

PANORAMIC VIEW



STAFF FILE PHOTOS

Katie Brasted and Dave Williams ride their horses along the levee below the Algiers Locks, part of the route of the proposed Woodlands Trail.

Park, trail proposed in Algiers, Plaquemines

One-woman campaign goes to parish council

By Johanna Schindler
West Bank bureau

Katie Brasted wants to share her view with everyone.

On her daily horseback rides, the Lower Coast Algiers woman often sees one of the area's three bald eagles, ruins from the Stanton Plantation sugar mill and Fort St. Leon, and the wildlife that flourishes in the last of the region's bottomland hardwoods.

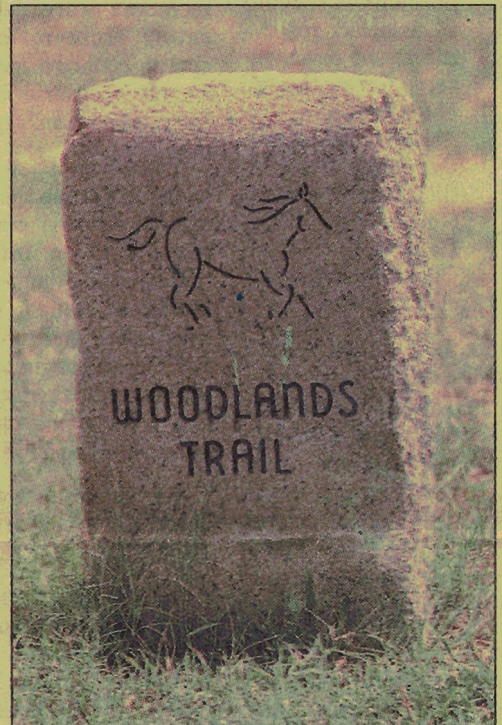
For the past three years, Brasted has waged a one-woman campaign to preserve green space and create public access to the area bordering the Orleans-Plaquemines line and

the Mississippi River.

On Thursday, Brasted presented a proposal to the Plaquemines Parish Council for a 176-acre park surrounded by a 19-mile path for hikers, joggers and cyclists that would parallel an equestrian trail marked by the cobblestones that once stood alongside New Orleans streets.

While researching the project, she has contacted and received words of support from such public officials as New Orleans Councilmen Troy Carter and Eddie Sapir; State Reps. Jackie Clarkson and Ernest Wooten; State Sens. Francis Heitmeier and Ken Hollis; and U.S. Sens. John Breaux and Mary Landrieu.

Algiers Assessor Tom Arnold, who has supported Brasted's vision from the beginning, attended Thursday's



Brasted hopes to see engraved markers like this along the proposed Woodlands Trail.

CONTINUED

176 acres, 19-mile path in plan

PARK, from Page 1

meeting in Point a la Hache. "This is a great opportunity for the two parishes to work together," he said, "a great project which will tie our parishes together more and more."

Plaquemines Parish President Benny Rousselle suggested the council draft a resolution to show general support for Brasted's project.

Plaquemines Councilman Steve Vaughn offered Brasted words of encouragement. "It's a great project," he said. "I look forward to working with you."

But Councilman Samuel C.

Pizzolato of Venice was lukewarm. "What impresses me in those pictures is the tranquility of the area," he said, referring to the photographs in Brasted's presentation. "Why bring people in?"

"People are coming," Brasted said. "At least six new houses have been built on my street in the past year. With this, we might prevent someone from coming in and clearing 90 acres and putting in 700 homes."

The Regional Planning Commission has set aside \$35,000 for a feasibility study on a woodlands trail to be conducted by Burk-Kleinpeter Inc.

Brasted has identified possible financing sources, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Trust for Public Land and the Transportation Equity Act. The trail could also be linked, she said, to the Missis-

sippi River Trail, which now extends 1,200 miles through seven states and will eventually run south from the river's headwaters.

The trail would cost an estimated \$180,000 per mile for a total of about \$4 million, Brasted said.

A trail would provide increased safety for runners and cyclists who now run alongside traffic on River Road in Lower Coast Algiers and neighboring Plaquemines, Brasted said. The path would take the exercise enthusiasts along the Donner Canal levee, the border for the two parishes, and along the river levee, where they could see wildlife as well as the Algiers Locks and the bustling shipping industry, she said.

A woodlands trail could also increase property values, she said. A 1985 survey of Realtors

showed that residential property near nature trails garners higher selling prices, she said. A National Association of Home Builders survey conducted a year ago showed that nature trails were a top priority in determining where people want to live, she said.

Brasted also envisions an equestrian center with a covered arena equipped to provide therapeutic riding for physically and mentally challenged people, including residents of the nearby Metropolitan Developmental Center.

The park could provide an area for camping for Scouts and other outdoors enthusiasts, Brasted said.

"Riding horses, I've just fallen in love with this area," Brasted said. "There are so many things to see that you can't see from your car."