

## HIKE OF THE MONTH

*Jack Curry Jr.*

# Picturesque stretch of levee has some drawbacks

On the west bank of the Mississippi River, just a few miles south of the bustling Central Business District, a winding, 4½-mile stretch of river levee offers hikers views of a largely rural and quiet Orleans Parish.

From the vantage point at the top of the levee, 14 feet above the surrounding river and flood plain, hikers can look one way and see knurled old oaks strewn with Spanish moss dotting large homesteads, where cattle and horses graze. Looking to the river, hikers will see a busy waterway crowded with oceangoing freighters, with some

tankers at anchor and others under way.

Raccoon, fox and river otter tracks can be seen in soft mud near the river. Above are eagles. Across the river, long stretches of the east bank are forested between Meraux, Docville and Violet.

There are places where the commerce of the city intrudes. River Road is busy, with dump trucks hauling dirt from the battery to the nearby English Turn subdivision. Gas flares from surrounding refineries that dot the horizon. Drainage ditches line River Road on both sides, mak-

ing it difficult to find a place to park.

A grass-roots effort to build a 19-mile nature trail, encircling much of the lower Algiers coast in Plaquemines and Orleans parish using the levees there, was begun last year. A feasibility study for the trail, tentatively called "Woodlands Trail," is under way, said Katie Brasted, vice president of the English Turn Civic Improvement Association.

The proposed trail is included in the Plaquemines Parish Bicycle Pathway Plan, but interest in the trail has come from beyond the metro area.

"Within two hours of putting up the Web site, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offered to help," Brasted said.

The trail's Web site is at [www.woodlandstrail.com](http://www.woodlandstrail.com).

### **If you go:**

Cross the Crescent City Connection to the West Bank. Exit the West Bank Expressway at the bottom of the bridge, taking General De Gaulle Drive east. Cross the Intracoastal Waterway bridge and turn east (right) at River Road (La. 406). After two miles, the road turns south and parallels the river levee for 4½ miles.