

How Industries Logged the Atchafalaya Basin Out, and How to Log Back In

Mon, 2012-08-20 10:16

I drove across the 18 mile I-10 bridge that spans Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin at dawn that day, both lulled by the rhythmic sound of the engine in my truck, and the soft hues of the morning light. I marveled at the stillness of the water, which splattered inconsistently with finger-like cypress stumps that seemed to point to the mirrored sky above.

"God's country," I thought to myself.

My destination for the day was the east side of the Basin, where I met with one of my heroes, Dean Wilson, the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper. As I pulled into his long driveway and parked my car under a canvas of the gently swaying moss that frequents our area, I thought of how lucky I was to get the opportunity to spend the day with Dean, exploring the great Atchafalaya Basin and all she has to offer.

The Basin itself stretches 140 miles along the full length of the Atchafalaya River, right down the middle of Louisiana before emptying out into the Gulf of Mexico. It is comprised of 885,000 acres of wetlands, and is the largest swamp in North America.

The sprawling home to over 100 species of fish, 40 different sorts of mammals (including the Florida panther and the Louisiana black bear), 20 amphibian types and around 300 categories of birds, would be my playground for the day.

Dean came out to meet me, dog by his side, ready to get to the launch. Greeting me with a thick Spanish accent, not at all usual in this Cajun French heavy area, he seemed excited to get out on the water. I had this feeling that Dean is more at home surrounded by swamp, in the cathedral-like solitude of the Basin, than anywhere else in the world.

I share his passion -- the unique ecosystem there is amazing, an awe-inspiring mix of unashamed beauty and adventurous trespass.

As we make our way by boat through the winding, shallow waters, I am suddenly taken back to prehistoric times. As I often do, I imagine what this area was like before man's first pirogue cut its way through.

It does not take long in our journey, though, to see that my imaginary quest is to be besieged by reality. Dean idles the boat down long enough to show me the effect of industry. Pipeline routes that slice the area into pieces, aging infrastructure from the oil and gas industry that continuously leaks contaminants into the once-clear water, and of course, acre after acre of stumps where the long-threatened Bald Cypress trees once stood guard.

Deeper into the swamp, and once settled among the deep-throated alligator hisses and the cacophony of chattering birds playing in the canopy above, Dean tells me stories of exploration and of his fight to protect this once-abundant paradise.

Dean came to the area, he explains, decades ago, on his way to the Amazon, where he had hoped to fight for protection of its fragile ecosystem which was (and is) being exploited at an unprecedented rate. His wish was to help save the forest before it was reduced to a fraction of its glory, much like the great Redwoods of the West, or those of New Zealand, the Philippines, and Southwest China -- all now reduced to less than 10 percent of their original size.

Living in the Basin for years with only his boat and a machete, he had quickly fallen in love with the area, and had become well acquainted with its own threats to survival. And so, he had stayed and raised his family here, in the ancient

Key Topics

- Culture
- Environment
- Law and Policy
- Recovery and Renewal
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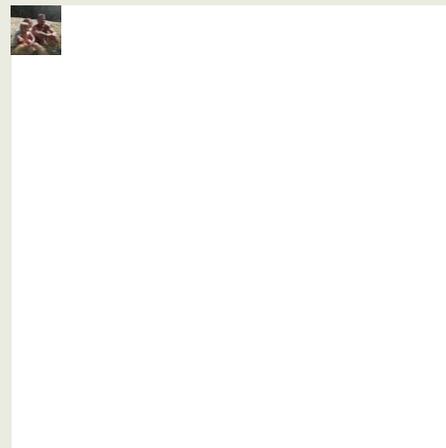
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swamps.

Eventually he founded the non-profit organization, [Atchafalaya Basinkeeper](#) – a part of the national Waterkeeper Alliance. Over time, this humble man and his crew has become the protecting angels of the Basin, her ecosystem and communities.

In the 2011 annual report released by the group, "Swamp Wars: The Fight for the Atchafalaya Basin," the major threats to the area are expressed as being the diversion of sediment load, illegal wetland development and cypress logging.

According to the report, "The Corps of Engineers continues pushing their policy of diverting up to 65 percent of the Mississippi river sediment load into about 25 percent of the water we get from the Mississippi River... [and has] realigned and straightened Grand River to maximize sediment loads into the Eastern Atchafalaya Basin in order to redistribute sediment into deeper swamps to create uplands for major land owners." This means that essentially the Corps is filling in the swamp with mud.

The booklet goes on to explain that often illegally constructed roads, levees and dams built throughout the Basin are causing huge detrimental impact to the ecosystem. Although laws on the books have been clearly set to protect this fragile area, regularly unscrupulous practices, endorsed in silence by the state, come into play, with disastrous outcome.

As Dean says, what often happens is that a developer or corporation will begin a project illegally. Yet, when caught in their deception, instead of punishment, they are given "after-the-fact" permits to continue. In this climate of "it's easier to seek forgiveness than permission," it's no wonder state and federal entities have become impotent in their enforcement of protection.

"As the laws are enforced, the penalty is greater for keeping an undersized bass than for illegally damming a bayou or damaging hundreds of acres of wetlands without a permit," he explains.

I have to admit, that my eyes get a little damp when Dean goes on to explain to me the general lack of foresight past generations had with saving a part of this precious forest for us. His description of loggers in the 1800s, starting separately on both sides of the forest and by the early 1900s meeting each other in the middle, burdens me with both anger and sadness.

As my eyes glaze across these magnificent trees, mere babies during that time of their elder's butcher, I fall upon the many more car-wide stumps, standing like gravestones in the water.

My anger grows significantly as I learn how that same unsustainable cypress logging still exists. The only logging operation left in the Basin, owned by the St. Martin Land Company, is logging all the swampland they own at this moment, as Dean says, "working hard to convince as many landowners as possible to log their (own) swamps."

That is why it's imperative that we have people like Dean and organizations like ABK. Recently, when [St. Martin Parish School Board](#) agreed to log its own 450 acres of cypress, a coalition between ABK, Gulf-based citizens and conservation groups led to a quick turn around on the idea.

ABK uses a variety of tools to protect the Basin, including education, monitoring flights, boat tours, environmental impact challenges to permit issuances, inter-agency and industry collaboration, and as a last resort, litigation.

Dean, who is also a National River Hero award winner, says that he relies heavily on cooperative efforts with other concerned groups. Citing alliances with the [Louisiana Environmental Action Network](#), the [Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club](#), [Southwings](#), [Gulf Restoration Network](#) and the [Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association - West](#), among others, ABK says it's these collaborations that "make us more powerful because we pool resources, knowledge and experience and we have a broader reach to achieve our goals at a regional level, and within the Basin"

ABK has, in response, had many successes.

Through their "Save Our Cypress Campaign," the group has effectively stopped the logging of Atchafalaya cypress use as a mulch, and educated the nation on the devastating practice.

And in 2011, ABK successfully worked to pass a bill through the Louisiana state legislature to buy Atchafalaya swamp land for permanent protection.

In addition, and working in tandem with the hydrogen pipeline company Air Products, ABK was instrumental in providing recommendations that led to a zero environmental impact construction project.

As Dean and I make our way back to the dock, I am overcome with gratefulness for all the fine work ABK is doing on behalf of future generations, and I resolve to help when I can to protect this precious and unique ecosystem.

Currently, the need for support is great. ABK lost a major funder last year when they refused to stop litigation protecting the Atchafalaya from logging. The threat of bankruptcy became a real possibility.

Yet with the help of a growing grassroots membership, the group pledges to continue to uphold their mission to protect the great wetland forest of the south.

To help, ABK asks that you please do not purchase or use cypress mulch from your local retailer, share information regarding the Basin widely, invite the Basinkeeper to do a presentation for your civic organization or school, and volunteer when possible.

Cherri Foytlin is a journalist, mother of six and wife of an oil worker, who lives in south Louisiana. She is the author of "Spill It! The Truth About the Deep Water Oil Rig Explosion," and regularly contributes to [www.BridgeTheGulfProject.org](#), [The Huffington Post](#), and several local newspapers. In the Spring of 2011 she walked to Washington D.C. from New Orleans (1,243 miles) to call for action to stop the BP Drilling Disaster, and has been a constant voice speaking out for the health and ecosystem of Gulf Coast communities, in countless forms of media. As founder of "28 Stones," - a Gulf based media project which focuses on national movement building through art,

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photography, video and written word - she is working to, "help build the foundation for a cooperative and unified amplification of voices and needs, particularly of Gulf Coast communities, across the nation and globe."

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Vestes de ski est un terme

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 2012-09-11 21:52.

Vestes de ski est un terme assez **abercrombie & fitch paris** Vestes de ski qui est utilisé pour les manteaux d'hiver qui ont plus **boutique abercrombie paris** qui est utilis look sportif. La fonction principale d'une veste de ski est de **abercrombie à paris look sportif** de la chaleur, garder les gens à sec, et si elles **abercrombie and fitch in paris de la chaleur** être utilisées pour faire du ski sur les pentes **magasins abercrombie paris**être utilisées de permettre la fonctionnalité et la facilité de mouvement **abercrombie paris 2012** de permettre faisant du ski.

Les fabricants de gilets de spécialité **boutique abercrombie a paris** Les fabricants de souvent leurs vestes disponibles à un prix très élevé. Par conséquent beaucoup **abercrombie and fitch paris france** souvent leurs gens vont acheter des vestes d'actualisation, qui est une chose **abercrombie sur paris** vont acheter des vestes raisonnable de le faire, surtout si vous essayez de **abercrombie em paris** des vestes de ski pour les enfants qui sont en croissance **abercrombie paris opening des vestes de** de leurs vêtements!

Il ya quelques défis pour ceux **abercrombie et fitch de leurs vêtements** essaient de trouver des vestes discount. Aussi ceux qui vivent dans **magasins abercrombie en france** essaient de trouver pays loin des grandes villes peuvent ne pas être **boutique abercrombie france pays loin des** que ce soit près de chez eux où ils peuvent trouver de bonnes **acheter abercrombie france près de chez de** de ski discount. Cependant, il ya encore beaucoup **distributeur abercrombie france encore beaucoup** pour ceux qui sont à la recherche de vestes de ski discount. C'est pourquoi **commande abercrombie france ceux qui sont** détaillants en ligne sont une si grande ressource dans ces situations. En fait, je dirais **commander abercrombie en france ressource dans ces situations** vous êtes plus susceptible de trouver de bonnes vestes de ski discount en **boutique abercrombie en france** vous êtes plus que dans toute ville où vous habitez.

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Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 2012-09-12 04:24.

In addition to physiological change outside "**<="">**", emotional changes are also pregnant women with an important problem **cheap jordans for sale**. The motherhood, family and friends around, its attitude has also undergone a subtle change in these external situation change **http://www.cheapjordanshoesus2012.com/">cheap jordan shoes**, if prospective mothers cannot in a short time is very good to deal with these changes, many emotional problem will come **cheap jordan shoes for sale**, serious and even affect fetal development and their physical and mental health. In the recently held "care for pregnant women emotional theme activities" **cheap jordan shoes paypal**, parental education instructor a special region **cheap jordans**, points out that the mood of pregnant women with child future behavior and emotions exist subtle connections **longchamp singapore**, and anxiety and depression will increase **nike high heels** the baby in the future are in the process of development of risk **nike heels**. She said, for quasi mother, it is the most important is not control emotions **monster beats**, but love mood. Don't depend on the adjustment of the mood of the people around self-surrender, should try to regulate itself **http://www.monsterheadphones6u.com/">monster headphones**, in an idea will rejoice, and change an Angle is eq management

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