

# Bayou Bartholomew Alliance



Fall 1999  
Vol. 3.

## Volunteers Beautify Bayou

On September 18, approximately 15 volunteers gathered at the Bayou Bartholomew bridge on Pinebergen Road in Jefferson County for a trash cleanup. The stream bank and channel below the bridge have served as an illegal dumping site for years. Some of the volunteers focused on picking up small debris under the bridge and along the road ditches. Others concentrated on removing the larger objects from the stream channel. Much of the large debris required the use of a winch to remove.

Several "unusual" objects were discovered buried in the silt, including a motorcycle, four newspaper vending machines, and a large metal safe! Much to our disappointment, someone had already emptied the contents of the safe with the help of a cutting torch. Other objects removed included stoves, washing machines, tires, 55-gallon drums, a lawnmower, and many smaller household items. The trash removed totaled enough to fill two 16-foot flatbed trailers.

Unfortunately, the Pinebergen Bridge is but one of many sites that are used as dumps on Bayou Bartholomew. It is up to people who care about the bayou to change that through education of the public and by participation in future cleanups. We truly appreciate the efforts of those who participated in the cleanup. They include the following: Cynthia Kimbrell, April Layher, Bill Layher, Kris Layher, Curtis Merrell, James Mooney, Phil Penny, Jason Phillips, Kenneth Phillips, Nate Ralston, and Derrell Young. Several members of Ted Nugent's United Sportsman of America were also present. They included Keith Baker, Johnny Brock, Chip Stewart, and Greg Stewart.



One of two trailer loads of trash removed from Bayou Bartholomew near Pinebergen on September 18.

## **Jefferson County Update**

Doug Butler has filled the position of water quality technician for the NRCS in Jefferson County. He graduated from UAPB in 1994 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. He was previously employed by the city of Pine Bluff as a Laboratory Technician for the Wastewater Utility. He is the son of Dr. Robert Butler and Mrs. Betty Butler of Pine Bluff. He lives in Pine Bluff with his wife Karen. The following is an update on the work Doug has been involved with so far.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA), with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), entered into contracts with landowners off of Gibb-Anderson Road near Pinebergen in Southern Jefferson County, to plant 310 acres in trees along Bayou Bartholomew. The Bayou Bartholomew Alliance (BBA) has agreed to purchase a portion of the trees for planting. The BBA also agreed to help plant 18-acre and 210-acre farm plots in the Bayou Bartholomew watershed off of Hwy. 425 South. The NRCS appreciates the cooperation of the BBA in its efforts to support conservation practices.

Reminder: Regular CRP sign-up is coming soon, and don't forget about continuous CRP sign-up. For more information call the Jefferson County NRCS office at 870-534-3200 ext. 3.

## **Lincoln County Update**

During the past two months we have finished all status reviews on the Water Quality contracts that fall in the Bayou Bartholomew priority area. These contracts provided incentives to farmers and ranchers to encourage conservation practices such as residue management, conservation tillage, irrigation water management, wetland and upland habitat management, and waste and nutrient utilization management. There were 57 contracts that covered over 5,800 acres of land in the priority area. This is the last year of the water quality contracts, but all farmers and ranchers are being encouraged to continue these practices to help prevent pollutants from entering the bayou.

We are currently working with EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) contracts that provide incentives to farmers and ranchers to provide cost-share for erosion controls including grade stabilization structures, residue management programs, prescribed grazing for ranchers, and wildlife wetland habitat management.

We recently had one landowner sign up for the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and will be working with him to provide assistance in getting all necessary information together to get that project rolling. We are also informing landowners and producers about current programs available and future sign-up periods for EQIP, CRP, and WRP programs.

Keith Shepard, Water Quality Technician, Lincoln County

### **You can contact the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance by writing, calling, or e-mailing:**

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## **Inmates Put to Work Restoring Bayou**

Female inmates from the Southeast Arkansas Community Punishment Center are scheduled to participate in efforts to restore Bayou Bartholomew in the coming months. The work will help to pay off a fine the center received from the Department of Environmental Quality. Possible projects include trash cleanups and tree plantings. Officials at the center also extended the offer of utilizing inmates in future volunteer efforts.

## **New Computers Purchased**

Money set aside from the recent 319 grant we received was used to purchase three computer systems. Doug Butler and Keith Shepard, the Water Quality Technicians for Jefferson and Lincoln Counties, as well as Dr. Bill Layher, the Alliance Coordinator, each received a new system. The primary use of the systems will be to apply GIS (Geographic Information System) to areas within the Bayou Bartholomew watershed. GIS is a software package that allows storage of information about the watershed (locations of impairments, locations and areas of tree plantings, etc) in a database and can display that information as a map. It should prove useful in determining what effect the Alliance's efforts are having upon Bayou Bartholomew. It will also help pinpoint areas that need the most attention.



### **Bayou Bartholomew Alliance Board**

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Dr. Bill Layher  
Coordinator



Scott Crabb is dwarfed by an ancient cypress tree located in Bayou Bartholomew.

## List of BBA donors since the June newsletter

July Sarah Wruck, Pine Bluff, in memory of Jeff Stone  
August Nell Phillips, Beaumont, TX, in memory of W.W. Phillips Jr.  
Zach McClendon, Monticello  
Union Bank and Trust of Monticello  
September Deborah Miller, Pine Bluff  
Betty & Everett Attebury, Monticello  
Mrs. Neale Bearden and The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, GA

The following is a memorial to William W. Phillips Jr. Readers should feel free to include memorials with their future donations.

Bill Phillips Jr. was born in 1922 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, to W.W. Phillips and Helen Bradford Phillips. He married his wife Nell in 1942, and lived in Fayetteville while they were in school. In 1945 he was shipped to France and earned the Purple Heart in Germany. When he came home he joined his father in his farming and ginning operation. Bayou Bartholomew flowed through one of the farms, and he and his family enjoyed picnicking there and looking for Indian arrowheads. When he was thirty years old he joined the National Bank of Commerce. In 1963 he became associated with the National Bank of Beaumont, Texas. He died in 1986 and his daughters Nell Allison (Dallas) and Sue Phelp (Beaumont) inherited the Bayou place.

Send to: Bayou Bartholomew Alliance, 7233 Camden Cutoff Rd, Pine Bluff, AR, 71603

**To Restore Bayou Bartholomew I Would Like**

**to donate** \_\_\_\_\_ **(a tax deductible donation) to be used for**  
**(circle one)**  
tree planting  
educational programs  
general funds to be used wherever needed most  
a memorial gift in memory of \_\_\_\_\_

**to donate time as a volunteer**  
**(circle one)**  
to plant trees  
to clean up Bayou Bartholomew  
wherever I am needed

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:**

## **Reflections of Bayou Bartholomew**

If you ask the average resident of Jefferson or Lincoln counties about their knowledge of Bayou Bartholomew, you are likely to get a variety of responses. Some might point out the fact that Bayou Bartholomew is heralded as the longest "bayou" in the world. Others might tell you about one of their favorite fishing holes. However, the only exposure the majority of the people in the area have to Bayou Bartholomew is the glimpse they catch of it as they cross one of several bridges that span it. A few months ago I would have classified myself as one of the latter. As a fisheries biologist and avid duck hunter, the plight of rivers and wetlands ranks high among my concerns. I grew up within 10 miles of Bayou Bartholomew, however I never ventured out to explore it or even to wet a hook. I believe the reason for this goes back to the image of Bayou Bartholomew.

To many people Bayou Bartholomew is thought of as a muddy, trashy, overgrown drainage ditch. Take one look at the bayou from a road crossing and you probably would agree. I would most likely still have that mindset had I not taken a job with Dr. Bill Layher. Dr. Layher serves as the Coordinator of the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance. His connection with the Alliance gave me an opportunity to learn things that would reverse my perception of Bayou Bartholomew dramatically.

Earlier this summer the decision was made that an inventory of impairments in and along Bayou Bartholomew was needed in order to better channel money and efforts into the areas most in need of restoration. Impairments can include such things as household, industrial, or agricultural trash dumps, eroding banks, and areas with little or no vegetative buffer zones. The job was to be accomplished with the use of a canoe, a handheld global positioning system unit, and two people. Luckily, I was one of those people. As of this writing, we have floated from Hazel Street in Pine Bluff to Yorktown in Lincoln County. The following is a condensed version of what we encountered along the way.

Near the beginning of our journey the bayou resembled a large marsh more than a stream. We navigated the canoe through a deep channel that cut through a wide expanse of lily pads and other aquatic vegetation. Every few hundred yards a large beaver hut projected out of the vegetation. The water, despite having a color similar to tea, was quite clear. In some places the bayou curved near tracts of bottomland hardwoods which formed a canopy over the water.

As the bayou flowed south to the Highway 15 bridge, signs of human use stuck out noticeably. Beer and soda cans, styrofoam worm containers, and old household appliances dominated the shoreline near the bridge. It's no wonder Bayou Bartholomew has a tarnished image. The amazing thing was how fast the landscape reverted back to normal only a short distance from the bridge. Near the crossing of the new 540 Bypass the channel of the bayou began to be dotted with small cypress trees. The going was fairly easy with the use of a trolling motor, aside from the occasional cluster of beaver dams. Crossing many of these obstacles required getting wet, although I didn't complain too much since the air temperature was usually pushing or exceeding 100 degrees.

As a general rule, the farther downstream we went, the larger the bayou became and boating became easier. There were some surprises in store, however. In some places the water went from a wide channel over six feet deep to several small channels less than six inches deep. Sometimes we encountered log jams that required portaging around. Floating Bayou Bartholomew in July and August is not an activity for unmotivated individuals. I just kept reminding myself that the diversity of habitat in Bayou Bartholomew is what makes it so unique compared to many other streams in the area. It is this diversity that allows it to support over 100 species of fish and many species of mussels, amphibians, and reptiles. And although I expected I would be dodging water moccasins around every bend, I have yet to spot one.

As Bayou Bartholomew winds into southern Jefferson County and northern Lincoln County, the most striking image is that of giant cypress trees. Although never officially aged, similarly sized cypress trees in other parts of the state have been determined to be up to 1000 years old. Some of the trees in Bayou Bartholomew had already grown for hundreds of years before the arrival of Columbus to North America! One feels a distant kinship to Native Americans and French fur trappers when he paddles a canoe past one of these giants.

Journeying down Bayou Bartholomew in a canoe is an adventure not many people can claim having taken part in. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to view the many out-of-the-way stretches far from bridges and human settlements. Although in reality never far from civilization, many places on the bayou feel as remote as any jungle in South America. I now know more than ever that Bayou Bartholomew is a resource worth saving and restoring, and I look forward to continuing my journey downstream to Louisiana.

Jason W. Phillips

## **Technical Support Group Seeks New Funds**

The Technical Support Group of the BBA, made up of approximately 40 individuals from state and federal agencies, met twice during July and August. Discussions centered on goals necessary to provide solutions to problems associated with the Bayou Bartholomew. Cost estimates to implement the solutions were made. The Arkansas Soil and Water Commission drafted a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) proposal to send to the EPA. It appears the State of Arkansas will receive monies for nonpoint source pollution programs for watersheds which have a plan of action. Fortunately, the Technical Support Group had previously put together a "Short and Long Term Strategy" which served as a basis for this new proposal. Hopefully, the Bayou Bartholomew Watershed will receive additional federal funds as a result of the hard work. from this group.

## **More Hardwoods to be Planted - Potlatch Corporation Lends a Hand**

The Bayou Bartholomew Alliance has ordered 87,000 hardwood seedlings to be planted this fall and winter. Funds for the trees came from private donations, Winrock International Foundation, and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Stream Team Mini-grant Program. Trees will be planted along the Bayou Bartholomew and Deep Bayou in Jefferson County. These riparian buffer areas will hold soil, thus preventing erosion, improving water quality, and providing wildlife habitat.

For a second consecutive year Potlatch Corporation has joined forces with the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance to plant trees in the watershed. This year they provided an additional 15,000 hardwoods for the effort. With Potlatch's assistance we will plant over 100,000 trees this fall. It appears additional monies from various sources may be acquired to plant even more this year.



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