

Woodlands Trail and Park film reveals a growing problem of invasive plant species



Woodlands Trail and Park Executive Director Katie Brasted addressed the crowd before "Struggle to Survive" began.

Photo by Michelle Provencher

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The growing problem of dwindling wetlands in the region was highlighted in the Woodlands Trail and Park documentary, "Struggle to Survive," which premiered Nov. 18.

The large group of attendees included Plaquemines Parish Councilwoman Lynda Banta, District 8, and Louisiana Senator David Heitmeier, said Katie Brasted, executive director of Woodlands Trail and Park.

"We're hoping the film just really educates people," Brasted said. "Yeah, it's a

park, but it serves a lot of functions."

The 30-minute documentary addresses the problem of invasive plant species overgrowing in the area and causing ecological damage. The film also sheds light on the restoration efforts being made to remove the harmful foreign vegetation.

As many as 20 million birds can cross the Gulf in one day during the height of spring migration, and this forest is where they get nourishment, said Brasted.

"It's like their gas station," she continued. "Think about if we removed that. They

couldn't refuel."

The Woodlands Trail and Park organization is dedicated to preserving and developing the coastal forests, park and trails at their Belle Chasse location.

"We have already raised over half one-million dollars to get this project moving," Brasted said. "And that's with no millage, no appropriations of money."

The peninsula formed by Plaquemines and Orleans parishes is one of the "last stands" of bottomland hardwoods in Southeastern Louisiana, according to the Woodlands Trail and Park news release.

The Lower Mississippi River Alluvial Plain region is home to America's most dramatic wetland losses of the last century, said the release.

Part of the funding for the feature came from a grant made by Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Entergy, ConocoPhillips and the Plaquemines Parish Government, the news release said.

"Struggle to Survive" will be aired on WYES Jan. 10 at 9:30 p.m., Jan. 14 at 10:30 p.m. and Jan 18 at 11:30 p.m.