

FRIENDS of the MANCHAC GREENWAY

2019

This summary includes most of the topics from this year's meetings of the FMG Board.

MEETINGS:

- The people who come to our monthly meetings and actively participate in our group are key to getting things done and are making this project work! We are making a positive impact on our community and will leave something better for future generations.
- Minutes for our meetings largely follow an advance agenda and are recorded, approved by our Board and disseminated to our membership and all interested parties.
- If you or anyone you think of should get in on this, then please forward an e-mail address to info@manchacgreenway.org. A Friends of the Manchac Greenway (FMG) Membership Donation posted at manchacgreenway.org would also be much appreciated.
- Monthly meetings have been conducted at 2:00 pm on Tuesdays or Thursdays at SLU's Turtle Cove Office in Galva or at Bec's on the Lake Restaurant and Catering in Frenier.

FINANCIAL:

- Treasurer Galen Schum has been keeping track of the ebb and flow of Friends of the Manchac Greenway funds and the bank balance seems to be hovering around \$4,000.00. We have used donations from membership dues and corporate donations to pay for membership brochures, graphic art services, appreciation plaques and other incidental expenses.
- In case you're wondering, big-dollar expenditures for the many meaningful infrastructure improvements to the Greenway that are envisioned await commitments from state and local government and funding through grants, foundations, etc.

FMG MEMBERSHIP, EDUCATION & PROMOTION:

- The organization's membership levels improved somewhat this year with an appeal sent to the 250 or so persons on our contact list. About 20 people saw fit to join us from this effort.
- The Greenway and FMG membership have been marketed this year by talks before civic groups, the distribution of Greenway brochures/membership application and stickers, our website manchacgreenway.org and manning tables at special events.

Future plans include:

- Posting temporary FMG membership advertising signs on the Greenway.
- Updating our website to include Educational/Informational topics on "Greenway Greenery," "Animals of the Greenway" and expanding on and promoting our interactive Greenway Map.
- Sending invitations to FMG Board Meetings and Meeting Agendas to all of our contacts.
- Resuming the effort to change "Frontage Road" entrance signs into "Manchac Greenway" signs plus adding Manchac Greenway signs on interstate approaches.

INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES:

- A star attraction on the Greenway has been the canoe launch into Shell Bank Bayou on the wide shoulder of the road a mile north of Ruddock in St. John Parish. It enters the highly accessible and beautiful Maurepas Swamp WMA and eco-tourism companies bring hundreds of out-of-town tourist to it each year. FMG has expressed concern about parking, pedestrian safety, litter and shared use of this unregulated piece of public property. Collaboration with St. John Parish and the River Parishes Tourism Commission (which covers St. Charles, St. John and St. James Parishes) has brought the attention of this parish asset to these officials and they have made a greater commitment to marketing the area's eco-tourism assets. A recent successful canoe tour for these officials at Shell Bank and a boat tour to SLU's Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station on Pass Manchac highlighted the beauty and importance of these wetlands.
- While the Upper Owl Bayou Canoe launch the FMG helped improve last year has yet to attract many canoeists, it has reinvigorated the site's use as a fishing hole. Litter abatement and vegetation management will remain perpetual problems here until an appropriate agency will adopt it from the LA Dept. of Transportation (LADOTD).
- FMG has plans for improving the Maurepas Swamp WMA Trail north of Peavine Rd. with an extra layer of gravel to alleviate flooding and muddy conditions on the trail but first, a potential donor must be found to help pay for an engineering study/cost analysis before approaching the LA Wildlife and Fisheries (the property owner) for input/approval. The final phase will be funding and construction.
- Sunset Park on the Greenway at Lake Maurepas has been a success story with its adoption by the Lions Club of Laplace. They've done an excellent job of keeping the picnic area clean and well maintained.
- The Mini-picnic park near Ruddock on the Greenway has recently been cleared of vegetation, rehabilitated back into original condition and is "back in business."
- FMG advocated the Greenway at a public input meeting with the South Central Regional Planning Commission. This organization, similar to ones in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, studies and recommends transportation project from the River Parishes south to the Louisiana coast.

CONTACT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- In the new post-election environment, representative of FMG will continue to develop and promote an agenda of Greenway issues to take up with local officials. Included in these discussions will be re-establishing the FMG/Bi-Parish Greenway Advisory Panel with new membership rosters and an agenda for locating sources of government and private funding.

PORT MANCHAC:

- The fortunes of the ill-situated non-functioning port in the marshes on North Pass continues to evolve. After entertaining the prospects of processing black graphite for a battery manufacturer

and then an elaborate housing resort/marina complex, newfound public attention has been brought to this languishing facility. This has brought into question not only the wisdom of these ventures, but the very foundations of the facility's use, governance, taxing structure, profits and costs to the taxpayer. The FMG continues to seek a good neighbor in the port and advocates for at least its partial reorientation toward a more agreeable, economically beneficial eco-tourism use, given its location in an environmentally sensitive, hurricane surge zone.

RING AROUND THE LAKE:

- FMG has worked with SLU Prof. Molly McGraw and the Greater New Orleans Regional Planning Commission (NORPC) to detail a digital GIS map of the Ring Route with points of interest that bicycle tour groups and individual cyclists may be able to use.
- NORPC has requested Comprehensive Bike Plans for each of the parishes on the proposed bikeway and will pay 80% of the cost. Completed bike plans and partial elements of bike plans have been completed in most of these parishes and FMG has requested completed plans from these parish governments.
- A recently survey was made of critical junctures for a levee-top "service road" on the new storm-surge protection levee from the Mississippi River to the Greenway. Contact is being made with the US Army Corps of Engineers, Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority and parish governments to request this "add-on."
- A promotional video for the Ring Around the Lake has been researched and scripted and contact made with state agencies for funding.

RESTORE ACT / MANCHAC GREENWAY MASTER PLAN:

- While the study prepared for Tangipahoa Parish by ELOS Environmental and Meyer Engineers covered the Greenway from Pass Manchac to Ponchatoula's S.W.R.R. Ave., the first priority in this project will be a proposed boardwalk from Selsers Canal to Ponchatoula on the east side of the Canadian National RR track. Elements of this detail in the plan that are still in need of clarification include funding for an engineering and cost analysis for this boardwalk to facilitate finding the funding to complete it, clearance with the Canadian National Railroad and cooperation with NORPC for assistance.

PRESERVING THE ISTHMUS OF MANCHAC:

- These efforts can be seen on the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation's web page <https://saveourlake.org/lpbf-programs/coastal/coastal-projects/maurepas-swamp-restoration/>

LA DOTD ADOPT-A-ROAD:

- The six adopting organizations enlisted by FMG at the beginning of the year (plus the original Manchac Boating Assoc. adoption) remain and their schedule of quarterly litter drives have

apparently been met. Another 16 miles of the Greenway are still orphaned and in need of generous adopting groups. Additionally, a DOTD contractor has also made quarterly collections on the entire Greenway, Middendorfs Restaurant sends out a crew to pick up around the Manchac Exit and Sheriff's litter crews also make occasional visits. The net result is a consistently cleaner Greenway.

- Upon completing the fourth FMG outing of cleaning its adopted mile, these conclusions come to mind: 1) Assiduous deep-cleaning has greatly reduced the amount of "legacy litter," now its just the fresh stuff. 2) Beware of adopting the last mile, it's just about where the after-work beer can or bottle is finished off and tossed out the window. 3) When counting on a decent turn-out of volunteers, remember: "Many hands make light work."