

Volunteer Marsh Grass Planting
Saturday, May 19, 2018
Onion Lake Mud Flat

Overview

On average, we lose a football field of marsh every hour! So volunteers will make a difference by planting marsh grass to create about 6 acres or 4.5 football fields of vegetated marsh.

Objective:

Plant 20,000 plugs of Smooth Cordgrass which will grow to create approximately 6 acres of vegetated wetland in the shape of a wheel.

Plan:

The grass plugs will be planted one foot apart in the shape of a wheel. Volunteers will gather clumps of smooth cordgrass from a nursery area located about one mile away. The clumps will be separated into plugs with 3 to 4 stems per plug. At the planting site, the plugs will be pushed into the mud to anchor them firmly in place. By the summer of 2019, the plugs will spread and create a dense stand of grass.

Logistics:

Need 20 shallow water boat crews with 3 or 4 people per crew. (16-18 foot flats with outboard or surface drive motors are preferred). Workers will have to crawl in the water/mud to harvest and plant grass.

Timing:

Since volunteers will be coming from far and wide, there will be 3 “waves” of boats going out during the morning. Each wave will pull for about 45 minutes, then travel to the planting site 15 minutes away and plant for 45 minutes. Crews can choose to repeat the process as many times as they wish.

- 8:30 AM – First Wave leaves the boat ramp to go pull plants.
- 9:30 AM – Second Wave leaves the boat ramp to go pull plants. First Wave will start planting.
- 10:30 AM – Third Wave leaves boat dock to go pull plants. Second Wave will start planting. First Wave will pull more plants.
- 12:30 PM – Food and drinks ready back at the boat ramp.
- 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM - Finish planting if necessary.

Boat Gear:

- Be sure to have PFD for everyone in the boat. Wear it while underway. Take it off while pulling or planting in shallow water.
- Other usual gear – boat registration, paddles, anchor, ice chest with water,

Personal Gear:

- We strongly recommend wearing old tennis shoes (high tops are best) while crawling in the mud. There may be clam shells or sticks with barnacles in the mud. Note: Aquasocks, sandals, crocs and other fashionable footwear will immediately get stuck and lost in the mud. Bare feet will likely get scratched and the crabs may eat your toes. DO NOT wear waders, hip boots or knee boots!
- Tight fitting gloves are good for protecting your hands while pulling or planting.
- Old (throw away) shirts and shorts/swim suits are suitable for working in the mud.
- Do wear a hat and have sunscreen on face and neck.
- Bring a change of clothes. There will be a place to hose off at the boat ramp.

Location and Lunch:

Crews will muster at the Intracoastal City Public Boat Launch (25191 La Hwy 333, Abbeville, LA 70510) See map below. (Lat. 29°47'7.63"N Long. -92°9'13.51"W) on Saturday morning at 8:30 AM. You will check-in at the boat ramp and be given directions and instructions. The planting site is 2.3 miles from the boat ramp. Lunch will be provided after the planting is completed.

Pulling Grass:

The nursery site was planted over the past 8 years by groups of students. The clumps of grass are 10 to 30 feet in diameter, growing in 6 to 12 inches of water. Harvesting requires reaching into the mud to dislodge clumps of grass. **Do not** pull the stems as you would when weeding the garden. This will break the stems and reduce survivability. Rinse the mud off the root ball and arrange neatly in the provided canoe. This will make it easier to remove when planting. Once the canoe is full of grass, it will be towed to the planting site. With 3 people pulling and one person placing the clumps in the canoe, the canoe can be filled in about 30 to 40 minutes.

Planting:

The wheel will be outlined with bamboo stakes. One person should hold the canoe and move along as the other three crew members plant. Planters should grab an armful of grass and plant between the stakes. A clump of 10 to 20 stems should be broken apart into plugs of 3 or 4 stems. The plug should then be pushed into the mud to securely anchor it from floating away. The next plug should be planted about 1 foot apart along the line. The person pulling the canoe can pass more grass to the planters as they progress along the line. In this way, a four person crew should be able to plant a canoe full of grass in about 30 to 40 minutes.

Helpful Hints:

When pulling or planting marsh grass in shallow water, it is best NOT to stand up. Besides losing your shoes, you will create a large hole while trying to get unstuck. You can easily crawl/slide on your belly to move. Kneeling in the mud provides enough surface area to pull grass without sinking too much. Sliding sideways or sitting on your butt is the easiest way to plant and move easily as you plant.

Map:

Intracoastal City Public Boat Ramp is about 16 miles south of Abbeville, LA. Follow LA Hwy 82 heading south from Abbeville. Where that highway turns west toward Pecan Island, continue straight on LA Hwy 333 to Intracoastal City.

