

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex Volunteer Descriptions

We are always looking for enthusiastic volunteers to assist us with our mission of conserving and protecting wildlife. If you see a position description that is of interest to you, please contact Diane Barth at 985-882-2021 or diane_barth@fws.gov.

Visitor Center Assistant

Position Description: Volunteers are needed to assist with staffing our visitor center. Duties include: greet visitors, provide refuge and local information, answer telephones, answer visitor questions, respond to visitor correspondences, distribute brochures, operate cash register to sell bookstore items, stock bookstore supplies and brochures and operate some audio/visual equipment. The visitor center is open from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Thursdays through Saturdays. The goal is to eventually have it open six to seven days a week. Volunteers could work as little as one, four hour shift a week to three, seven hour days a week.

Skills Desired: Volunteers should have good communication skills, an interest in and ability to learn about local history and natural resources and a desire to share knowledge with visiting public, and work with others, including children. Experience with public speaking is beneficial, but not necessary. A flexibility to handle variations in routine due to shifting priorities and visitor needs is appreciated. This position will provide a motivated person the opportunity to spread his/her appreciation of the natural world to many refuge visitors.

Compensation: Volunteers will receive training in the background of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System, the eight refuges managed under the Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex and basic hunting and fishing related information. A volunteer hat, shirt and jacket will be provided.

Volunteer Interpreter

Position Description: Volunteers are needed to assist our full-time visitor services staff with:

- Presenting curriculum-based, educational programs for students in local classrooms;
- Presenting curriculum-based, educational programs for students on Big Branch Marsh and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuges;
- Leading curriculum-based, educational programs for children (students, scouts, homeschoolers, etc) at the Bayou Lacombe Centre in Lacombe, Louisiana;
- Leading interpretative canoe tours for families on Cane Bayou.

Peak demand for school programs is usually spring (Feb-May) and fall (Sept-Dec). We currently have four classroom programs and three on-site refuge programs available. A background in education or interpretation would be extremely helpful. New volunteers will accompany a Park Ranger to programs until they feel comfortable leading the

program. Volunteers interested in assisting with classroom and on-site refuge programs should be available about 12-15 hours a week preparing and presenting programs.

The programs at the Bayou Lacombe Centre are meant to allow a scout leader, parent or teacher to educate their group, class, home school student, scout troop or pack by supplying easy to follow guidelines, games, tools and handouts. The programs are divided into five topic areas; Coastal Wetlands, Endangered Species, Wildlife Clues, Waterfowl and Exotic/Invasive Species. Each topic has three to ten learning segments and games. The hands-on activities include all needed tools, such as magnifying glasses, pictures, examples, reference manuals and guides to ensure a successful teaching experience.

The canoe trips are usually scheduled for the spring and fall when the temperatures have cooled somewhat. The free canoe program is entitled "*Paddling Through Time: People & Louisiana's Wetlands.*" This program allows individuals to experience the excitement of canoeing southeast Louisiana's scenic Cane Bayou, in Mandeville, while learning how humans have interacted with and changed the land over time. Trips will include both the natural and cultural history of the area and an introduction to canoeing techniques. Each excursion will last 2-3 hours, beginning at 9:00 am Saturday mornings. We need volunteers to not only lead this program (we'll provide the script) but also have the necessary canoe skills to ensure a safe program experience.

Skills Desired: Volunteers should have good communication skills, the ability to work with others of all ages, an interest in and ability to learn about area history and natural resources and a desire to share knowledge with visiting public. Experience with public speaking and designing environmental education activities is beneficial. Training is provided in interpretive techniques to effectively present information to visitors. A flexibility to handle variations in routine due to shifting priorities and visitor needs is appreciated. This position will provide a motivated volunteer the opportunity to spread his/her appreciation of the natural world to many refuge visitors.

Compensation: Orientation to eight National Wildlife Refuges in southeast Louisiana, training in interpretation and area history and volunteer hat, shirt and jacket.

Gardener

Position Description: Volunteers are needed to assist with our efforts to restore and maintain historic, formal camellia gardens on the Bayou Lacombe Centre property. Activities include weeding, pruning, mulching, removal of debris, etc. All activities are outside and MAY require bending over, kneeling, lifting and using basic gardening tools such as pruning shears, wheelbarrows, etc. Level of activity can be determined by volunteer. One Saturday a month, our Friends of the Louisiana Refuges group hosts a "Work/Play Day" at the Bayou Lacombe Centre. Each Work/Play Day (9:00 am to 2:00 pm) includes three hours of working in the gardens, followed by a light lunch (provided) and then a canoe tour on a nearby bayou. Call or email for dates.

Skills Desired: Volunteer should have an interest in gardening and outdoor activity. New volunteers will be paired with current volunteers until they feel comfortable performing work on their own.

Compensation: Light lunch and canoe adventure. All canoe equipment is provided along with a short introduction to basic canoe skills.

Special Event Worker

Position Description: Volunteers are needed throughout the year to assist with various tasks associated with our special events. Events include: Wild Things (October); Earth Day (April); Bayou Tech Bear Festival (Mid-April); Step Outside Day (May); Bogue Chitto Youth Fishing Event (June); and Lacombe Crab Festival (June). Duties could include: assist in staffing the visitor center gift shop or US Fish and Wildlife Service information table; leading children's craft activities; assisting with canoe tours and pontoon boat rides; distributing fishing equipment; and help in preparing food and cleaning up following the event.

Skills Desired: People person, love of kids, and desire to share your knowledge. Knowledge of southern Louisiana is beneficial but not necessary. Staff and existing volunteers will brief new volunteers on the refuge complex and how to run specific booths and/or activities

Compensation: Lunch

Resident RV Volunteers

Position Description: We are looking for couples or individuals willing to assist us with one or all of the following:

- Presenting curriculum-based, educational programs for students in local classrooms, on Big Branch Marsh and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuges and at the Bayou Lacombe Centre in Lacombe, Louisiana;
- Staffing the visitor center;
- Leading interpretative canoe tours for families on Cane Bayou;
- Refuge maintenance projects including minor plumbing, carpentry, painting, masonry and janitorial work;
- Gardening projects related to landscape and trail maintenance;
- Photographing a variety of natural resources;
- Clerical activities, such as filing and answering the phone at the front desk.

Peak demand for school programs is usually spring (Feb-May) and fall (Sept-Dec). We currently have four classroom programs and three on-site refuge programs available. A background in education or interpretation would be extremely helpful. New volunteers will accompany a Park Ranger to programs until they feel comfortable leading the program. In addition, we offer activities at our headquarters facility in Lacombe. The programs at the Bayou Lacombe Centre are meant to allow a scout leader, parent or teacher to educate their group, class, home school student, scout troop or pack by supplying easy to follow guidelines, games, tools and handouts. The programs are

divided into five topic areas; Coastal Wetlands, Endangered Species, Wildlife Clues, Waterfowl and Exotic/Invasive Species. Each topic has three to ten learning segments and games. The hands-on activities include all needed tools, such as magnifying glasses, pictures, examples, reference manuals and guides to ensure a successful teaching experience.

Visitor center duties include: greet visitors, provide refuge and local information, answer telephones, answer visitor questions, respond to visitor correspondences, distribute brochures, operate cash register to sell bookstore items, stock bookstore supplies and brochures and operate some audio/visual equipment.

Canoe trips are usually scheduled for the spring and fall when the temperatures have cooled somewhat. The free canoe program is entitled "*Paddling Through Time: People & Louisiana's Wetlands*." This program allows individuals to experience the excitement of canoeing southeast Louisiana's scenic Cane Bayou, in Mandeville, while learning how humans have interacted with and changed the land over time. Trips will include both the natural and cultural history of the area and an introduction to canoeing techniques. Each excursion will last 2-3 hours, beginning at 9:00 am Saturday mornings. We need volunteers to not only lead this program (we'll provide the script) but also have the necessary canoe skills to ensure a safe program experience.

Maintenance projects vary from electrical, plumbing, construction, woodworking and everything in between.

Gardening volunteers are needed to assist with our efforts to restore and maintain historic, formal camellia gardens on the Bayou Lacombe Centre property. Activities include weeding, pruning, mulching, removal of debris, etc. All activities are outside and MAY require bending over, kneeling, lifting and using basic gardening tools such as pruning shears, wheelbarrows, etc. Level of activity can be determined by volunteer.

Since many people request a winter/spring position, we have started a waiting list of potential volunteers. The waiting list is **not** in first come, first serve order. When we have a vacancy we will go through the waiting list and look for folks who have skills needed to complete projects we have at the time. In some cases we may need folks with a heavy maintenance background. In others we may only need people interested in working in our visitor center. The range of skills that we need from volunteers varies by season and project funding.

Compensation: The complex has five RV pads with cement patios and full hook ups (water, electric and sewer). Amenities for RV volunteers include community washer/dryer building, gas grill and picnic pavilion. Pets are allowed but must be under control at ALL times and non-intrusive to others. Use of RV pad will require a one month minimum commitment and at least three, eight hour days for couples and four, eight hour days for individuals. The schedule is flexible; weekdays, weekends and holidays may be worked. All volunteers are given an orientation to eight National Wildlife Refuges in southeast Louisiana and a volunteer hat, shirt and jacket. Please check for

availability. Fall/winter slots fill VERY quickly, while spring/summer positions are usually available.