

Protection of Plaquemine Point Old-Growth Cypress Forest

Effort of Residents and Land Owners in area known as “Plaquemine Point”

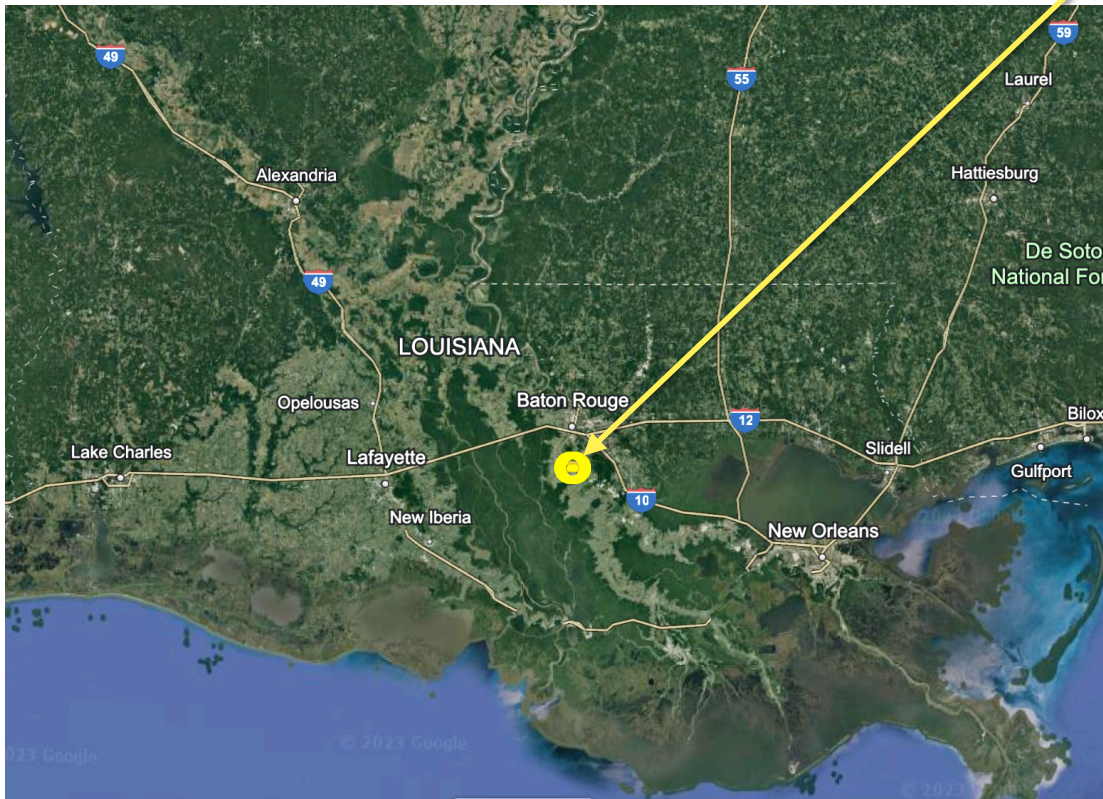
Sunshine, Louisiana

Located in Iberville Parish on east side of Mississippi River

Laura Comeaux August 13, 2024

Plaquemine Point

Location - East Side of Iberville Parish



A. E. LeBlanc Natural Area and Old-Growth Cypress Forest

Location within Plaquemine Point



A. E. LeBlanc Natural Area and Old-Growth Cypress Forest

Certifications and Recognitions

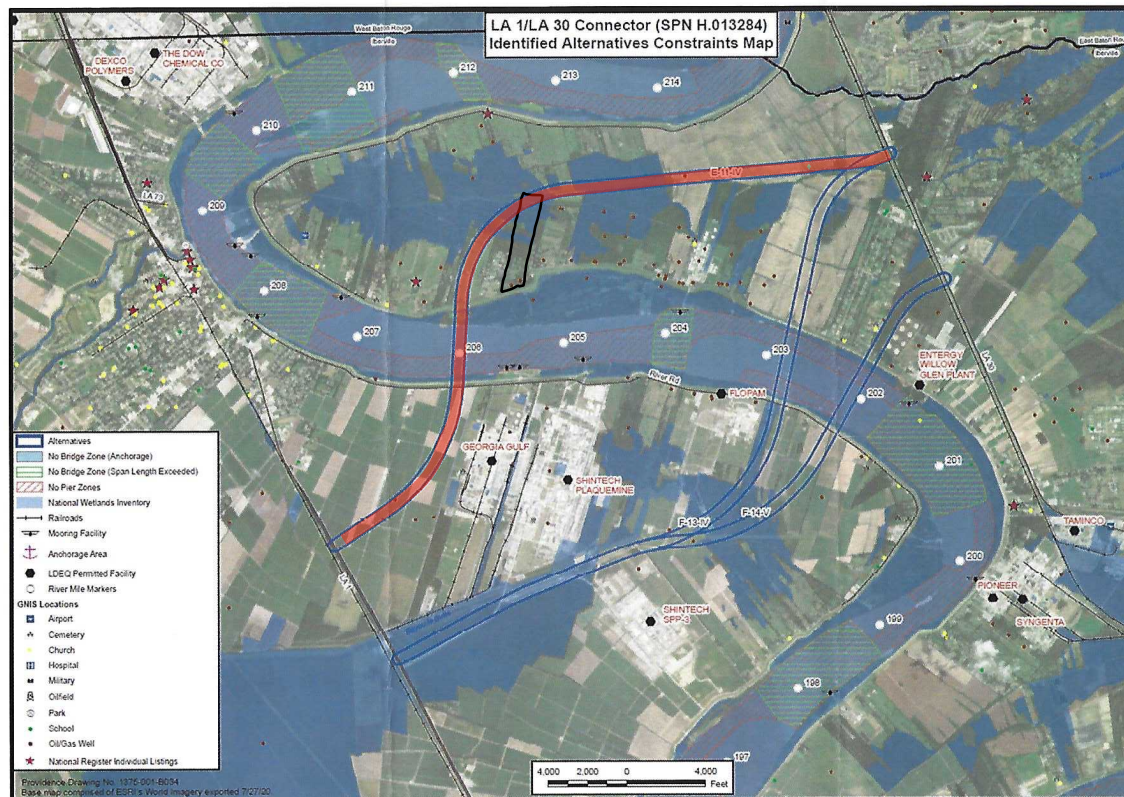
The 60-acre section of the LeBlanc land, known as the A. E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area and Old-Growth Cypress Forest, has been recognized by the following five (5) organizations due to its rarity and unique features:

- **Natural Area** by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (**LDWF**) Wildlife Diversity Program
- **Cypress Legacy Forest** by the Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy (**LPCL**)
- **Old-Growth Forest** by the Old-Growth Forest Network (**OGFN**)
- **Regenerating Cypress Forest** by Louisiana State University (**LSU**) Environmental Sciences Department Regenerating Cypress Forest Research Project
- Old-Growth Cypress Forest located within the **Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape** by The Cultural Landscape Foundation (**TCLF**)

The contiguous Bordelon (Cox) and Ellison tracts neighboring the LeBlanc Forest also have **LPCL Cypress Legacy Trees**.

Mississippi River Bridge Option E-11-IV bisects Plaquemine Point and cuts through LeBlanc Forest

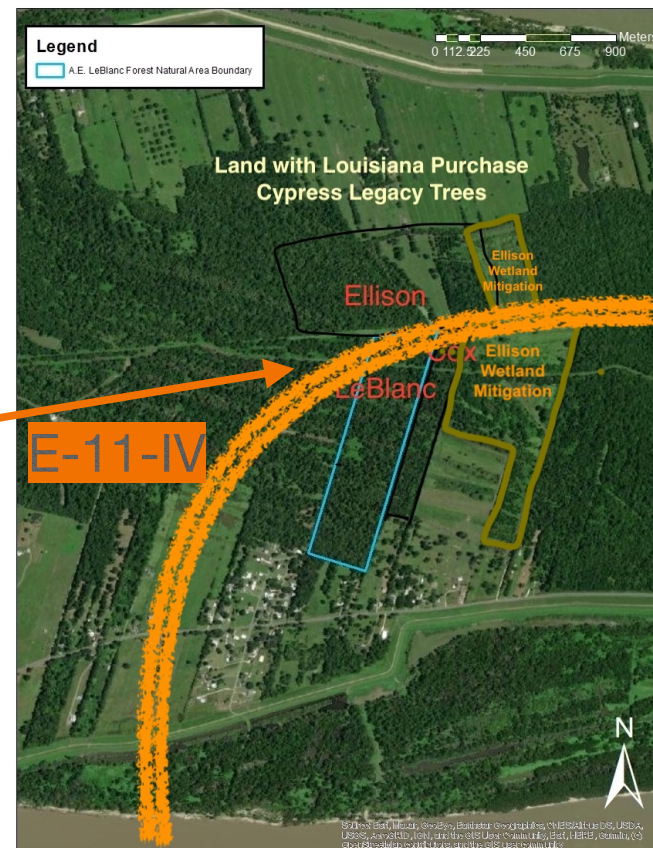
MRB South GBR: LA 1 to LA 30 Connector 3 Preliminary Alternative Corridors



Old-Growth Forest Neighboring LeBlanc Forest

Location of Bordelon (Cox) and Ellison Old-Growth Tracts

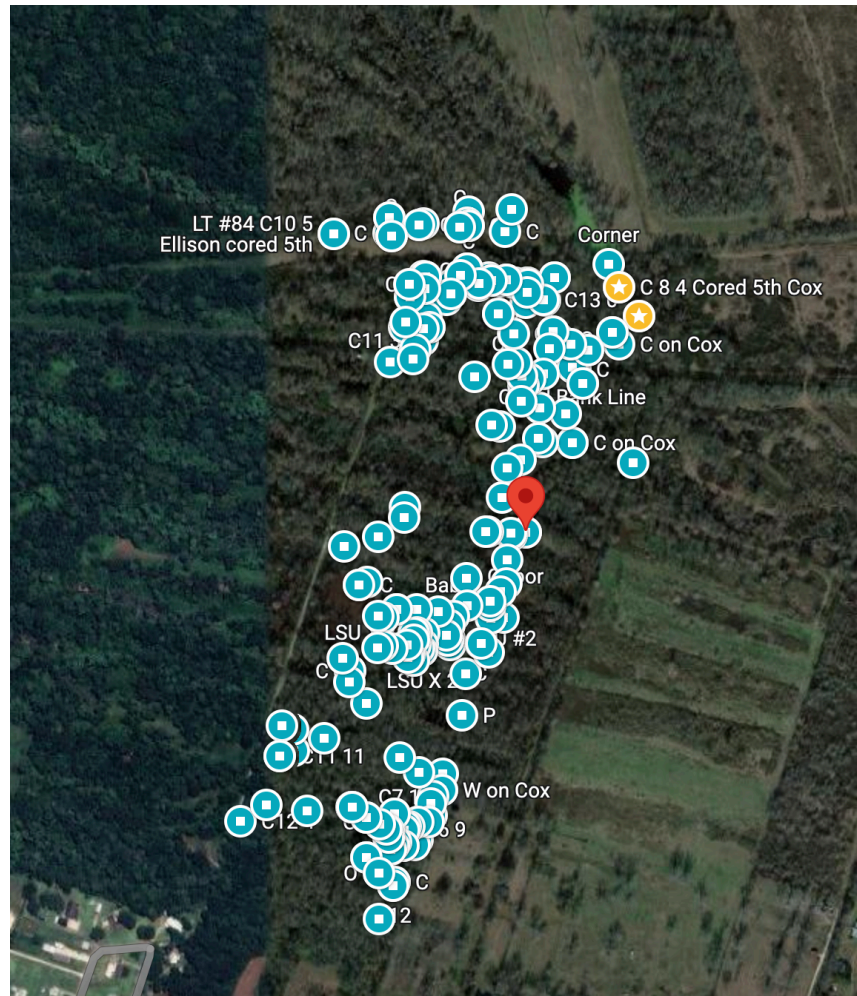
- E-11-IV impacts LeBlanc, Bordelon (Cox), and Ellison Tracts that have old-growth cypress trees recognized by Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy
- DOTD Contractors have said they may “tweak” the route to go around old-growth trees
- Any variation of E-11-IV will cut through contiguous old-growth forest on one or more old-growth tracts
- Any variation of E-11-IV will cut through two Ellison tracts already used for Wetland Mitigation



Locations of Old-Growth Cypress Trees

Mapping of GPS coordinates is ongoing.

Identification - up-to-date as of 8/2024.



Certifications and Recognitions

LDWF Natural Areas Registry Program

June 2022 Certificate and Sign

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

ACKNOWLEDGES

THE LEBLANC FAMILY

For the voluntary protection of

A. E. LEBLANC FOREST NATURAL AREA

29 JUNE 2022

LOUISIANA NATURAL AREAS REGISTRY PROGRAM



John Bel Edwards

John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana

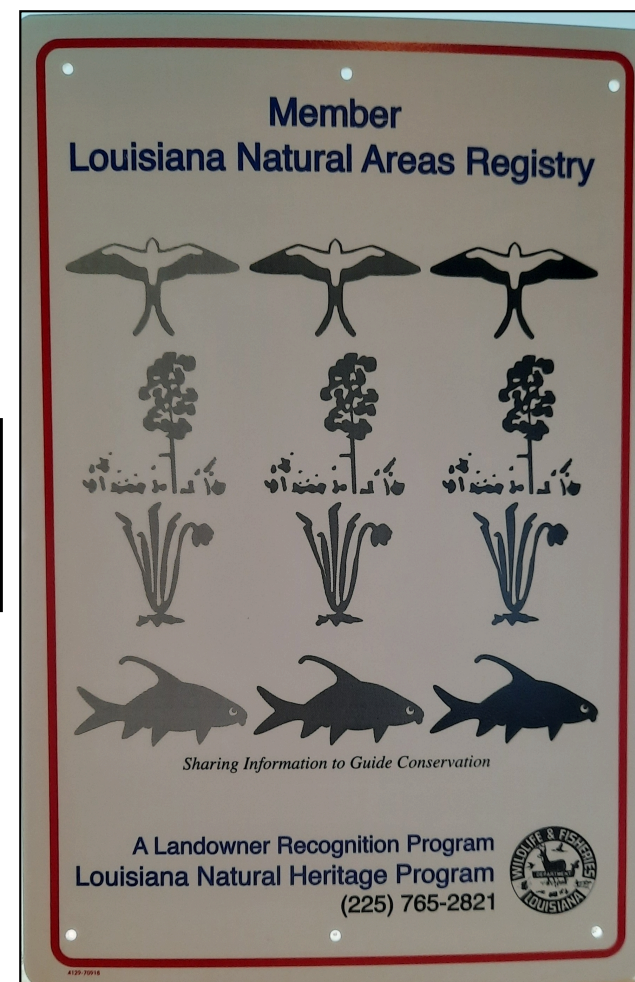
Jack Montoucet

Jack Montoucet
Secretary
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Nicole Lorenz

Nicole F. Lorenz
Program Manager
Louisiana Natural Heritage Program

Species
List is
attached
separately



LDWF Natural Areas Registry Program

June 2022 Certification Letter (excerpts)

“It is hereby agreed that a tract of land consisting of approximately 60 acres, contained in Township 08 South, Range 01 West, Section 13 and Township 09 South, Range 01 West, Section 04, further described on the attached map, which is part of this agreement, and located in Iberville Parish on Plaquemine Point in Sunshine, Louisiana, shall be placed on the Louisiana Registry of Natural Areas pursuant to ACT 324 of 1987.

A. E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area is located 8 miles south of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and 3.5 miles east of Plaquemine, Louisiana, along the east bank of the Mississippi River. The property consists primarily of bottomland hardwood forest with some exceptionally large old growth bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum* (L.) Rich.) and Nuttall oak (*Quercus nuttallii* Buckl.) This land is part of the original land grants to settlers by the Spanish government in 1767. Because this property is located in a low-lying area, it has never been farmed or utilized for grazing livestock. The LeBlanc family intends to maintain the property as an old growth bottomland hardwood forest and make improvements when necessary, primarily through the control and removal of invasive species.

Asserted to this 29th day of June 2022.”

LDWF Natural Areas Registry Program

2022 Certificate Presentation



LDWF Natural Areas Registry Program

October 2023 LDWF Support Letter and Opposition to Bridge Footprint Near LeBlanc Forest (excerpt)

As stated in the October 23, 2023 LDWF Wildlife Diversity Program letter written to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD), referring to the LeBlanc Forest:

“Should this site (*LeBlanc Forest*) be within or adjacent to the final footprint of this project, irreversible harm would be caused to the ecological integrity of this at-risk wetland natural community and the species that utilize it.”

LDWF Natural Areas Registry Program

October 2023 LDWF Support Letter and Opposition to Bridge Footprint Near LeBlanc Forest (excerpt)

As stated in the October 23, 2023 LDWF Wildlife Diversity Program letter written to LaDOTD:

“Valuable ecosystem services are provided by A.E. LeBlanc Natural Area, including, but not limited to, floodwater storage, water filtration, storm protection, and carbon sequestration.

Removal or impairment of those services would likely facilitate colonization of invasive plants and animals resulting in devastating impacts to surrounding communities.

Disturbances to hydrology, soil, or vegetation, as well as an increase in anthropogenic activity, on or near the property will degrade the area.

When forests like this are cut for development, it can take hundreds of years for them to regrow to previous conditions, and, in many cases, these forests never fully recover the carbon storage and biodiversity they once had.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries’ Louisiana Natural Areas Registry Program respectfully requests the utilization of alternative project options to avoid impacts to A.E. LeBlanc Natural Area.”

Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

August 2022 Recognition Letter



**OLD-GROWTH FOREST
NETWORK** *Connecting people with nature by creating a
national network of protected, mature, native forests*

PO Box 21
Easton, MD 21601
oldgrowthforest.net
info@oldgrowthforest.net

8/1/2022

Dear Descendents of A.E. LeBlanc Sr,

The Board of Directors is delighted to inform you that A.E. LeBlanc Forest of Iberville Parish, Louisiana is hereby recognized as a Private Forest in the Old-Growth Forest Network, a growing alliance dedicated to the preservation of unique and beautiful native forests across the U.S.

Our nation's original forests have been reduced to a tiny fraction of their former magnificence. The Old-Growth Forest Network is working to designate one forest in every county where people can experience their natural heritage and nurture a deeper relationship with the natural world. Like the trees we love, the supporters of the Old-Growth Forest Network stand together to ensure these forests will never be logged.

Although the focus of the Old-Growth Forest Network is on publicly accessible forests, we also recognize the importance of private landowners like you who have made the commitment to keep their forests unlogged. Often these landowners are sacrificing timber income to let their forests mature and provide unique habitat, beauty, clean water and clean air. We honor and recognize your generosity.

We are grateful to all who have worked to protect and care for this forest in the past and strongly encourage you to pursue permanent legal protection through a conservation easement with your local land trusts to protect this forest for future generations. We have included a sign that you may post on your property to make your special designation known to visitors. Your forest has also been listed in the Private Forest Registry on our website.

Thank you, and congratulations!

For the Forests,

Joan Maloof
Founder and Executive Director

Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

Registration Sign and Presentation

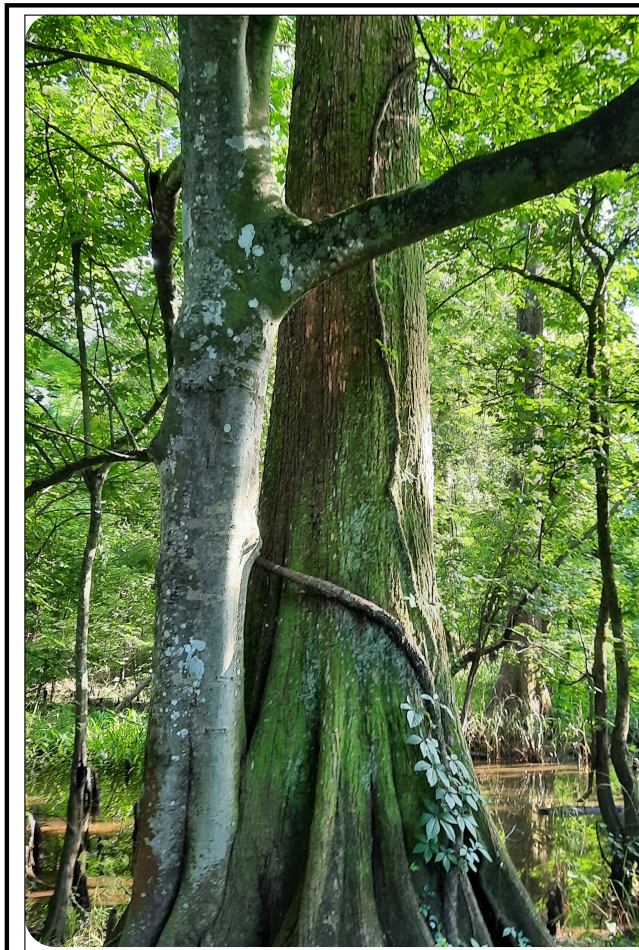


Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

Recognition on Website



<https://www.oldgrowthforest.net/private-forests>



A.E. LeBlanc Forest

Iberville Parish, Louisiana

Description:

A. E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area is approximately 60 acres and is located 8 miles south of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and 3.5 miles E of Plaquemine, Louisiana, along the east bank of the Mississippi River. The property consists primarily of bottomland hardwood forest with some exceptionally large old growth bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum* (L.) Rich.) and Nuttall oak (*Quercus nuttallii* Buckl.) This land is part of the original land grants to settlers by the Spanish government in 1767.

Because this property is located in a low-lying area, it has never been farmed or utilized for grazing livestock. The LeBlanc family intends to maintain the property as an old growth bottomland hardwood forest and make improvements when necessary, primarily through the control and removal of invasive species.

Photo provided by Laura Comeaux.

Location:

Iberville Parish, LA

Acres:

60

Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

October 2023 OGFN Support Letter and Opposition to E-11-IV Bridge Route



**OLD-GROWTH FOREST
NETWORK** *Connecting people with nature by creating a
national network of protected, mature, native forests*

October 10, 2023

Mr. Robert "Bobby" Lott
Assistant Environmental Engineer Administrator
Louisiana DOTD Office of Engineering Environmental Section
P.O. Box 94245
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Dear Mr. Lott,

This letter is in reference to the A. E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area that is part of Iberville Parish Parcel 0400538300. This letter is in opposition to route E-11-IV for Project MRB South GBR: LA 1 to LA 30.

We are writing to voice our concerns regarding the proposed route E-11-IV because it would negatively impact an historic forest that has been recognized within the Private Forest Registry of the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN). OGFN is a nonprofit organization working to connect people with nature by creating a national network of protected, publicly-accessible forests and a network of people to protect them. OGFN also educates about the extraordinary ecological and human wellness benefits of mature and old-growth forests, and speaks out regarding threats to important forests.

As proposed, route E-11-IV would impact the A.E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area, which contains cypress trees aged 220-360 years old, with the potential for some to be much older. This forest represents both a cultural and natural heritage of ancient trees that are extremely rare across the country. Less than 1% of all historic old-growth forests remains in the eastern United States.

PO Box 21
Easton, MD 21601
oldgrowthforest.net
info@oldgrowthforest.net

Cypress trees are an especially important member of this group because of their extraordinary longevity; however, more than 90% of ancient bald cypress trees have been cut. In fact, the most recent issue of National Geographic profiled the discovery of Southeastern bald cypress trees more than 2,500 years old and warned of the threat to these trees from climate change, logging, salt water intrusion, and development. Cypress forests are also crucially important to our future, with groups such as the Pontchartrain Conservancy planting bald cypresses as future hurricane buffers for Louisiana. Why would we choose to also remove the ones that are protecting us right now?

As a mature forest with centuries-old trees, the A.E. LeBlanc forest contributes more to climate change mitigation than a younger forest would. Mature forests are important carbon sinks and land conversion involving deforestation is a well-documented source of greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. The proposed route E-11-IV would increase potential climate impacts by degrading the A.E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area and removing its ability to mitigate future climate impacts, such as flooding and hurricanes. In addition, Louisiana's Climate Action Plan specifically recognizes forests as considerable carbon sinks and places to maintain cultural heritage. The landowners of Iberville Parish Parcel 0400538300 and living descendants of A.E. LeBlanc have documented a rich cultural heritage tied to this forest.

It can take hundreds of years for forests to regrow to their previous conditions; even then, many logged areas can never recover the carbon storage and biodiversity they once had. We urge you to also consider the long term potential impacts of the proposed route beyond the limited life of transit infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Adloo".

Sarah Adloo
Executive Director
Old-Growth Forest Network

Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

November 2023 Newsletter <https://www.oldgrowthforest.net/ogfn-blog/2023/11/3/a-threatened-louisiana-icon>

A Threatened Louisiana Icon

A.E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest, one of the oldest and most beloved intact old-growth cypress forests in Southern Louisiana, is under threat.

[Keep reading](#) to find out how you can help.



Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

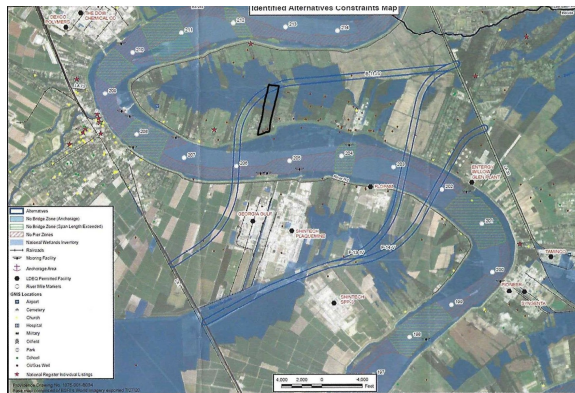
November 2023 Newsletter <https://www.oldgrowthforest.net/ogfn-blog/2023/11/3/a-threatened-louisiana-icon>



A Threatened Louisiana Icon

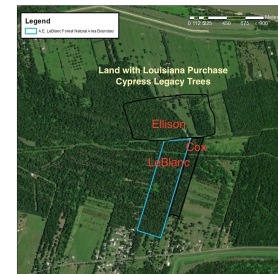
BY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, KAYLA GREEN

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LA DOTD) is beginning its plans to create a new Mississippi River South Bridge in Iberville Parish. The bridge would connect Louisiana Highway 1 on the west side of the river to Highway 30 in east Iberville.



The three proposed routes (marked in blue) for the new Mississippi River South Bridge. Route E-11-IV for Project MRB South GBR: LA 1 to LA 30 runs through the A.E. LeBlanc Forest property (marked in black) and would remove several centuries-old cypress trees. Construction would also permanently alter the thriving intact forest ecosystem.

Consultants hired by the LA DOTD originally had a list of 32 possible locations. The seven-member commission narrowed the list to three locations in May of 2022. One of the three possible locations would tear through one of the oldest and most beloved intact cypress forests in the area ([link](#)), called the A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest.



The A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest is located in Sunshine, Louisiana (Iberville Parish). It has been in the Comeaux family for over 200 years and sixteen descendants of early Acadian settlers currently own the forest including Laura and Cliff Comeaux (*see photo above*). The forest is a member of the **Old-Growth Forest Network's Private Forest Registry** and a registered Louisiana Natural Area as part of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Wildlife Diversity Program. There are large cypress specimens in the 60-acre forest, with conservative age estimates ranging from 90 to 360 years old. Many of the oldest specimens are over 220 years old, qualifying them as "**Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy**" trees.

Despite receiving these national and state recognitions, the A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest is under threat, with more than fifty centuries-old trees to be destroyed, if chosen as the final location for the new bridge.

Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

November 2023 OGFN Support Letter and Opposition to E-11-IV Bridge Route (excerpt)

 OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK



Photo of A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest

Below is a letter written to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development in opposition to the proposed route that would threaten the survival of this centuries-old family forest

November 2023

Dear Mr. Lott,

This letter is in reference to the A. E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area that is part of Iberville Parish Parcel 0400538300. I am in opposition to route E-11-IV for Project MRB South GBR: LA 1 to LA 30.

Here is why.

In June 2023, I had the opportunity to visit the 60-acre A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest in Sunshine, LA and see first-hand the awe-inspiring cathedral ceilings of bald cypresses towering over a rare and incredibly diverse ecosystem that has remained undisturbed by humans for centuries. It is unlike anything I have ever seen in southeast Louisiana, and it is why I am writing this letter in opposition to the proposed route E11-IV for Project MRB South GBR: LA 1 to LA 30.

 OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK



On an individual basis, old-growth cypress is not hard to find in Louisiana, but entire intact forests of the ancient trees are extremely rare in the state. (Photo of A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest)

Old-Growth Forest Network Registration

November 2023 OGFN Support Letter and Opposition to E-11-IV Bridge Route (excerpt)

As you know, the bald cypress is a Louisiana icon and our official state tree. It is the tree that built New Orleans, erected Baton Rouge, and turned Louisiana into the prosperous developed state that 4.6 million people now proudly call home. It is also the oldest known wetland tree species on the planet and can regularly reach up to 600 years in age. Because of Louisiana's vast delta network, bald cypress forests thrive in almost every natural environment this state has to offer. Our state is called the "Sportsman's Paradise" and there is no other tree more important to our local wildlife than the bald cypress, especially older ones. Black bears, woodpeckers, warblers, wood ducks, and bats all nest in the hollows of large cypresses. The flat tops of older cypresses make exceptional nesting sites for our national bird, the bald eagle. I cannot think of a better symbol to represent the spirit of Louisiana's inhabitants than the mighty bald cypress.

 OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK



A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest

 OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK



Photo of A.E. LeBlanc Forest

Only a hundred years ago Louisiana had the largest and oldest intact cypress forest in the entire country. But a combination of a growing population, demand for durable and superior building materials, and lack of foresight to leave at least *some* of our inherited old-growth cypress forests standing for future generations has left only a handful of them around today. *For a tree that is considered the embodiment of Louisiana's natural beauty, it would be a tragedy if we did not preserve one of the few remaining intact old-growth cypress forests in the state such as the A.E. LeBlanc forest.*

Other states like **South Carolina** and **North Carolina** worked to preserve these treasures. For example, South Carolina is home to the Congaree National Park which is dedicated to its vast old-growth bald cypress forests. Similarly, North Carolina's privately owned Black River Preserve protects the oldest bald cypresses in the world including some that are over 2,600 years old.

I urge you and others in your office to visit the A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest. I encourage you to see, feel, hear, and smell the thriving old-growth bald cypress ecosystem that still has centuries left to grow. This forest has stood for over 300 years and with your help it can stand for 300 more.

We have a duty to our descendants to leave this earth better than we found it. Let's start by keeping the A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Forest standing. Future Louisianians will be proud you did.

Sincerely,

Kayla Green
Development Director, Old-Growth Forest Network
Louisiana Resident (2009-2021)
Loyola University New Orleans (Class of 2013)

Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

Cypress Tree Boring and Ring Counts from LeBlanc Forest

Ring Count Results From Borings – LeBlanc Property - Preliminary Estimated Age

Tree #1 GPS 30.292700, -91.179587

Circum.: 12' 7" at 4.5 ft high (corrected to 11' 7" due to orig. taken around buttress)

Boring: 8.75"

Rings counted: approx. 68

Estimated age: 140 yrs

Tree #2 GPS 30.299195, -91.179045 **LEGACY TREE #81**

Circum.: 10' 8" at 4.5 ft high (corrected to 9' 8" due to orig. taken around buttress)

Boring: 6.75"

Rings counted: approx. 87

Estimated age: 210—230 yrs



Tree #3 GPS 30.299077, -91.179009

Circum.: 16' 0" at 4.5 ft high (corrected to 15' 0" due to orig. taken around buttress)

Boring: 8.25"

Rings counted: approx. 84

Estimated age: 230—260 yrs



Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

Cypress Tree Boring and Ring Counts from LeBlanc Forest

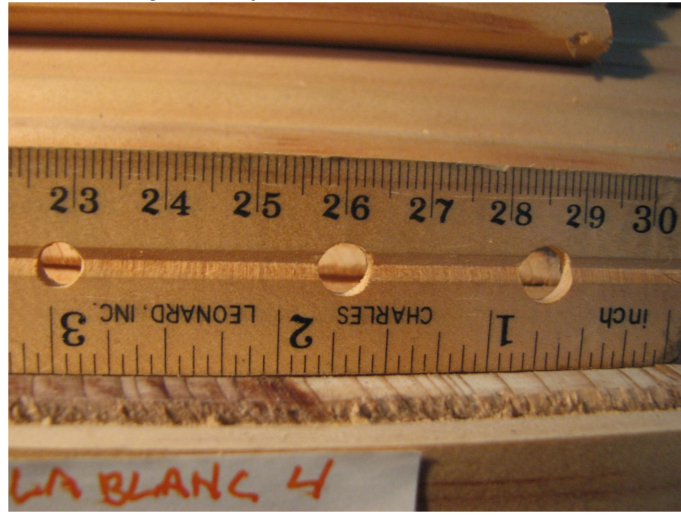
Tree #4 GPS 30.299707, -91.178546

Circum.: 13' 6" at 4.5 ft high (corrected to 12' 6" due to orig. taken around buttress)

Boring: 7"

Rings counted: approx. 58

Estimated age: 180—200 yrs



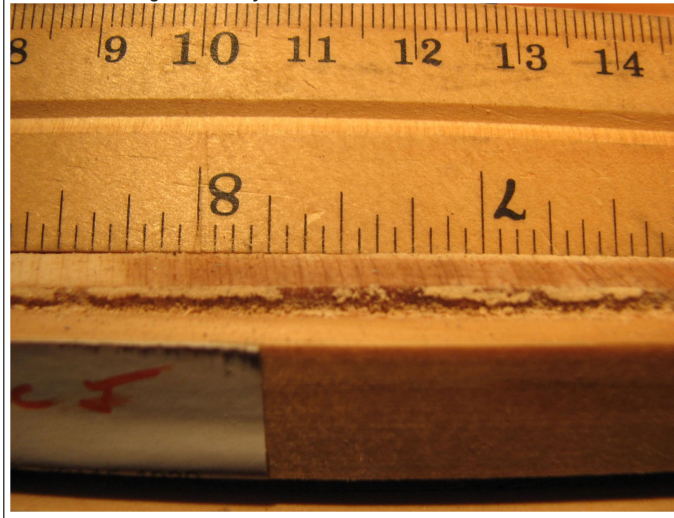
Tree #5 GPS 30.299615, -91.177575 **LEGACY TREE #78**

Circum.: 13' 9" at 4.5 ft high (actual measurement above buttress was 12' 3")

Boring: 7.25"

Rings counted: approx. 109

Estimated age: 300—330 yrs



Tree #6 GPS 30.298865, -91.176961

Circum.: 14' 9" at 4.5 ft high (actual measurement above buttress was 11' 6")

Boring: 3.5"

Rings counted: approx. 65

Estimated age: 330—360 yrs



Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

Cypress Tree Boring and Ring Counts from LeBlanc, Ellison, and Cox Forests

Ring Count Results From Borings From July 17, 2022 Visit – LeBlanc, Ellison, and Cox Property - Preliminary Estimated Age

Tree #1 GPS 30.299655, -91.179122 (7th overall) **LEGACY TREE #80**

Circum.: 11'4"
Boring: 6.5"
Rings counted: approx. 85
Estimated age: 200–240 years

Tree #2 GPS 30.299715, -91.179090 (8th overall)

Circum.: 10'4"
Boring: 5.25"
Rings counted: approx. 46
Estimated age: 125–155 years

Tree #3 (Ellison) GPS 30.299806, -91.178454 (9th overall) **LEGACY TREE #83**

Circum.: 10'4"
Boring: 3.25"
Rings counted: approx. 44
Estimated age: 190–230 years

Tree #4 GPS 30.299658, -91.178102 (10th overall)

Circum.: 11'7"
Boring: 7.5"
Rings counted: approx. 91
Estimated age: 210–240 years

Tree #5 (Cox) GPS 30.299573, -91.176255 (11th overall)

Circum.: 8'4"
Boring: 7.5"
Rings counted: approx. 95
Estimated age: 90–120 years

Tree #6 (Cox): GPS 30.299218, -91.175964 (12th overall) **LEGACY TREE #79**

Circum.: 10'4"
Boring: 13"
Rings counted: approx. 190
Estimated age: 220–260 years

Ring Count Results From Borings From May 11, 2023 Visit – Ellison Property - Preliminary Estimated Age

Tree #1 GPS 30.300550, -91.177810 (13th overall)

Circum.: 12' 5"
Boring: 7"
Rings counted: approx. 57
Estimated age: 150-160 yrs

Tree #2 GPS 30.300383, -91.178461 (14th overall)

Circum.: 9' 10"
Boring: 14.5"
Rings counted: approx. 95
Estimated age: 100-110 yrs

Tree #3 GPS 30.300451, -91.179585 (15th overall)

Circum.: 10' 10"
Boring: 4.75"
Rings counted: approx. 49
Estimated age: 180+ yrs

Tree #4 GPS 30.300373, -91.179088 (16th overall)

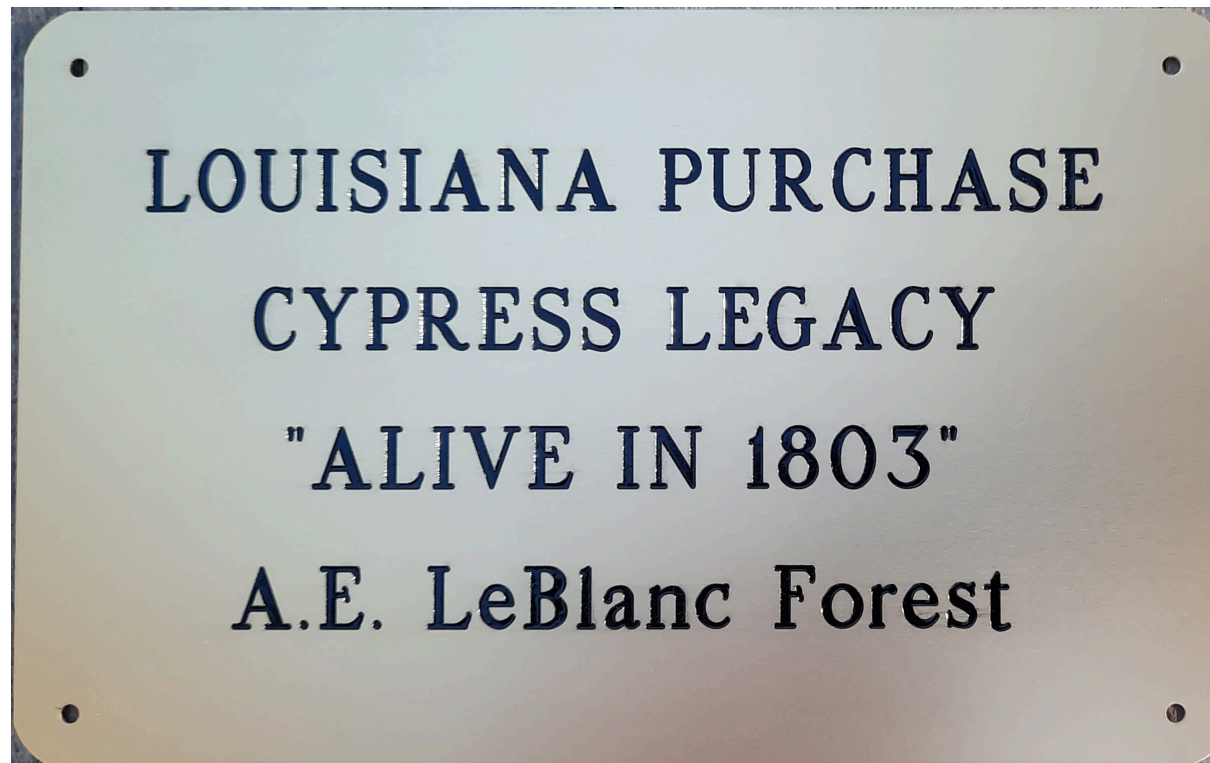
Circum.: 11' 11"
Boring: 9"
Rings counted: approx. 67
Estimated age: 140-150 yrs

Tree #5 GPS 30.300242, -91.180386 (17th overall) **LEGACY TREE #84**

Circum.: 10' 5"
Boring: 8"
Rings counted: approx. 110
Estimated age: 220+ yrs

Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

Cypress Tree Forest Designation Sign from LPCL

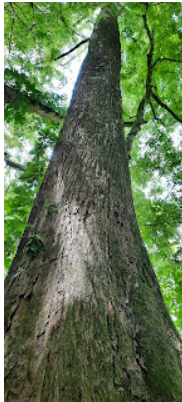


Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

August 2022 Newsletter Recognition on Website

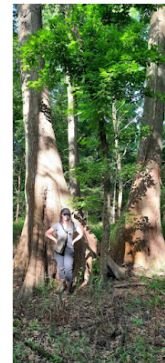
<https://lapurchasecypresslegacy.blogspot.com/2022/08/>

Top Ranked Mississippi River Bridge Location Threatens Old Growth
Cypress in Iberville Parish



Old growth Cypress in new Mississippi bridge approach path
(currently highest ranked Alternative E-11-4)

Likely the largest and oldest concentration of mature cypress on the East Bank of Iberville Parish has been recently inventoried near the town of Sunshine. The LPCL has identified borings taken from several trees on the site and found many of the trees over 11 feet in circumference to be 200+ years in age, with many likely meeting the LPCL landmarked thresh hold of 219 years—“Alive in 1803”. Two of the trees from which borings were taken are likely over 300 years old. The LPCL has awarded one of the trees in the projected bridge approach right of way LPCL Plaque #78—it is estimated at 300—330 years old. See map pinpoint for tree #5 in map link to map below)



Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

August 2022 Newsletter

Many of these cypress likely were alive during the Revolutionary War, when Bernardo de Galvez and his troops marched through Plaquemine Point on their way from New Orleans to Fort New Richmond in Baton Rouge. The property “ is part of the original land grants to settlers by the Spanish government in 1767... because this property is located in a bottomland hardwood low lying area, it has never been farmed or utilized for grazing livestock” (La Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Areas Registry assessment) Laura Comeaux, descendent of the original owner of the site, portrays the historic connection between the current owners and the original owners in the 18th century, who effectively became stewards of the 200+ year old cypress landmarked by the HDLC:

"The forest is named after Alphonso Etienne LeBlanc, Sr., the grandfather of the eldest living land-owners. The family has appreciated the wildlife and beauty of the forest, using it for hunting, bird-watching, and nature walks among the old-growth trees. The land, which has been in the family for over 200 years, tells the family history too. The "land genealogy" goes like this: Alphonso Etienne LeBlanc, Sr. inherited the land from his mother, Marie Caroline Terrell, who inherited the land from her mother, Marie Eugenie Lambremont, who inherited the land from her father, Michel Pierre Lambremont (the grandson of a French soldier) who moved to the Sunshine area and married Marguerite Pelagie Breau (of Acadia) in St. Gabriel in 1793 and purchased this land, which was one of the original Spanish Land Grants given to the Acadians by the Spanish government in 1767".



"Augusto Ferrer-Delmu's painting, "La Marcha de Galvez" depicts Berardo de Galvez and his ragtag army marching through Louisiana's swamp area, [including Plaquemine Point], to clear the British from Fort Bute and Fort New Richmond in Baton Rouge"

As mentioned above, the historic and ecological significance of LeBlanc Track has also recently been documented by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Area Program, which has determined this site worthy of inclusion in its Louisiana Natural Areas registry. Additionally, the Old Growth Forest Network has included this site in its nation wide registry of significant old growth sites in each parish/county throughout the U.S. www.oldgrowthforest.net/private-forests

Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

August 2022 Newsletter

Top Ranked Proposed Bridge Site Threatens Many Old Growth Cypress

The La Purchase Cypress Legacy was notified of the threat to these venerable cypress by the LeBlanc family, which has for generations owned 60 acres of unfarmed bottomland hardwood in Plaquemine Point near the settlement of Sunshine, on the East Bank of Iberville Parish.

All three top ranked site alternatives for the proposed new Mississippi River Bridge near Baton Rouge, and the currently top ranking site proposal (E-11-IV - third row in chart below) would have bridge pylons located in the area of the landmarked cypress at the northern end of the LeBlanc and adjacent Cox property.

Round 2 Screening Results

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES	TRAFFIC		ENVIRONMENTAL & PERMITTING				PUBLIC COMMENT PUBLIC/STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH ⁴	WEIGHTED AVERAGE (LOWER SCORES ARE BETTER)
	NUMBER OF VEHICLES PER DAY OR TOLLED BRIDGE IN 2042 (ADT)	CHANGE IN AREA-WIDE TOTAL VEHICLE HOURS IN 2042 (VHT) AM & PM	BRIDGE/ CONSTRUCT- ABILITY ISSUES ¹	BRIDGE/ NAVIGATION ISSUES ²	PIPELINES/ POWER LINES (Linear Feet) ³	WETLANDS (acres) ⁵		
Weight Factor (each column)	25%	20%	7%	7%	7%	22%	22%	
C-5-B	2	1	2	1	1	3	3	2.29
C-6-B	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	1.86
E-11-IV	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.29
F-12-IV	1	2	2	1	2	3	2	2.07
F-13-IV	1	2	3	2	2	2	1	1.71
F-14-V	1	2	3	2	2	2	1	1.71
H-15-VII	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	2.00
H-22-VII	2	3	1	1	1	2	3	2.50
H-23-VII	1	3	2	1	1	1	3	2.29
M-25-IX	1	3	2	1	1	1	3	2.29

This LA DODT chart ranks Alternative site E-11-IV (third row) as having the lowest impact on wetlands (“1” is least impact/most favorable), despite the considerable amount of old growth cypress that would be impacted on the LeBlanc and Cox properties on which bridge pylons would be constructed)

Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy

August 2022 Newsletter



LeBlanc-Comeaux family members in front of LPCL registered tree

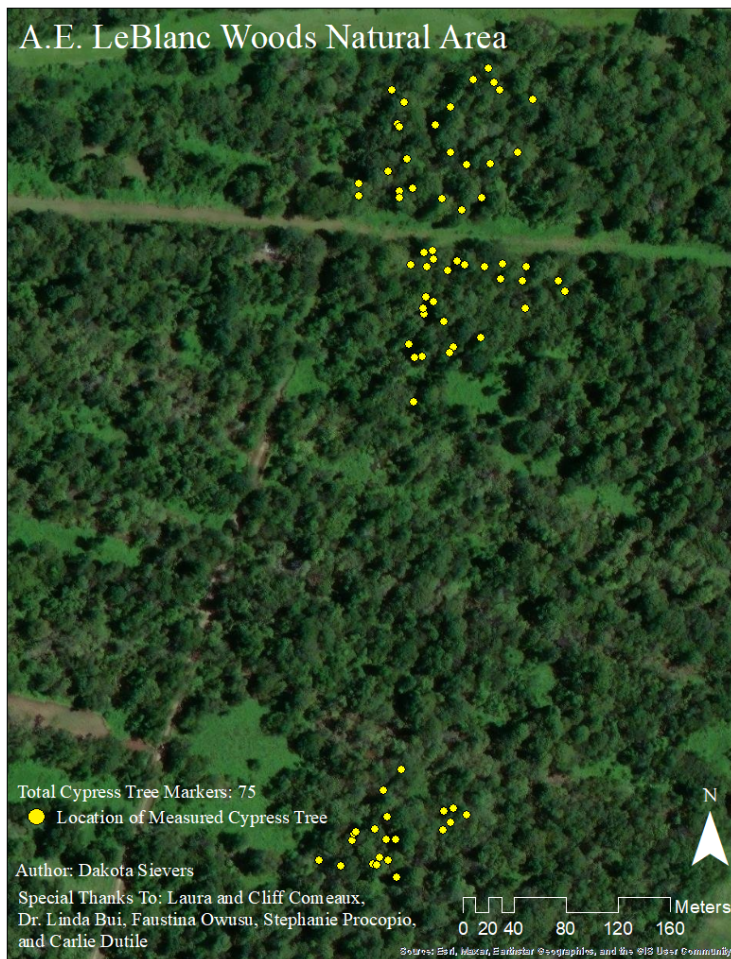
[LeBlanc Old growth cypress deserve stewardship, not destruction](#)

The trees from which borings have been taken represent only a fraction of the mature cypress that would be impacted on by the construction of the Mississippi River Bridge approach if the currently highest ranked Alternative E-11-IV were chosen as the preferred site of the new bridge. As DOT's environmental impact statement moves ahead on the preferred bridge alternatives, those of us committed to preserving the ecological heritage of Louisiana should make our voices heard.

The LeBlanc family's determination (as reflected in their participation in LA Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Areas Program) to save the old growth cypress (as well as other mature bottomland hardwood habitat) on their property from unwarranted destruction is an inspiration to the La Purchase Cypress Legacy campaign. We at the LPCL believe, the ecological and natural heritage costs of bridge construction at this proposed site do not justify Alternative E-11-IV as the highest ranking and other decision makers need to be reminded that the mature/old growth forested wetlands identified on the LeBlanc and Cox property have significant value as storm buffers and carbon capture sites exceeding that of the other highly ranked bridge alternatives. We'll keep our readers informed on public comment opportunities as the LA DOT's Environmental Impact Statement on the bridge alternatives progresses.

LSU Environmental Sciences Department

2023 Regenerating Cypress Forest Research Project



LSU Environmental Sciences Department

2023

Regenerating Cypress Forest Research Project

Regenerating or Ghost Forest? A.E. LeBlanc Woods Natural Area

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GULF RESEARCH PROGRAM

ABSTRACT

Baldcypress trees are important in wetland areas, particularly on the Gulf Coast and in Louisiana. The trees provide a wide range of vital ecosystem services such as dampening winds, suppressing storm surges, cycling excess nutrients into the soil, and providing shade and habitats. The health of these trees is paramount for the state of coastal areas, and in the past years, baldcypress forests do not seem to have been regenerating, which means they are emerging ghost forests. Ghost forests occur when there is little to no regeneration, or the forest is actively dying or is dead. Saltwater intrusion, urbanization, overharvesting, and climate change lead to the death of forest trees. The A.E. LeBlanc Natural Woods Forest located in Iberville Parish is home to old growth baldcypress trees and is in the preferred path for the new Mississippi River bridge. The planned construction poses a potential threat to baldcypress trees in this area. This research seeks to determine if this old-growth forest is regenerating or an emerging ghost forest through observing age distribution. The proxy for age is the diameter of the tree at breast height. Trees with larger diameters are assumed to be older provided they had the right nutrients. This forest is healthy and regenerating making it an important forest, which provides ecosystem services.



Figure 1. Photo of a ghost forest. Image Credit: Dakota Sievers

METHODS

- We created transects (50 or 100 m)
- Took coordinates of all trees within 2 m of each transect
- Measured circumference and calculated diameter
- Created a map in ArcMap to show the measured trees
- Ran a regression on the diameter values to generate a model



Figure 2. Three students measuring a baldcypress tree in the A.E. LeBlanc Forest. From left to right: Dakota Sievers, Stephanie Procopio, Faustina Owusu. Image Credit: Laura Comeaux

RESULTS

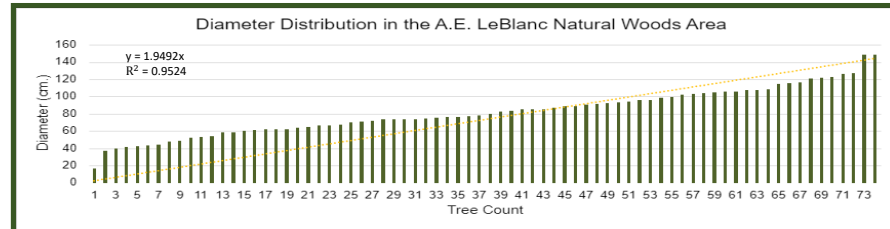


Figure 3. Graph of the diameter distribution in cypress trees in the A.E. LeBlanc Natural Woods Area. A total of 74 trees were measured for circumference (m), which was then converted to diameter (cm). The regression line in yellow has a slope of 1.9392. The R-squared value is 0.9524.

- 74 trees were measured for circumference and the coordinates were taken for 75 trees (Figure 4). There was a small moist area with 5-10 seedlings and 2 saplings were spotted but were unable to be measured.
- The diameters of the 74 trees (in numerical order) produced an R-squared value of 0.9524 and a regression line with a slope of 1.9392 (Figure 3).
- The forest is regenerating because there are multiple age classes.

DISCUSSION

- The forest is regenerating and not a ghost forest, meaning that a healthy, regenerating old-growth forest is at risk. The diameters collected (Figure 3) show that the forest consists of many different age classes and legacy trees ("Alive in 1803"). There are not many baldcypress forests with young trees in Louisiana. This forest is a good representative of a regenerating forest.
- Circumference was taken by multiple people at approximately 4.5 feet. The rationale for selecting trees was methodical and not random. In the future, efforts to maintain consistency while measuring at the necessary height should be made.
- This study provides the landowners information for their fight against the building of the new Mississippi River bridge through the forest.
- Old growth forests are very important.



Figure 5. Photo of an at least 200-year-old baldcypress tree. Trees with this plaque have been found to be at least 200 years old/ "Alive in 1803" at the time of the Louisiana Purchase. This designation is part of a project called "Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy" and this plaque was put on the tree by Harvey Stern.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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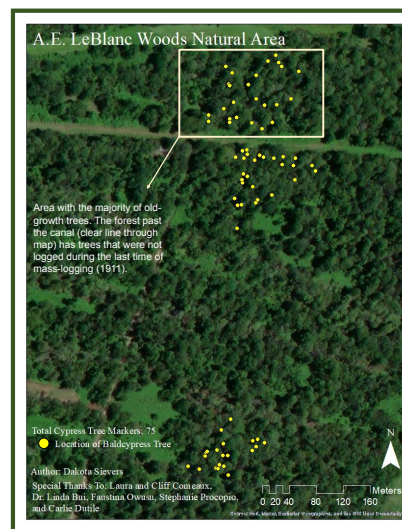


Figure 4. Map of baldcypress trees that were observed on the A.E. LeBlanc property. A total of 75 tree locations were plotted. The top-most boxed in section was never logged and contains the most old growth trees. Map created with ArcMap 10.8.2.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

2023 Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape Recognition

Recognition on Website

<https://www.tclf.org/plaquemine-point>

<https://www.tclf.org/plaquemine-point-faces-imminent-threat>

Plaquemine Point Faces Imminent Threat



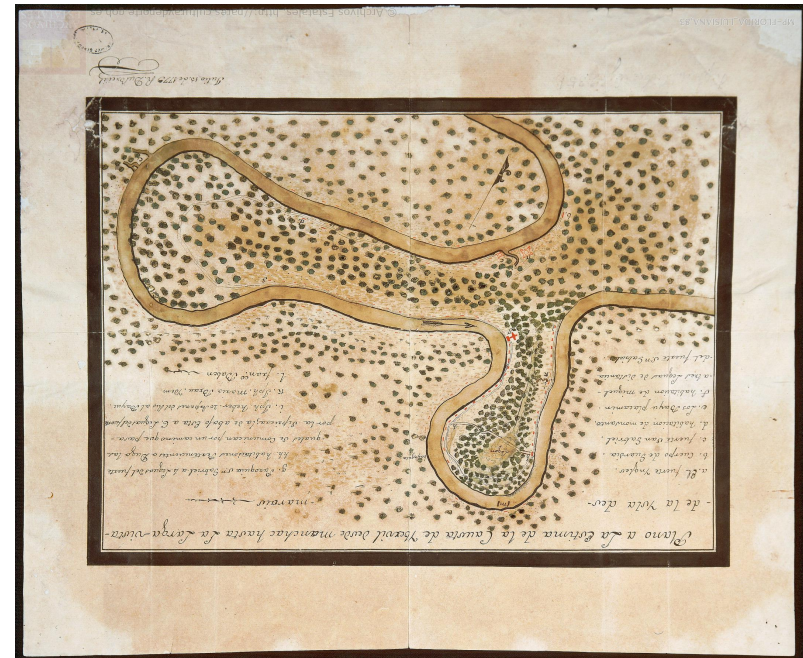
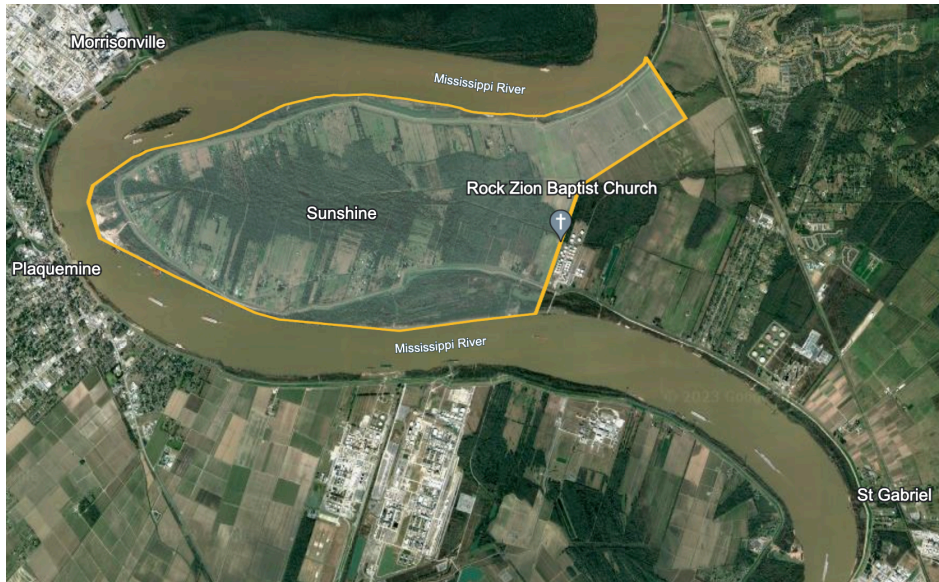
The Cultural Landscape Foundation

2023 Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape Recognition

Plaquemine Point, a peninsula in a bend of the Mississippi River some eight miles south of Baton Rouge, LA, contains a nationally significant old growth forest that could be partially destroyed as the result of a proposed bridge and road project. This half-wooded, half-cleared oblong site approximately ten miles long and one mile wide in Sunshine, LA, is a significant cultural landscape; it is part of the ancestral home of a number of indigenous tribes, including the Chitimacha, Houma, and Bayou Goula, who inhabited the land for thousands of years, and also represents more than 300 years of Western settlement. The area was colonized by the French and Spanish and provided refuge for a group of Acadian exiles in the eighteenth century – several of whose descendants still reside there. In the middle of the peninsula is the 60-acre A.E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area, an old-growth forest including trees between 220 and 360 years old. It is the only privately-owned old-growth forest in Louisiana included in the [Old-Growth Forest Network](#) (OGFN), a national non-profit established in 2011 focused on protecting native, mature forests, that includes more than 200 sites in 35 states. According to the OGFN, “only a fraction of [one percent] of Eastern original forests, on average, remain standing.” The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) is examining three potential routes for the bridge and road project, one of which would traverse Plaquemine Point longitudinally, directly impacting more than 150 acres of forest and potential archaeological sites that could reveal the rich history of settlement in the region. A previously identified archaeological site on the peninsula located near the proposed route is an abandoned African American cemetery with one remaining gravestone, that of an African American Civil War veteran. If this bridge and road alternative were to be selected, it could be in violation of state laws protecting old growth forests and Governor John Bel Edwards’ [Climate Action Plan](#), which calls for the retention of old growth forests.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

2023 Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape Recognition



Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape alongside a 1779 map used during Revolutionary War (shown upside down due to original orientation being South pointing up)

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

2023 Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape Recognition

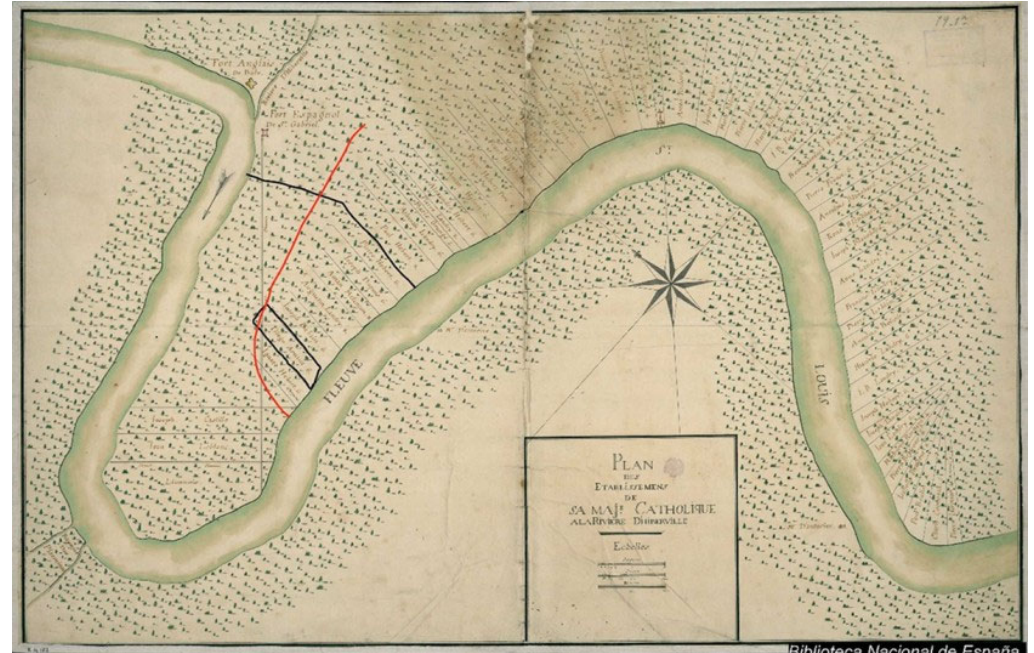


A. E. LeBlanc Old-Growth Cypress Legacy Forest Natural Area, Plaquemine Point, LA - Photo courtesy Laura Comeaux

History

Plaquemine Point is part of Iberville Parish, on the east side of the Mississippi River, near the Baton Rouge metropolitan area. Historically, it was known as Riviere D'Hiberville or Manchac Point (French) or as Costa de Yberville (Spanish). In 1767 the peninsula was a Spanish outpost, important militarily for the protection of navigation in and out of New Orleans. Spain had acquired Louisiana from France in 1762 and England had acquired the area north of Bayou Manchac (including Baton Rouge) in 1763; the Spanish built Fort San Gabriel on the south side of the bayou on the peninsula, across from the English Fort Bute, with the bayou the international border between the Spanish and British territories.

In 1767 a group of approximately 200 Acadians arriving in New Orleans who had been exiled from Acadia (today's Nova Scotia) by the British in 1755, and who had spent more than a decade, unwelcomed, in Maryland, were invited by the Spanish governor to settle at Fort San Gabriel. The Acadian presence would help fortify the area against the British. Spanish land grants were distributed to the Acadians; they were told to immediately build cabins on the lands assigned to them, and to construct shed-like structures in the vicinity of the fort in the early days before their cabins were complete. A road divided the point longitudinally, with twelve yards between the properties. A Spanish Commandant's letters written during 1767-1770 offer valuable insights into the life of the Acadians and Native American people in the area during this time; most have yet to be translated from Spanish to English.



c. 1769 Map for Sunshine & St. Gabriel settlement; area in black is the LeBlanc property. -

A little under a decade after the Acadians' arrival, in 1775, the Revolutionary War began. In 1779, Spain declared war against England and aided the Americans in their fight, crucially protecting New Orleans and the Mississippi River delta from the British. General (and Governor at the time) Bernardo de Gálvez and his army of Spanish soldiers, along with Acadians and Atakapa-Ishak Indians, hiked through the Plaquemine Point area to capture Fort Bute. The eighteenth (and nineteenth) century also saw the increase of enslaved Africans and African Americans on plantations and elsewhere, which added another layer of culture and history. Two plantations, the Bagatelle and Lucky Plantations – located on the northern and southern edges of the peninsula – are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the latter is located very near the point at which the proposed bridge and road would cross into Plaquemine Point.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

2023 Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape Recognition

Remarkably, due to private ownership, the landscape of Plaquemine Point has been preserved over the centuries. (About 99% of the peninsula is privately owned.) In the middle of the point is the 60-acre A.E. LeBlanc Forest Natural Area, a nationally-significant old-growth cypress included in the [Old-Growth Forest Network](#), a national non-profit established in 2011 focused on protecting native, mature forests, that includes more than 200 sites in 35 states. It is named after Alphonso Etienne LeBlanc, Sr., the grandfather of the eldest living LeBlanc landowners on the Point, and a descendant of Acadian settlers. The site is also registered with the Wildlife Diversity Division of Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy Organization. Within the forest are many old-growth cypress trees between 220 and 360 years old, some registered as Legacy Trees, or trees (based on core samples taken from their trunks) that were alive at the time of the Louisiana

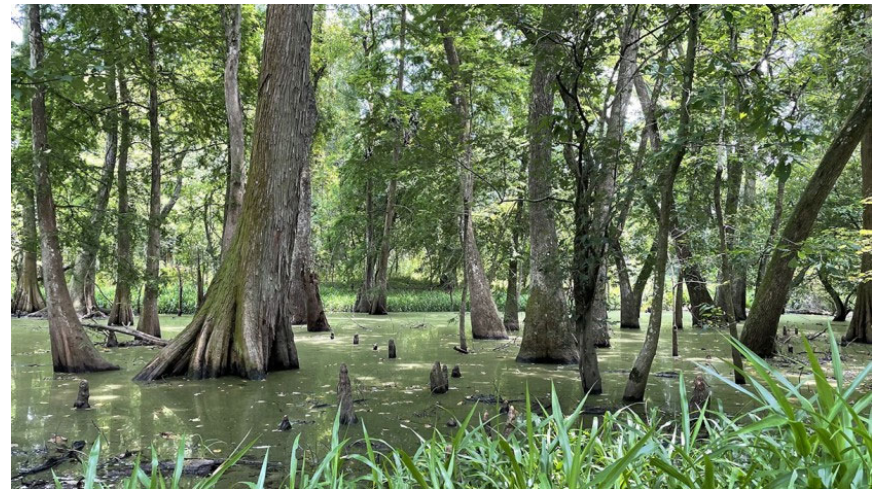
The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is planning a roadway and Mississippi River Bridge that would connect Louisiana Highway One (LA 1) to Louisiana Highway 30 (LA 30) via a controlled access, four-lane divided roadway. The bridge would span the Mississippi River, with travel lanes twelve feet wide and outside shoulders eight feet wide. Capital Area Road and Bridge District (CARB-D) was statutorily created “for the purpose and mission of planning, financing, and building a Mississippi River crossing and connectors,” with a commission comprised of representatives from five parishes, a governor’s appointee, and a representative from LADOTD. CARB-D hired Atlas Technical Consultants to carry out the environmental planning and review process, which began in July 2020.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

2023 Plaquemine Point Cultural Landscape Recognition

Alternative E-11-IV would cut through Plaquemine Point longitudinally, destroying the habitat in the middle of the peninsula, as well as the pathway of the road that the Spanish used to divide the land grants given to Acadian settlers in 1767. The land that this road traversed has never been archaeologically studied; doing so could yield important information about the history of settlement at the fort. E-11-IV would also pass very near Fort San Gabriel on the peninsula and the site where the Acadians built their shed-like structures when they first arrived. Many of the residents of Plaquemine Point are descendants of the original Acadian settlers; E-11-IV has the potential to wipe out an important part of their cultural legacy. Further archaeological investigation is also merited at the site of an African American cemetery and church where one grave marker and several depressions in the ground indicating unmarked graves were discovered in the late 1980s. This site could reveal previously unknown information about the history of African American life and culture in the area.

Thus far there has been minimal active outreach from LADOTD to the Plaquemine Point community; the public have to regularly search the CARB-D website and scour local news outlets to stay informed about public meetings and other updates. Most of the previous stakeholder engagement has been with large industrial companies on the other side of the Mississippi River. The first time LADOTD directly contacted members of the Plaquemine Point community was in late August 2023, when they requested access for their representatives to several properties to conduct studies on the final alternatives.



Old-Growth Cypress and Tupelo Forest - Cox Property - Photo courtesy Rachael Schexnayder

When federal funds are involved, as is the case with this project, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process must be undertaken, which results in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), before the project can proceed. An EA is much shorter than an EIS and involves cases when an agency is unclear about whether a proposed action will have significant environmental or cultural effects. An EIS is undertaken when it is clear that a project will significantly affect natural and cultural resources; regulatory requirements for an EIS are more detailed and rigorous than for an EA, and the process can take up to two years. During a September 2023 public meeting an Atlas representative (the project's manager) stated that they are working under the assumption that they will be proceeding with an EA, and that Atlas anticipates being done with the entire environmental planning process, with a "signed environmental document" ready, no later than winter 2024 – a timeline incompatible with an EIS. Presuming that no EIS will be necessary, especially when old-growth forests, wetlands, and potential archaeological sites are present, would appear to be a premature and troubling assumption. It is clear from the recorded and publicly accessible meeting that LADOTD and Atlas are under pressure to remain within a strict timeline and that they are unwilling to entertain extending it past 2024.

Certification Signs and Photos



Ongoing Protection Effort - Letter to FHWA

The LeBlanc family old-growth cypress forest is located in Plaquemine Point in Iberville Parish (Iberville Parish Parcel No. and Name: 0400538300 Pauline L. Becnel & others). The E-11-IV bridge route of the Mississippi River Bridge Project traverses this land. The LeBlanc Co-Owners are adamantly opposed to the E-11-IV route. Their opposition is based on the ecological value of the old-growth cypress forest standing on their land and on neighboring land that would have to be destroyed for any variation of Alternative E-11-IV. The E-11-IV route or any path adjacent to it will have significant adverse environmental effects in Plaquemine Point, both cultural and ecological.

On May 27, 2022, LaDOTD and its bridge project contractor, Atlas, announced that three bridge routes including E-11-IV would “Move into NEPA Analyses”. An 18-month scoping period followed. The Atlas/LaDOTD final Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) report dated December 5, 2023, and entitled "Enhanced Planning Investigation MRB South GBR: LA 1 to LA 30 Connector," was submitted to the FHWA Louisiana Division on December 8, 2023, by LaDOTD Project Manager, Paul Vaught.

The above designations and recognitions of the land were provided to LaDOTD and FHWA before the PEL report was submitted. We are at a loss to understand why this significant and relevant information was not included in the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report.

Before and throughout that 18-month scoping period, members of the Plaquemine Point Community expressed their objection to the E-11-IV route in writing. They also provided information to LaDOTD and Atlas on the ecological and cultural importance of Plaquemine Point. The LeBlanc Co-Owners extended multiple invitations to LaDOTD and Atlas to visit the LeBlanc Forest. For fourteen (14) months the invitation to visit the site was ignored. Concerned parties were not consulted or invited to a single public meeting during the scoping period. LaDOTD did not visit the site until *after* the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report was published on December 5, 2023 and submitted to the FHWA Louisiana Division.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that meaningful public engagement be used to ensure decision makers are informed by the views of the public and that public engagement be used to inform the level of review for and scope of analysis of a proposed action. These regulations also require that the public involvement be “early and continued” to determine important environmental issues and significant environmental effects deserving of study. It is our position that LaDOTD’s process did not comply with 40 CFR sections 1501.1, 1501.2, 1501.9, 1502.2, 1502.4, 1502.5, 23 CFR 771.111, and the US Department of Transportation FHWA PEL Guidebook “Self-Assessment for PEL.”

Despite the lack of LaDOTD public meetings during the scoping period, the Plaquemine Point Community and conservation organizations provided credible scientific and historical information from April 2022 through December 2023 to LaDOTD and Atlas. The information demonstrated that E-11-IV will significantly and adversely affect the quality of the human environment in Plaquemine Point. The destruction of any old-growth cypress forested areas in Plaquemine Point by Alternative E-11-IV, whether the path is through the LeBlanc Forest or through contiguous neighbors’ land, will result in both cultural and ecological damage.

This information was communicated through phone-calls, mailed letters, email, and vocally by attending Capital Area Road and Bridge District (CARB-D) Meetings. In addition, at the CARB-D meetings, spoken and written testimonies were given and accompanied by hand-delivered documents to the LaDOTD Secretary, Dr. Eric Kalivoda, who was a CARB-D board member. Once again, we do not understand why the above information was omitted from the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report.

NEPA regulations and the FHWA NEPA implementation regulations require that the environmental scoping information used as the basis for a PEL be accurate, up-to-date, and inclusive of information received from the public. We believe that omitting the submitted items from the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report violates 40 CFR sections 1500.1, 1501.1, 1501.9, 23 U.S.C. Chapter 1 section 168, 23 CFR Chapter 1 Appendix A to Part 450, 23 CFR section 771.111, and the US Department of Transportation FHWA PEL Guidebook.

The items that were omitted from the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report include, but are not limited to, the following:

- LPCL cypress tree coring results, newsletter, Forest Certification
- OGFN Certification, newsletter, letters written to LaDOTD
- LDWF Wildlife Diversity Program Natural Area Certification, Species List including Species of Greatest Conservation Need, letter written to LaDOTD
- LSU Environmental Sciences Department Regenerating Cypress Forest Research Report
- Plaquemine Point TCLF Certification Report
- Fort San Gabriel de Manchac (Plaquemine Point) Historical Map and articles on 1767 Acadian settlement
- CARB-D spoken testimony and hand delivered scientific and historical information provided to LaDOTD by LeBlanc Co-Owners and LPCL Representative during 3/23, 9/23, & 12/23 meetings
- Various letters mailed to LaDOTD by LeBlanc Co-Owners and community members

Ongoing Protection Effort - Letter to FHWA

The Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report was approved by the FHWA based on the statement that the document complied with 23 USC Chapter 1 §168 (b)(1) “Integration of planning and environmental review”. But the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report does not comply with the conditional statement of the same 23 USC Chapter 1 §168, which is (d)(7), requiring that the planning product be based on reliable and current data. By way of example:

Appendix B, STAGE 0 Environmental Checklist of the PEL asks “Are there any Significant Trees as defined by EDSM I.1.1.21 within proposed ROW? (Y or N) If so, where?”

Atlas Response: During preliminary windshield surveys, several potential significant trees were observed. The exact road/bridge alignment could be located anywhere in a 600-foot wide corridor; therefore, avoidance or minimization of impacts to the trees could be analyzed during preliminary design.

This response fails to mention 20 months of information received from the LeBlanc Co-Owners, residents and landowners in Plaquemine Point, and Conservation Organizations concerning old-growth cypress forests and diverse species present in Plaquemine Point. It fails to mention that for 14 months, LaDOTD received repeated request from the LeBlanc Co-Owners to perform a site visit of the LeBlanc Forest, as was performed on the Shintech and Dow properties during that time.

Another example of an inaccuracy in the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report is the following:

In Appendix K “Public & Stakeholder Engagement Summary”, the only stakeholders mentioned were not residents or landowners in Plaquemine Point. Despite multiple letters from the LeBlanc Co-Owners, the Plaquemine Point Community members, and conservation organizations to LaDOTD Public Information Office, Robert Lott of LaDOTD, and LaDOTD Contractors Atlas/Providence/Franklin Associates, the project team did not visit the A. E. LeBlanc Natural Area or meet with the Plaquemine Point Community during the PEL period. Of the “stakeholders” listed in the Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report - not one is a resident of the property at issue. Are the residents and owners of the property not “stakeholders”?

Atlas and LaDOTD are presently working to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) while determining the final “preferred alternative” without inviting public input. The NEPA EIS formal start date has been delayed more than four times, which has delayed the start of the NEPA public involvement activities and public hearings. The concern is that the final “preferred alternative” will be pre-determined by the time the “NEPA Clock” is started by LaDOTD. The Atlas/LaDOTD final PEL report Section 6.2 “Results and Recommendations” conclusion statement that “expected impacts to known resources are minor” reveals a pre-determined outcome that violates the NEPA laws 40 CFR sections 1501.1(b), 1502.2(g), and 1502.5.

The delay of public hearings is evident in the following quote from the June 24, 2024 CARB-D meeting. At the meeting, the LaDOTD Project Manager Paul Vaught explained the approach to which he stated the FHWA Louisiana Division has agreed:

“For the last couple of months we have been trying to figure out what the rules are around starting the NEPA clock, especially with some of the evolving and new regulations - and so, where we are is we have gotten a determination from FHWA. Basically it's that we can continue and do this enhanced level of field work without actually starting the NEPA clock. The plan is probably within the next three to four months, as we're wrapping up the field work, then we'd have to start preparing the environmental documentation and that's when the NEPA clock will officially start.”

For the above reasons we urge LaDOTD to remove E-11-IV from consideration as a bridge route.

In the event that LaDOTD decides not to remove E-11-IV from consideration, the LeBlanc Co-Owners are requesting the following:

1. That the information in opposition to E-11-IV that the Plaquemine Point community, LDWF Wildlife Diversity Program, and conservation organizations have provided to you be publicly documented on the project website and that the Atlas planning documents be amended prior to the NEPA EIS formal start date.
2. That LaDOTD promptly schedule a formal recorded public hearing, regardless of the NEPA EIS formal start date, to allow Plaquemine Point residents and landowners, and conservation organization representatives to respond on the matter. The conservation organizations that have recognized the ecological and cultural value of the LeBlanc Forest and Plaquemine Point include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy, Contact: Harvey Stern, Coordinator, 740 7th Street, New Orleans, LA 70115
 - Old-Growth Forest Network, Contact: Sarah Adloo, Executive Director, PO Box 21, Easton, MD 21601
 - Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Wildlife Diversity Program, Contact: Nicole Lorenz, Wildlife Diversity Program Manager, 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808
 - Louisiana State University College of Coast and Environment, Contact: Linda Bui, Professor, 93 South Quad Drive, Suite 1002, Baton Rouge, LA 70803
 - The Cultural Landscape Foundation, Contact: Charles Birnbaum, President, 1711 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009
3. That the LeBlanc Co-Owners receive (advance) notification of LaDOTD’s NEPA EIS formal start date according to §1501.9(c)(5)(i).