

FEDERAL FY 2025



Atchafalaya

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Annual Report

PREPARED BY:
CAROLINE CASSAGNE



**CAROLINE
CASSAGNE**



**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

If the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area had a theme this year, it would be “Seasons of Change.” We celebrated meaningful new additions, welcoming Lafourche Parish into the Heritage Area and our first Heritage Area baby. We also bid farewell to our executive director and programs director, though it felt more like a warm “see you around” than a goodbye. This period of transition was made smoother thanks to the thoughtful leadership of our commission and the steadfast support of the Office of Cultural Development.

Although I have served as executive director for only a few months, I am proud of what we accomplished together this year. The boundary modification to include Lafourche Parish was finalized with the passage of Act 475, which also added a parish representative to the Atchafalaya Trace Commission. I am deeply grateful to Rep. Orgeron, Parish President Chaisson, and our commissioners for their commitment and collaboration. This milestone would not have been possible without their efforts.

The coming year marks a major moment for the Heritage Area: the 20th anniversary of our national designation. Two decades of advancing French language education, supporting outdoor recreation, promoting our natural and cultural assets, celebrating festivals and food, delivering interpretive programming, and so much more. We have plenty of exciting new “swamp things” ahead, and I look forward to building on our work in community revitalization, cultural celebration, natural resource conservation, and recreational enhancement.

Here’s to 2026 and to the next 20 years of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area.

OVERVIEW

HISTORY OF THE ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The National Heritage Area program is part of the National Park Service. Designated by Congress, National Heritage Areas tell nationally significant stories through natural, cultural, and historic resources. Designated in 2006, the mission of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area is to enhance the identity of our unique American landscape by preserving and promoting our heritage and by fostering progress for local champions that create authentic, powerful connections between people, culture, and the environment. To find out more about what is happening in the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, check out www.atchafalaya.org.

OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area is to enhance the identity of our unique American landscape by preserving and promoting our heritage and by fostering progress for local champions that create authentic, powerful connections between people, culture, and the environment.

OUR VISION

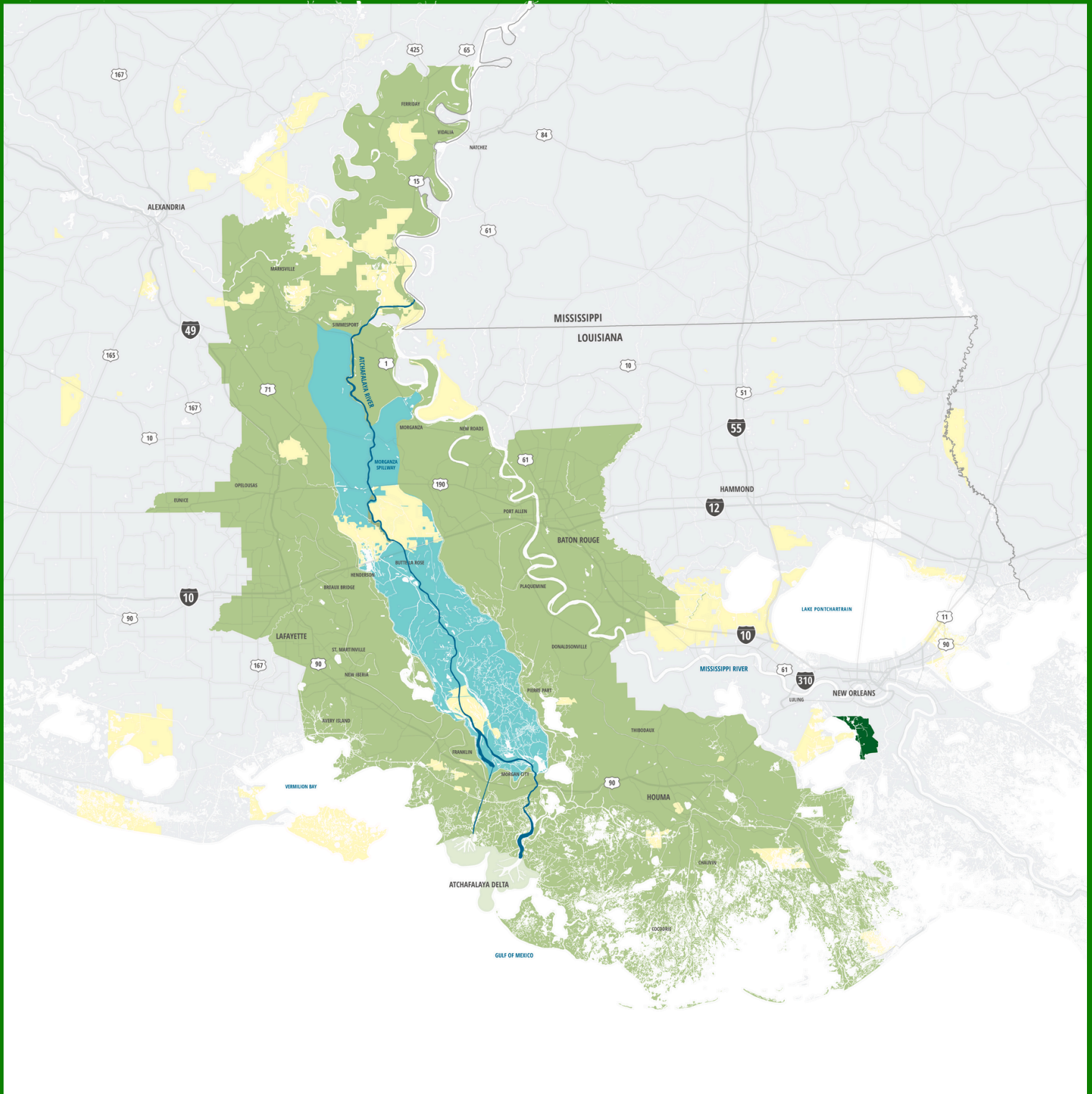
The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area is a place where Louisiana culture and wilderness collide to create an American experience like no other, drawing people worldwide for adventure, wonder, and indulgence.

HOW TO INTERPRET THIS DOCUMENT

As a federal program, the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area adheres to the federal fiscal year. Activities in this document have occurred between October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025.



MAP





LAFOURCHE PARISH JOINS THE ANHA

In December 2023, Representative Scalise and the Louisiana Congressional Delegation introduced legislation to include Lafourche Parish in the Heritage Area. H.R. 6843 passed the House Natural Resources Committee in September 2024. The accompanying Senate bill, S. 3542, championed by Senator Cassidy, passed out of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources without amendment in November 2024. President Biden signed the bill into law in late December 2024.

With signing of Public Law No: 118-177, the last item needed to add Lafourche Parish to the Heritage Area was to update the Louisiana statute to include a representative from the parish on the Atchafalaya Trace Commission. Rep. Joe Orgeron introduced HB 319 to reconcile the state statute with the new federal law.

At the culmination of the 2025 Regular Session, Gov. Jeff Landry signed the bill into law. Act 475 adds a Lafourche Parish representative to the Atchafalaya Trace Commission. Parish President Mitch Orgeron selected Dr. Quenton Fontenot to serve as the first commissioner from Lafourche. The passage of this bill represents the completion of the heritage area expansion effort.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FUNDING

FY 23	\$500,000
FY 24	\$500,000
FY 25	\$500,000

GRANTS PROGRAMS

LEGACY GRANT PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area awards Legacy Grants to long-lasting initiatives related to cultural heritage interpretation, creative placemaking, natural resource conservation, and recreation improvements. Grants are intended for cultural, natural, or recreational infrastructure improvements that will serve communities for generations.

FUNDING CATEGORIES

- **Cultural Heritage Interpretation:** Funds projects related to interpretive improvements, mapping, and heritage tourism-based activities. Eligible projects include trail signage installation and tour development.
- **Creative Placemaking Initiatives:** Funds projects related to community and creative development including murals, culture-specific events, and asset mapping. Eligible projects include cultural asset mapping projects and local heritage-themed murals.
- **Natural Resource Conservation:** Funds conservation planning, native plantings, and other environmental initiatives. Eligible projects include waterway improvements and conservation workshops.
- **Recreation Improvements:** Funds creation, update, and maintenance of paths, trails, boat ramps, and lookouts. Eligible projects include boardwalk construction and recreation signage projects.

CELEBRATION GRANT PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area awards Celebration Grants to initiatives that celebrate the culture, heritage, and natural resources of the area all year long

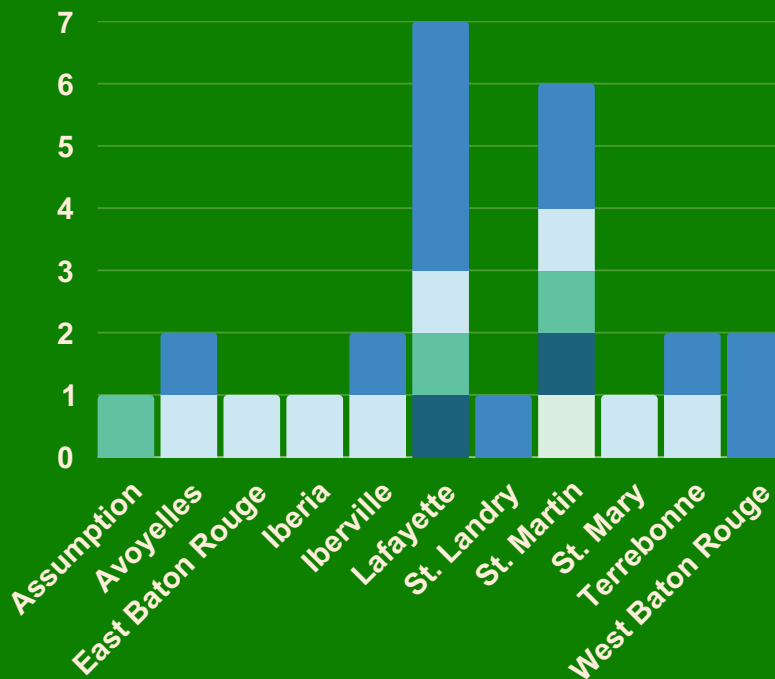
FUNDING CATEGORIES

- **Cultural Heritage Events:** Funds events within the heritage area that directly relate to culture, ecology, and recreation. Eligible projects include annual cultural festivals, wildlife presentations, and heritage speaker events.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Funds marketing and promotion efforts for arts and cultural organizations. Eligible projects include printing brochures and Facebook marketing campaign funding.
- **Other Small Projects:** Funds smaller projects related to cultural heritage interpretation, natural resource conservation, and recreation improvements.

NOTE ABOUT GRANT PROGRAMS

Both grant programs are reimbursable up to 50% of the total cost of the project. Each grant requires at least a 1:1 match with non-federal funds.

GRANT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



NUMBER OF PLACEMAKING MURALS FUNDED



NOTABLE GRANT PROJECTS



The Solomon Northup Liberation Statue and Plaza preserves and celebrates Marksville's historical heritage. By erecting a statue and educational plaza, Marksville Main Street and Historic District honors Northup's legacy, raises awareness among future generations about his contributions, and fosters a deeper understanding of the broader struggle for freedom and equality. The statue will be permanently installed in January 2026.

Shadows-on-the-Teche officially completed the reinterpretation of the Visitor Center. The new exhibits explore the slave trade, sugar industry, experiences of the enslaved population, Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Jim Crow period. All themes will be explored through the enslaved/Black experience and have the Weeks family history woven throughout, providing important context for visitors.



FUNDS AWARDED IN 2025

GRANTS

Baton Rouge Riverfront Signage	\$10,025
Atakapas-Ishak Trail	\$15,000
Teche Woods Nature Trail	\$17,000
Parc des Pont Breux Renovation	\$10,000
Mapping the Basin Storymap	\$7,500
Pierre Part Belle River Paddle Trail	\$14,000
Solomon Northup Statue & Plaza	\$25,000
Bayou Arts Fest Culture Collective	\$7,925
Plaquemine Lock Restoration Project	\$20,000
KRVS Live Broadcast of 50 th Festivals Acadiens	\$5,000
A/V Recording of 50 th Festivals Acadiens	\$9,300
2024 Camp Atchafalaya	\$12,500
Continuing Support for Atchafalaya Creatives	\$3,500*
Shadows-on-the-Teche Visitor Center	\$15,000
Louisiana Heritage Map	\$1,203.09*
2025 Le Grand Reveil Acadien	\$1,750*

*Denotes partial payment.

GRANTS CONTINUED

2025 Swamp Life Expo \$3,500

Eagle Expo Wings to Soar \$1,500

Rougarou Fest Folklife Village \$3,500

Open Studio Acadiana \$2,000

SPECIAL INITIATIVES & SPONSORSHIPS

Bayou des Glaises Mural \$1,000

Le Grand Pique Nique \$500

Americanafest 2024 \$960

Paques in the Parc 2024 \$500

Breaux Bridge Mural \$2,000

Sugarfest 2024 \$2,000

2025 Festival International \$5,000



Bayou des Glaises Mural - Simmesport

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

PURPOSE

The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area’s 2022 strategic plan identified the need for a technical assistance program for rural communities within the heritage area. This program operates as a “toolkit,” with ANHA staff meeting community leaders to evaluate which focus areas can best serve their community.

FOCUS AREAS

Asset Inventory

- Assessment of community’s natural, cultural, recreational, and historical resources along with a prioritized list of project needs.

Walking Audits

- Identification of projects for planning and implementation of BikePed networks along with Complete Streets policy development.

Tactical Urbanism

- Development of temporary infrastructure including streetscape designs, recreation opportunities, and other improvements with the option to make permanent.

Grant Assistance

- Discovery and development of grant funding proposals through federal, state, non-profit, and foundation opportunities.

Cultural Roundtables

- Connection of local small business owners through roundtable discussions to facilitate collaboration and stronger community networks.

ANHA Ambassadors

- Training, workshops, and networking opportunities for community champions outside of the municipal field. Development of future leaders.

PROCESS

Initial Ask

Community reaches out to ANHA for assistance with community development projects.

ANHA Survey

Community completes a needs assessment survey from the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area.

Site Visit & Meeting

ANHA staff visits the community, meets with local leaders, reviews assessment findings, and discusses community priorities.

ANHA Proposal

ANHA analyzes data from survey and site visits to develop empowerment opportunities.

Implementation

ANHA works with the community to implement priorities through technical support, research, trainings, network building, and more.

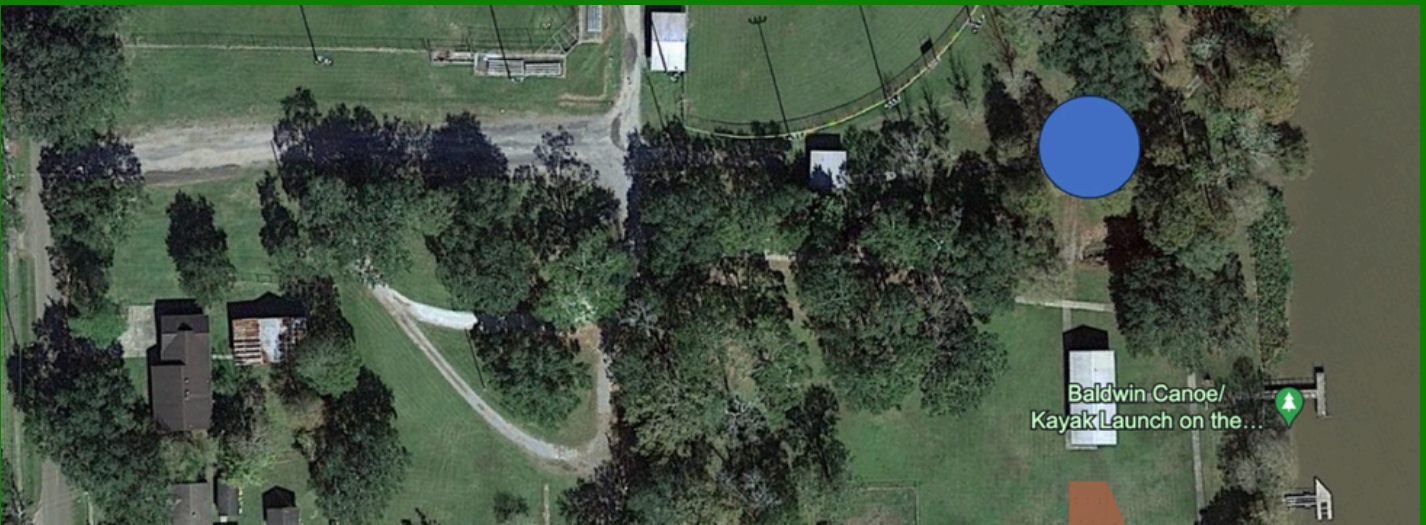
Routine Check-Ins

ANHA continues to follow-up with the community until determined implementation goals are met.

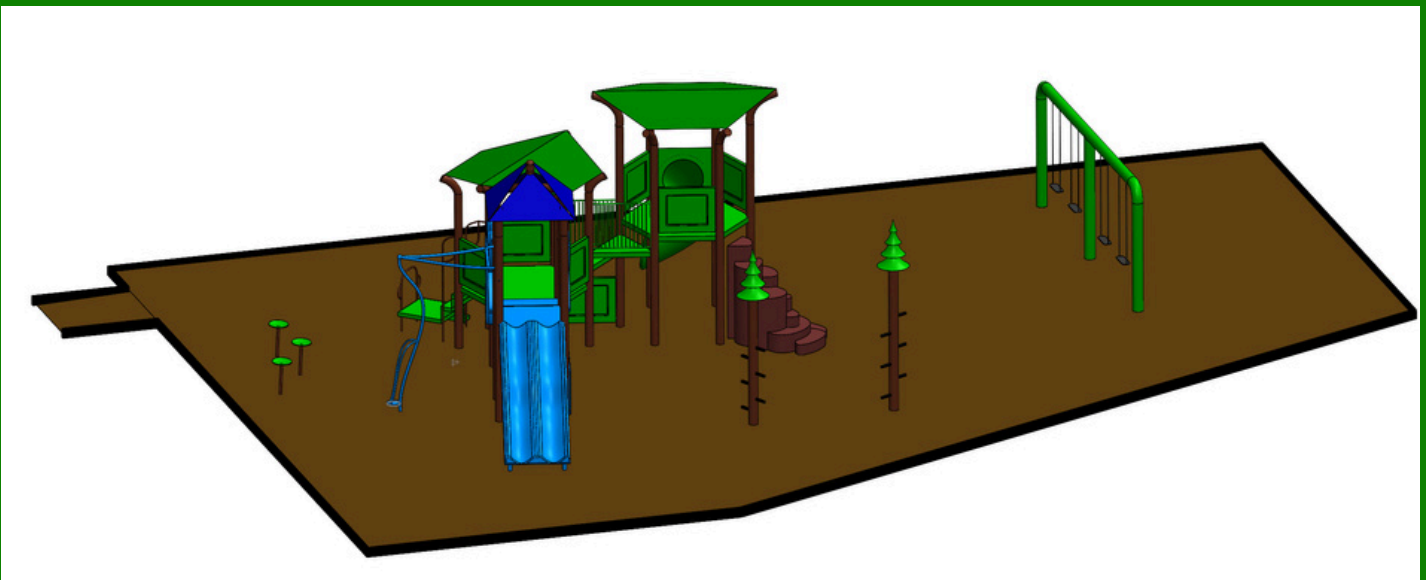
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SPOTLIGHT

BALDWIN PLAYGROUND

PARK SITE



EQUIPMENT RENDERING



The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area worked with Louisiana State University's playground program to develop a playground for Baldwin in 2024. Since then, ANHA staff have assisted in identifying funding sources to build the playground. As of 2025, the playground is 50 percent funded.



NOTABALE PROJECTS

Sunset Cultural Districts Mural

Fall 2025

Lafayette Airport Signage

2025

“Year of Foodways” Postcards

2025

IMPRESSIONS & REACH



Total Posts

503

Total Reach

249,596

Total Engagement

10,783

Total New Followers

424

Total Blog Posts

31

E-newsletter Subscribers

79

Funding Opportunities Subscribers

111




THANK
YOU 

Contact

WWW.ATCHAFALAYA.ORG

@ATCHAFALAYANHA

CBYRNE@CRT.LA.GOV