St. Landry, St. Martin, Lafayette and Vermilion Parishes. Parish Presidents, Mayors, Police Juries, LDEQ, Soil and Water Conservation groups and other stakeholders are generally represented at the meetings.



RAIN BARREL ART PROGRAM

The rain barrel art program is an annual collaboration of BVPA, LCG, Project Front Yard, LUS, and Lafayette area schools. This art contest, geared toward middle and high school students, promotes drinking water conservation, stormwater management, and public art.



STORM DRAIN ART PROGRAM

2018 was the inaugural year of the storm drain art program. Our partners include LCG, Project Front Yard, Habitat for Humanity, ULL, BVD, and the ACA. Ten drains have been painted by local artists to illustrate the need for watershed protection. The art work symbolizes local ecology, culture and community.



STATE OF THE RIVER MEETING

The first state of the river meeting was held in May 2018. Held annually, this public meeting covers the latest information on water quality and sampling initiatives, fish and wildlife, and current efforts being made by various groups to improve the watershed. BVPA board members are available for questions, refreshments are served, and networking is encouraged.



WATER SAMPLING PROGRAM

The Long-term Water Quality Sampling Program has grown over the last five years. Through the coordination of Donald Segura, Director of Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water District, and the cooperation of our partners, we sample both the Bayou Teche and Vermilion River. Currently there are a total of 19 sample points throughout five parishes.



REVIVING RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

The BVPA and other *Partners in Preservation* hosted a series of educational workshops throughout the watershed. Participants learned about stormwater management and resiliency through native plantings, had an opportunity to install a demonstration area, and received advice and complimentary plants.



Follow us on Facebook/Instagram to learn about future events!

**Thank you for being a
Partner in Preservation!**



EST. 2013

**BAYOU VERMILION
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION**