



LOUISIANA

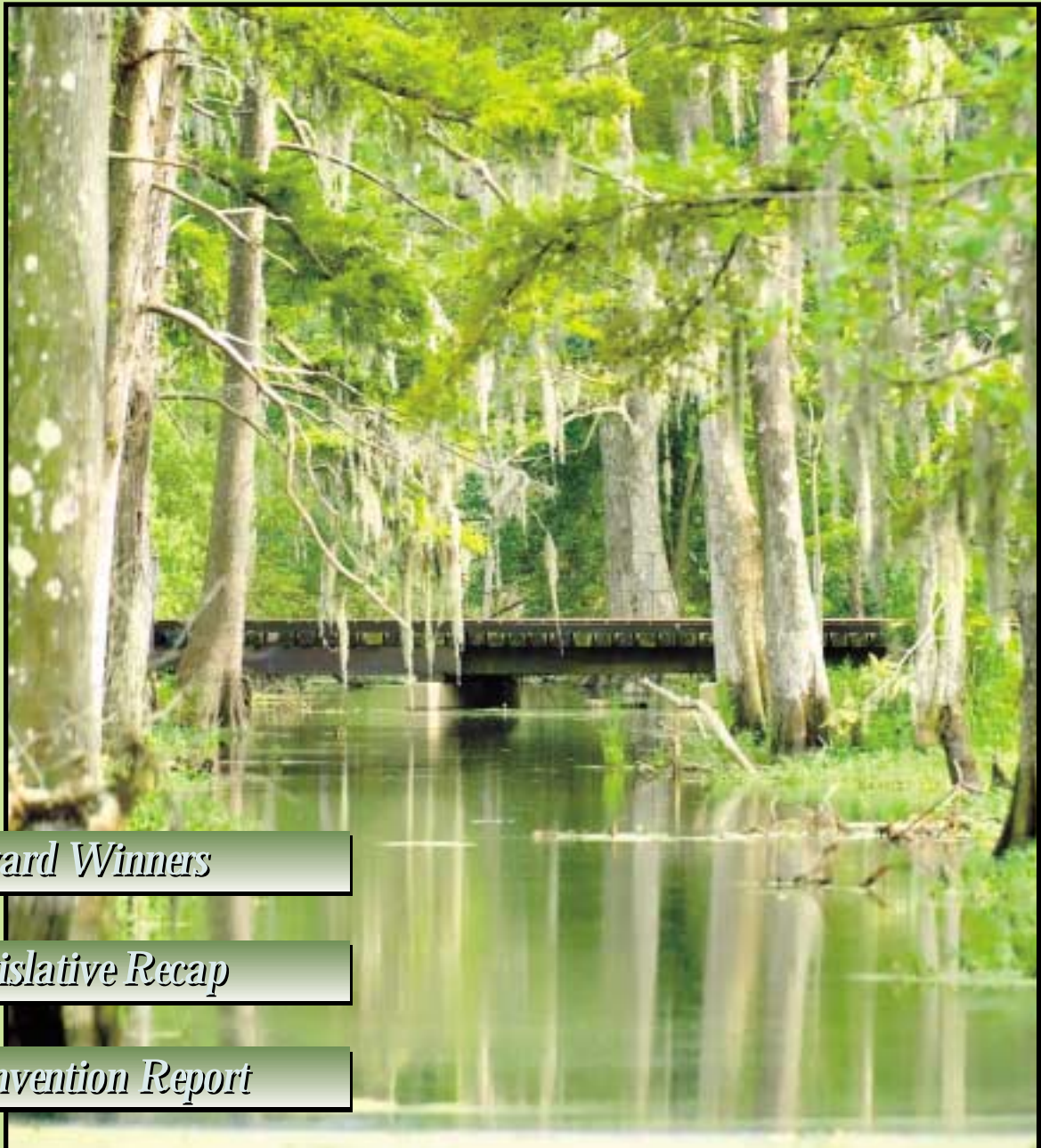
Wildlife

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Woodlands Trail and Park

Conservation Organization of the Year

There's a not so little nook of forests and wetlands on the Westbank of Orleans and the top end of Plaquemines that holds the soil, houses the birds, including an extended family of bald eagles, breaks the wind and gathers the citizens in celebration of Nature. Although it took a blow from the storms of 2005, it's getting the tender loving care to recover from a group of citizens devoted to its future. That group of advocates is Woodlands Trail and Park, a local nonprofit that began as an ambitious grassroots regional effort in 1997 to plan for smart growth while preserving and protecting the natural beauty and cultural treasures within a 10,000 acre peninsula in the metro New Orleans area.

Currently recognized as one of three



Woodlands Trail & Park was named Conservation Organization of the Year. Receiving the award from LWF President Terry Melancon (L) and NWF Region 8 Director Dr. Earl Matthew is WT&P President Katie Brasted along with Park members and supporters (L-R) Paul Richard, Clayton White, Hank Willie, Carol Osborne Cowley and Benny Rousselle.

American Heritage Rivers Initiative "Keystone" projects for Louisiana, Woodlands Trail and Park has worked over the past eight years to unite the river communities of Orleans and Plaquemines Parishes with a series of educational, recreational and historical greenways in one of the regions last stands of bottomland hardwoods.

The Woodlands group has formed 15 local, regional and national partnerships and worked with organizations, private citizens, interest groups, corporations and governmental entities as a coalition to discover and celebrate the natural beauty of the area. The efforts in "Creating a Legacy" began in 2000 with dedication by ordinance of over 8 miles of forested greenway corridor to Woodlands Trail and Park for the establishment of educational, recreational and historical trails and greenways.

In 2005, the Park collaborated with Rep. Earnest Wooten to garner an additional 110 acres to put under its protection.

Last year, Woodlands Trail and Park engaged in numerous efforts to promote the park and the conservation of wetlands, including fundraising events that also raised awareness of the mission of the Park and the important ecosystem functions and values it protects. It collaborated in volunteer efforts to clear trails of fallen trees and branches left by the hurricanes, and set about to suppress invasive species that got a toehold after the storms. It formed a partnership with the Land Trust Alliance to formulate a land trust for the Woodlands Trail and Park that will be able to hold conservation easements and property to further the greenway corridor mission. The group received significant grants of state and federal funds to further the Park's mission of preserving habitat for wildlife and increasing community awareness and access to wetland environments. And its president and founder, Katie Brasted was honored for her work with the park as one of 50 Women of the Year by New Orleans City Business Magazine.

Gay Brantley - Governor's Award Conservationist of the Year

Gay Gannaway Brantley, staff naturalist for the Northeast Louisiana Refuges Complex headquartered in Monroe has spent an entire career dedicated to bringing the wonders of the natural world and the stories they tell to young and old alike. The complex includes Black Bayou Lake, D'Arbonne, Upper Ouachita, Handy



Conservationists of the year for 2006 (presented in 2007), L-R: Todd Masson, Communicator; Gay Brantley, Governor's Award; Kirk Rhinehart, Professional; Susan and Charles Allen, Volunteers; Katie Brasted, Organization (Woodlands Trail & n Park); Ben Kleinpeter, Corporation (Kleinpeter Farms Dairy); Anna Kathryn Whittington, Youth; Plaquemine Mayor Tony Gulotta, Elected Official; Mark Schexnader, Educator.

Brake, and Red River National Wildlife

Refuges. Brantley is the responsible for all land based Fish and Wildlife Service environmental education and interpretation activities in the north half of the state. Even with these challenging work responsibilities, Brantley volunteers her time as conservation educator with the Girl Scouts and other groups and spends many evenings and weekends at the refuge and other venues with her programs about wildlife and conservation.

Brantley has been a crucial component to the success of the young Black Bayou Lake Urban National Wildlife Refuge and its award-winning support group, Friends of Black Bayou. Because of Brantley's tireless efforts, the refuge now has an association with the Monroe City School System technology team, coordinating a website, educating teachers of all subjects, connecting curricula and extending field trips to before and after experiences for students, and even sharing these activities with school systems as far away as Georgia. As one leader of the Friends of Black Bayou put it, "I am happy that Gay is often the human face of the refuge that people will remember."

The list of Gay Brantley's activities and accomplishments over the past year is impressive, and exhausting. They include: presenting 89 onsite environmental education programs on various topics to 4,352 participants; organizing and executing 2 special refuge events attended by 1,900; 14 off refuge programs reaching 321 participants; numerous presentations at off refuge special events like National Hunting and Fishing Day, Jake's and Greenwing events, etc., participated in by over 2,000; coordination and design of all educational exhibits at Black Bayou Lake's Conservation Learning Center; writing 22 educational media releases on conservation as well as developing brochures and educational materials for the refuge.

High praise comes from Brantley's boss: "Gay is a natural leader. She has a Master's degree in biology but much of her meaningful experience comes from hunting, fishing, camping and enjoying Louisiana's outdoors with an inquisitive eye. Students flock to her, and during her life she has impacted thousands. You can see from this sample of her work, Gay is a conservation professional par excellence."