

# CYPRESS ON THE MOVE

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KERRY MALONEY / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Cody Hitchcock starts the assembly line of tree passing as volunteers from the Church of the King participate in a tree planting project in the Tchefuncte Marsh on Feb. 26.

## Tree-planting project takes root in marsh

*Volunteers play a vital role*

By Pat Mashburn  
Contributing writer

The proactive approach makes sense, and it's one

that Mandeville Public Works Director David deGeneres and city officials are counting on to restore vital nutrients to the Tchefuncte Marsh.

With help from the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana in the form of the donation of more than 700 bald cypress trees, and coordination by Keep Mandeville Beautiful, the future is filled with optimism.

"We're continuing a project that began five years ago," deGeneres said. "What we're doing is partnering with the coalition and they've contributed bald cypress trees and we're going to plant them into the degraded marsh. It's a wonderful opportunity for the city to stop coastal erosion and protect this valuable ecosystem."

On Feb. 26, deGeneres and about 30 volunteers gathered at the city-owned Tchefuncte Marsh and began spreading out the 3- to 5-foot-tall trees along the boardwalk to be planted in the coming weeks. The 1,400-plus acre wetland is located north of Lake Pontchartrain and runs east

See TREES, Page 4

## Pipeline provides nutrient-rich water to marsh

TREES, from Page 1

to west from Lewisburg to the Tchefuncte River. The boardwalk and pipeline were built as part of the award-winning, state-of-the-art "Green Treatment" program.

Keep Mandeville Beautiful brought together volunteers from the area to facilitate the position of the trees along the boardwalk. The trees were delivered from the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, via semi-truck, to the Mandeville Public Works

Department and then transported to the site.

"The help of the volunteers last Saturday was critical," said Susan Russell of Keep Mandeville Beautiful. "They were there from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. putting trees in position so that all of them could be planted this week. Otherwise, we'd be running behind. It was truly a collaborative approach."

As the only land between Lake Pontchartrain and parts of Mandeville, the area serves as a vital floodplain from storm surge.

In addition, the area provides habitat to native wildlife and is accessible along the half-mile long boardwalk.

In the 1920s, more than 1,200 acres of virgin cypress trees were harvested in the marsh. Ten years ago, the city of Mandeville bought the property and took it out of commerce with the pledge to restore the area and keep it in its natural state.

"By discharging water from our sewerage treatment plant in this area," deGeneres said, "it's got a lot of nutrients in it and

healthy fertilizer for the plant life. We're trying to replant and revitalize the swamp so that it provides a layer of protection for the city from storm surge."

Storm surge brings in salt water that kills the vegetation in the area, and the pipeline will bring in nutrient-rich water that is intended to flush out the salt water. As the grass continues to grow, more wildlife will return to the habitat, deGeneres said.

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