

Pontchartrain Conservancy Plants 2,400 Baldcypress Saplings in Madisonville
Trees will help enhance the natural coastal wetland buffer, mitigate effects of storm surge

NEW ORLEANS (March 17, 2021) – [Pontchartrain Conservancy](#), a leader in coastal sustainability, water quality and environmental education for more than three decades, has partnered with St. Tammany Parish, the Town of Madisonville and Arcosa Marine, to plant 2,400 baldcypress saplings across 12 acres south of Madisonville to reduce the risk of storm surge flooding in the town. The swamp trees will strengthen community resilience by enhancing the natural coastal wetland buffer.

To the detriment of communities like Madisonville, many of the remaining wetland areas around Lake Pontchartrain contain few healthy trees. This leaves rich riverfront communities like these increasingly exposed to severe storm surge and waves from Lake Pontchartrain, as demonstrated by severe weather events such as Hurricane Isaac in 2012.

“On average, every 2.7 miles of coastal wetlands can reduce storm surge by up to one foot. As many parts of our region continue to face increasing environmental threats and challenges, it is important for us to restore the wetlands that act as vital lines of defense against damaging storm surge and winds,” said Pontchartrain Conservancy Coastal Scientist Shelby Barrett. “We’re extremely grateful to partner with St. Tammany Parish, the Town of Madisonville and Arcosa Marine on this critical restoration project.”

“The town of Madisonville greatly appreciated working in conjunction with St. Tammany Parish and Arcosa Marine on the planting of 2,400 bald cypress saplings here in Madisonville,” said Mayor Jean Pelloat. “We feel that this will help tremendously with coastal preservation and with the flooding in town. We look forward to the beautiful growth of the trees in the near future.”

The closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) in 2009 has allowed water and soil salinity to return to the healthy conditions that once supported the swamp habitat around much of the rim of Lake Pontchartrain. Loss of the cypress-dominated swamps began due to logging and continued with the introduction of nutria and unnaturally high salinity by the MRGO, preventing natural regeneration and regrowth of the wetlands.

“We know that trees offer more than beauty to our community. This collaborative project is in keeping with our ongoing Replant St. Tammany initiative. Trees help in flood protection and offer a natural habitat for wildlife,” said St. Tammany Parish President Mike Cooper. “I want to thank all of our partners in this project. We look forward to seeing these saplings mature to enhance the wetlands and increase this natural storm surge defense.”

Madisonville is located approximately 1.3 miles inland from Lake Pontchartrain and is surrounded by a wetland area, presently dominated by low-lying marsh that is suitable for restoration. The development of forested wetlands in the marsh areas south of Madisonville could reduce storm wave height during hurricanes and change the Federal Emergency Management Association’s flood zone types and base flood elevations for the town.

“Arcosa Marine has a culture that values environmental responsibility and is a part of this community,” said Arcosa Marine Vice President of Operations Bryson Person. “These are our neighbors, and we are proud to partner with the parish and the town to restore and preserve this habitat while giving something back to the land and the community.”

About Pontchartrain Conservancy: Pontchartrain Conservancy, formerly the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, is a New Orleans-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to an environmentally sustainable, prosperous and resilient region. Our mission is to drive environmental sustainability and stewardship through scientific research, education and advocacy. Pontchartrain Conservancy consists of a board of directors representing Lake Pontchartrain Basin parishes and regulatory agencies. For more information or to get involved, visit www.scienceforourcoast.org. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram at @PontchartrainConservancy and on Twitter at @OurBasin.