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### **Teamwork on Bayou Teche highlights importance of clean water**

ST. MARTINVILLE, LA—Municipalities in St. Landry, St. Martin and Iberia parishes have agreed to test water quality on Bayou Teche on a quarterly basis. Eric Martin represented St. Martinville as mayor for more than 15 years and initiated the effort. Martin says, “Long term water quality monitoring is important if we want to promote recreational use such as, canoeing, fishing and swimming in Bayou Teche. Our towns and businesses want to be sure communities and guests can enjoy clean and safe water all year long.” Martin collaborated with Dr. Whitney Broussard, Institute for Coastal Ecology and Engineering at UL Lafayette, and Kristen Kordecki, Bayou Teche Coordinator at Acadiana Resource Conservation and Development, to develop a plan of action.

Several cities and towns, including Port Barre, Arnaudville, Breaux Bridge, St. Martinville, Jeanerette and Baldwin have agreed to collect water from the Bayou in their respective areas and analyze the water for oxygen levels and pollutants such as nutrients, sediments, and sewer system wastewater. Martin says, “I applaud the mayors and city councils for prioritizing water quality and Bayou Teche. The message our towns are sending is that Bayou Teche is an important part of our identity and we want to protect it.” The results will be shared between the towns along the bayou and with the public in an effort to create a comprehensive set of information that will help guide efforts in the watershed to improve water quality. As such, the municipalities will collaborate in the water quality testing to provide critical information for the overall efforts to restore Bayou Teche.

“This collaboration is an important step because it demonstrates the commitment our municipalities and our communities have to reversing water quality problems in Bayou Teche,” says Kordecki. “If we can gather data that points to a problem in the water, then we can start working together to make changes on the ground that improve the bayou.”

Dr. Broussard will lead a state-sponsored effort this spring to collect water quality data along the entire course of Bayou Teche. He agrees, “The health of Bayou Teche depends on the health of

its watershed and its people. This will require a watershed solution, but watersheds pay no mind to political boundaries. We are working together from Courtableau to Charenton with mayors, city council members, parish presidents, concerned citizens, government agencies, and the University to bring this historic bayou back to its former condition."

Citizens are also taking action with the Water Sentinels program led by the Sierra Club's Haywood Martin (no relation to Eric Martin). Five teams of two persons, in St. Landry and St. Martin parishes, go out to the bayou every three months and test the bayou water using water quality kits donated by Acadiana RC&D and the TECHE Project. Martin will hold a free training workshop in May in New Iberia for citizens interested in the Water Sentinels program. Contact Acadiana RC&D for more information.

"With mayors and municipalities along the bayou working with concerned citizens, non-profit organizations, the University and the state," Broussard concludes, "There is a watershed moment happening along Bayou Teche."



Bayou Teche near Parks. Photo courtesy Mike VanEtten



Dr. Whitney Broussard, far right and Haywood Martin teach volunteers how to test water quality. Photo courtesy, ARC&D