

IN A LOWER COAST COMMUNITY, RESIDENTS TRY TO MAKE A PARK New Orleans, La.

If you think the French Quarter is wild, try venturing a little south of New Orleans to where Orleans Parish meet Plaquemines Parish.

That's where the real wildlife is: thirty-four species of mammals, seventy-seven species of reptiles and amphibians and more than 149 species of birds call the area home, and more than thirty-four types of vegetation can be found there. It's the perfect place to become one with nature.

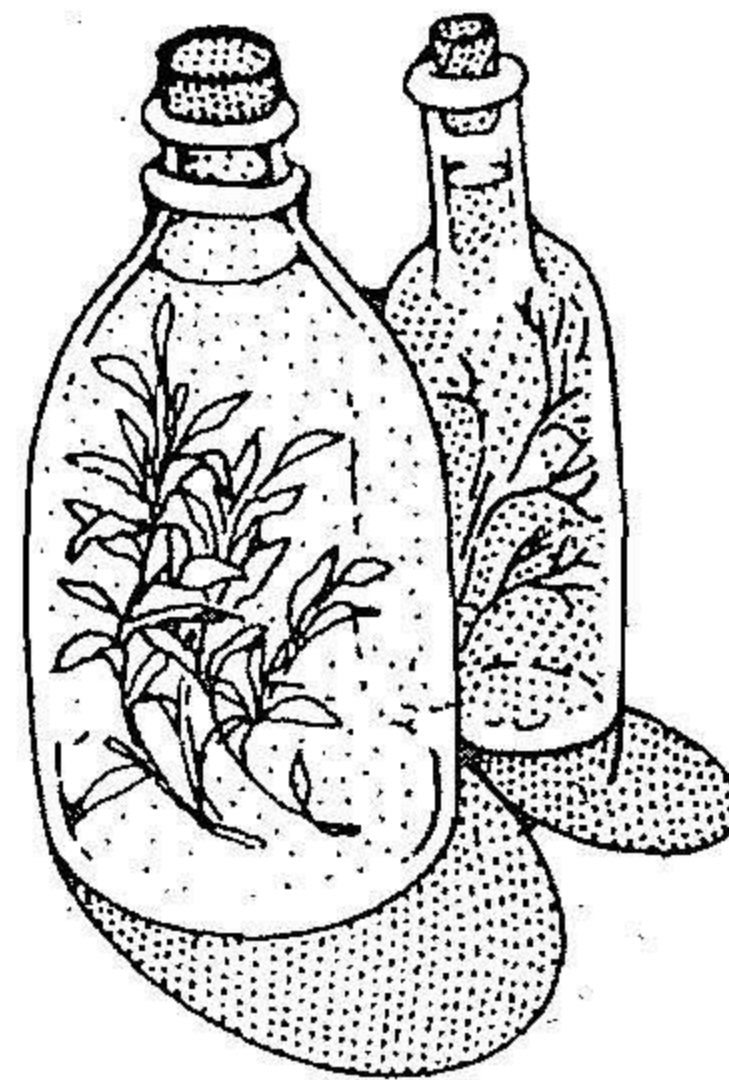
Katie Brasted and others are working to preserve more than two hundred acres of wooded land in that area, on a peninsula across the Mississippi River from the city.

The project is called the Woodlands Trail and Park. Essentially it would take land owned by Plaquemines Parish and convert it into trails for horseback riding, biking, hiking and birdwatching. The work needed is mainly building bridges for crossing the canals on the property. The land has a historical component as well: World War II bunkers are buried beneath the underbrush.

Brasted has made a mission of the

Woodlands Trail, working on it with increasing intensity since 1997. As a child she played in the woods often, and she wants the same for the children of the lower-coast Algiers community.

The ambitious plan came out of a conversation Brasted had with the vice president of the parish about the parish's proposed bike path. "He said, 'have you seen the region and planning commission's master plan?' and it was



similar to what I wanted to do," says Brasted. "We decided to plan it together, to serve the most people." The plan is waiting on parish council approval and several funding sources.

To see a map of the area and read the proposed plans, visit Brasted's Web site: www.woodlandstrail.com.

Though a good hour and a half drive from Baton Rouge, the trail will be well worth the trip, with all the

wildlife and the recreational opportunities, according to Brasted.

"It is beautiful bottomland forest and it will be nice to have public access in order to teach people," she says. "If you look at maps from the 1800s, it was all cypress swamp and was considered a navigable wood by the military. Over the years, more than six hundred acres were drained to create English Turn Golf Community.

"And those wetlands are so important ... if we can preserve some of this green space, we can teach people how important it is to be environmental stewards." ❖