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CRCL restores urban swamp habitat with support from EPA's CRUSH program

Over 850 volunteers have planted more than 11,000 trees across Louisiana's coast

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana is celebrating the success of its partnership with the EPA's Communities Restoring Urban Swamp Habitat (CRUSH) project, which concludes this month after volunteers planted more than 11,000 trees across Louisiana's coast. The CRUSH project will wrap up with its final volunteer planting event scheduled for March 17 and 18, during which bald cypress trees will be planted along the Atchafalaya River near Morgan City. There will be a celebration for volunteers March 18 after the last of the trees have been planted.

Through the project, whose sponsors include Apache Corp., the Environmental Protection Agency and Cheniere Energy, about 850 volunteers have restored more than 84 acres of coastal wetlands. The trees have been planted in sites including Lake Maurepas, the Central Wetlands Unit, Fort St. Philip, Pointe-aux-Chenes Wildlife Management Area, the Atchafalaya River Basin and Avery Island. The project began in the winter of 2018.

"The CRUSH project has been a monumental success for CRCL and for Louisiana," said Gardner Goodall, the Native Plants Program coordinator at CRCL. "The coastal forests of Louisiana were in decline for decades, for reasons including logging, hurricanes and a lack of nutrients and fresh water from the river. Through CRUSH, we have begun to bring those forests back, and we've educated hundreds of volunteers in the process."

The trees planted during the project include the bald cypress, the state tree of Louisiana. Trees help to anchor the soft soil of the Mississippi River Delta, and they provide shade and habitat for wildlife. Trees also help absorb wind energy, helping to protect buildings and other structures, and they knock down storm surge during hurricanes. The trees planted along the Atchafalaya River this month will also become a source for seeds for the next generation of trees to be planted.

About 2,000 square miles of coastal wetlands have turned into open water in less than a century in Louisiana. CRCL, the first statewide nonprofit dedicated to confronting coastal land loss in Louisiana, incorporated in 1988 to draw attention to coastal land loss and to help shape science-based policy. Since then, the organization has developed a program to recycle oyster shell that otherwise get sent to a landfill; started the Native Plants Program, through which millions of plants and trees have been planted across Louisiana's coast; created the State of the Coast conference, the largest such gathering of its kind in Louisiana; and trained hundreds of students through the Future Coastal Leaders program. CRCL recently began growing cypress trees from seed at its Restoration Headquarters in St. Bernard Parish.

CRCL, a member of the Restore the Mississippi River Delta campaign, holds volunteer events throughout the year. Among the opportunities are oyster reef building workdays and Native Plants Program events during which volunteers travel by boat to project sites. Volunteer groups are welcome.

To learn more about the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, visit the organization's [website](#).

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[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to unite people in action to achieve a thriving, sustainable Louisiana coast for all.