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## March Meeting

March 14, 2007

### **Basic Self Rescue and Assisted Rescue for Kayakers & Canoeists**

Dave Ramsey will give an introductory on "Six Life Threatening Hazards" for Kayakers & Canoeists. Dave's presentation will include video clips from "Kayak 101" and "Whitewater Self Defense". This is intended as a basic introduction for beginning kayakers and canoeists and NOT a "Swiftwater Rescue" course. It will also be a good refresher for experienced paddlers.

Dave Ramsey has been a member of HCC for several years. He is a Red Cross Certified Instructor of basic Canoeing and Red Cross & ACA Kayaking Fundamentals Instructor with Susan Eda's/Pat Isley's Spring Woods Canoe Group (SWCG). He has trained and taken large groups of Boy Scouts canoeing in Canada (nine Canada treks) and has kayaked "Week Of Rivers" three times.





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Houston Canoe Club  
*Water Line*



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## River Instructor and Department Manager

My name is Truc Allen and I work for Wilderness Adventure at Eagle Landing in **New Castle, VA**. I would like to provide an employment opportunity to the members of your club or someone you may recommend.

The position is for a **River Instructor and Department Manager**. The position is available for seasonal (May-August) or Full-time, year-round.

Some more details/requisites about the position:

- Loves, above all, working with kids, teaching them all about kayaking
- CONFIDENT class III paddler (though you will not be instructing on anything higher than class II+).
- Has a bomber roll
- Has paddled a good amount of creeks and rivers to be able to predict and identify hazards
- Is extremely safe and safety minded
- Has a great attitude, work ethic and loves water.
- Decent organizational skills (assist in keeping minor inventory of boats and related equipment)
- Solid judgment when it comes to how to protect the clients as well as themselves
- Has great or is capable of learning swiftwater rescue skills
- Can begin working here no later than the first week of MAY and as early as March.

You can also check out our website at HYPERLINK "<http://www.wilderness-adventure.com>"<http://www.wilderness-adventure.com>. Please feel free to contact me if you find or know of anyone who would be interested in the position and/or would like to see more of the job description.

I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your time and consideration,

Truc Nguyen-Allen  
Director of Activities  
[wilderness-adventure.com](http://wilderness-adventure.com)  
p.800.782.0779 f.540.864.6800

11176 Peaceful Valley Rd.  
New Castle, VA 24127

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**Wed Feb 14, 2007 10:58 am (PST)**

It's that time of year again. My company, Blue Sky Rafting, is looking for a few good people to spend the summer on the Upper Clackamas. We have full and part-time positions available. Training is provided for a fee. Training starts on weekends in April

If interested, please check out our website for more info:

[www.blueskyrafting.com/employment.htm](http://www.blueskyrafting.com/employment.htm)

or call or email.

Thanks.

pete giordano

blue sky rafting

503.630.3163

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## **FROM THE SAN MARCOS RIVER FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER**

By Anne Olden

Reading the SMRF newsletter shows the breadth of knowledge the organization keeps up with about river-related issues, as well as the many activities in which SMRF is involved. I encourage you to become a member and learn not only what SMRF is doing, but what other groups are doing throughout the state concerning stream flows, groundwater issues, invasive plant removal, and much more. The SMRF website is [www.sanmarcosriver.org](http://www.sanmarcosriver.org) Below are summaries of two items from the October newsletter.

In August SMRF board members met with county sheriffs in three counties adjacent to the upper river to discuss increased crime, public intoxication, drugs and drunk driving on and along the river. The counties have limited resources to deal with these problems. SMRF hired off-duty deputies to provide security at problem areas along the river at the times when many of the problems were occurring. Many citations were issued for littering, underage drinking, and drug violations. SMRF will consider hiring more security if the problems continue.

A new book about the San Marcos River has been published by Texas A&M University Press. It is sponsored by the River Systems Institute at Texas State University, with Andy Sansom as general editor. The author is Dr. Jim Kimmel, a geography professor at Texas State. His wife, Jerry Touchstone Kimmel, a professional nature photographer, did the photography for the book. The text talks about the history of the river as well as its beauty. [Sounds like an idea for a Christmas gift.]

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## **River, Lakes, Bays 'N Bayous Trash Bash**

Saturday Terry Hershey Park  
March 31, 2007 15200 Memorial Dr.  
7:00 a.m. Houston, TX 77079

### Announcement

The Bayou Preservation Association (BPA) is planning to host the Upper Buffalo Bayou Site for the 2007 Houston-Galveston Area Council's (H-GAC) annual Trash Bash. This year we are adding a new clean-up site along Buffalo Bayou between Highway 6 and Beltway 8 and the Langham Creek spur between I10 and Buffalo Bayou. The area is about seven miles long and entirely within Terry Hershey Park.

We are seeking volunteer groups and corporate sponsors to make this a meaningful event. The Trash Bash will provide gloves, trash bags, water bottles, shuttle service, restrooms, trash hauling, public service certificates, entertainment and educational programs. Experienced paddlers are welcome to bring canoes and kayaks.

### Objectives:

1. remove inorganic trash from the waterway, plastic, styrofoam, metals, tires, etc.,
2. promote public awareness of the inherent beauty of our bayous as public assets for recreation, leisure enjoyment and natural habitat,
3. promote public awareness of problems and causes of water pollution,
4. provide public education for watershed management,
5. designate Buffalo Bayou from Highway 6 to the Ship Channel as the premier paddling venue in our area,
6. provide public service opportunities for west Houston residents.

### Preliminary Schedule:

7:00 am open registration, sign in, opening announcements and instructions, assign areas and hand out supplies,  
7:15 am begin shuttle rides. Shuttle bus rotates continuously,  
7:30 am begin clean-up,  
8:00 am open display booths,  
10:30 am open food service, begin entertainment,  
11:00 am announcements,  
11:50 am closing remarks, noon resume entertainment,  
1:00 pm end of program.

Call BPA at (713) 529-6443 for more information

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## Greetings and Salutations!



from Cecilia

Welcome to the first installment of "Backwater Backwash", a random and incomprehensible collection of thoughts, observances, and experiences in no particular order, so that it makes absolutely no sense at all.

Past and future trips. Pre-children to post-children. When it was just me, I was comfortable with little gear. Now, with children in tow, a lot more gear is required, including toys, special foods and utensils to prepare and serve said foods, and up until a few months ago, diapers and all the accoutrements. My first aid kit is bigger. My ice chest is bigger. My tent is



bigger. My boat is bigger. I am bigger.

I recall day trips to the beach. Pre-children, I could go on a moment's notice, and my gear would consist of a beach towel and some sunscreen. Post-children, a day trip to the beach requires a week in advance planning, plenty of towels, First aid kit, large ice chest, toys, at least 2 changes of clothing, extra sandals, about ten trips back and forth from the car, the EZ-Up Canopy, some lawn chairs, the camera (can't miss those precious moments!), PFD's, extra gallons of water just for rinsing sand off... and out... of certain.... areas...., a big bottle of saline for washing sand out of eyes, a marine case for the camera, sunglasses, hats, extra photo cards for the camera, handi wipes, a couple of buckets for shells, extra batteries for the camera, boogie boards and a long list of other things I can't think of right now. Mostly stuff for the camera.



**Now, don't get me wrong... I absolutely LOVE doing stuff with my little guys! If I didn't, I certainly wouldn't get gear just for them or even bring them ("here, you stay with your aunt and watch the "home and garden" channel all weekend while mommy runs off and has an absolute blast without you!"). Heck, I plan trips with them in mind most of the time. I just miss not having to make 50 trips from the car and wagon and spending 4 hours just trying to set up camp.**

**But when I see my boys enjoying looking up at the stars, or making sure we do their eternal campfire ritual, or sitting in a river making little dams or creating their own eddys, or getting to see wild deer up close and personal as they drink from the river (the deer drinking from the river, not the boys...), its all worth it.**

**</>**

**SYOTR!**

**Cecilia Gill**

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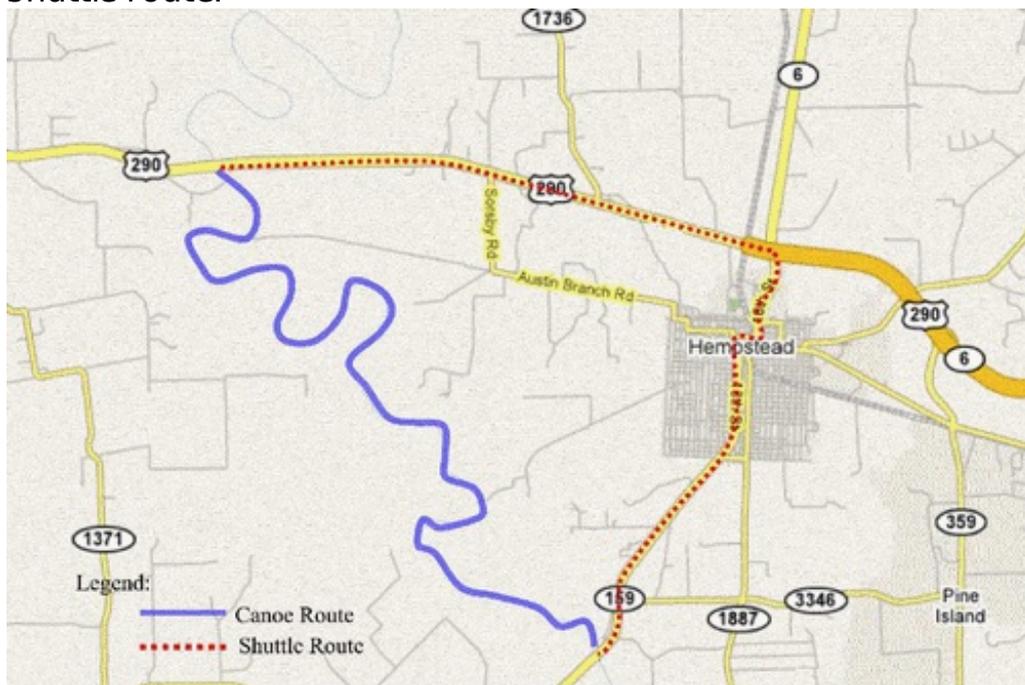


# Brazos River Day Trip

## Highway 290 to FM-159 by John Rich

On November 26th, my girlfriend and I spent a day paddling a 12-mile section of the Brazos River, from the Highway 290 bridge, south to the road FM-159 bridge. The general area of this canoe trip is near the city of Hempstead, which is on Hwy 290 northwest of Houston, where Hwy 6 branches off to go north to College Station.

A map of the section we paddled, showing the canoe route, and the vehicle shuttle route.



The take-out point was the Farm-to-Market road FM-159, which runs south out of Hempstead. We parked the pick-up vehicle there, and then headed north. We put-in at the Hwy 290 bridge crossing, at the county line between Waller and Washington Counties. Both of these bridge crossings have public parking underneath, and are frequented by fishermen.

I made the trip with my girlfriend, Kay. Her canoe experience is as a girl scout when she was young, some time on a lake, and fishing in Alaska. This was her first time in a canoe paddling just for fun and the scenery. I consider myself a novice canoeist, with my experience consisting of some flat lake paddling, two trips to Big Bend on the Rio Grande, and Oyster Creek in Sugarland.

The east bank of the river at Hwy 290 was steep and covered with large hunks of granite for erosion control. That looked like a difficult place to carry a canoe down to the river. The west bank was shallower, and was just sloping dirt. So that seems like the best place to put-in. You just drive west over the bridge (coming from Houston), U-turn at the first highway crossover, and double back to the pull-off for the under-bridge parking. From the nearest parking to unload the canoe, you have to carry the canoe downhill only about 100 feet. There was shoe-sucking mud near the waterline, so you start the trip immediately with a mess in the bottom of your canoe. Oh well.



The happy couple at the Hwy 290 put-in site, about to embark upon the river. My canoe is an Old Towne Discovery 15'8".



Looking back at the Hwy 290 bridge from the river.

The water level seemed to be somewhat low, due to the lack of rain over the last month. There was no current noticeable to help move you along, but there might have actually been about a half-mile per hour or so - it just wasn't obvious. And even worse, the wind was from the southeast at up to

about 10 mph, working against us as we paddled downstream. But with two paddlers, we made acceptable progress. And it was a drop-dead gorgeous day with comfortable temperature and cloud-speckled blue sky.

My GPS said it was 7 miles, straight-line distance, to the FM-159 take-out point. But with the meandering bends of the river, the actual paddling distance is 12 miles, according to the Texas River Almanac.

The map in Image #1 was taken from Google Maps off the internet. Be forewarned: this does not seem to be a good source for great river detail. I quickly discovered that there are many more bends in the river than are shown on that map. So you can't really determine your position precisely by counting the number of bends and relating them to the map. That led me to think that I was further along than I really was. A better map would have been nice.



.....!:

This is a typical view of the river in this section. The banks are either gently sloped and lined with trees, or else very steep 25-foot tall dirt walls with open ranch land on top. Willow trees seemed to be the most common. In many places, you can see where the dirt banks collapse into the river as the water flow in the curves reshapes the river. Also in this photo you see a log sticking up in the river - there are a lot of those. But the log obstacles are far apart, and the water flows slowly, so it's easy to miss the logs and branches sticking up. In fact, we zig-zagged around in-between them a few times just for entertainment.

One lesson I learned was when I tried to paddle between two branches sticking up out of the water, and we hit bottom on a log just under the surface, and got bounced around a bit. Thus, I learned that where there are multiple branches sticking up, it might be wise to assume that there is a common log running in-between them from which they protrude. Doh!

The river here is very undeveloped, and we saw only one ranch house. The adjacent land is all large farms and ranches, so there are few signs of human habitation to spoil the scenery. There were several spots where landowners had built a small patio to overlook the river with their lawn chairs, or while

fishing. We spied one motorboat tied up to the shore. And a few of the riverbanks had signs of wheel ruts from all-terrain vehicles. Otherwise, it felt like uninhabited wilderness.

There were only about a half-dozen places on this stretch where the river was constricted by sandbars such that the water flow was channeled through a small area and increased to a nice flow rate, creating a small tongue of "rapids". They weren't much, maybe only a Class one-third, but provided mild entertainment to break the boredom.

The river bottom would often be very shallow on one side, but moving to the other side always found deeper water. We rarely scraped bottom, and then only when we were too close to protruding spits of sand.

Next up, some history! I think knowing the history of the area makes a canoe trip so much more interesting. For example, in the early days of Texas, steamboats actually came upstream on the Brazos during high water to pick up cotton bales from the plantations. They would go as far north as Washington on the Brazos (Navasota area). Several were sunk in the river, and many got stuck in low water for long periods of time.

Only about one mile downstream from Hwy 290, you get to see a couple of interesting man-made structures. This is the first of them



It's a very large wood structure protruding diagonally out from the riverbank. It reminds me of a "fender" that you see built around bridge pilings to guide boats through a bridge crossing so that they don't hit the support pilings. But I have no idea if that's what this really was. Is it related to those steamboats that I mentioned? One good theory is that this was a structure built by the landowner to deflect the water current like a shield, to prevent erosion of the riverbank from taking away his land.

It may also be related to this next man-made item, found just a short distance further downstream



. This, I think, is the remains of an old railroad bridge, which crossed the Brazos River here. There was a rail line built starting in 1857 called the "Austin Branch", to move goods from the port of Galveston up to Austin. It was a spur line off of another route that ran west out of Galveston. This spur was started around Hempstead, and with a short interlude for the Civil War, was completed to Austin in 1872. There was also a POW camp for captured Union soldiers just a few miles east of this point along that rail line. The rail has since been pulled up and removed, and there are few remaining signs of that track bed.



**close-up of the bridge piling, which is about 40-feet high.**

So, I think this large piling is a support for that old railroad bridge, and is about 150 years old, in remarkably good shape. Look along the water line in Image #6, to the right of the piling, and you'll see iron girders still spread out across the river, where the bridge has collapsed down onto the riverbed.

Or am I wrong about all this? Does that look too new to be Civil War era? Could this be the site of an old road bridge, before Hwy 290 was built?

I have a feeler out to several people in the Waller County Historical Society, asking what the wood structure is, and the date of the old iron bridge. I'll post a follow-up if I get any more info on the history of those items.

At any rate, that collapsed bridge structure creates the one big obstacle to boat traffic on this stretch of river. We encountered a pair of fishermen in a small motorboat here, but they couldn't get past the bridge obstacle. A canoe, however, is small enough to get beyond it. We pulled over in front of the bridge at the sandbar riverbank to examine the situation. There are three possibilities for passage: the left side, straight ahead, or portage.



**This shows** the "left side" option. The water bends around the left side of the bridge piling, but as you can see, it is fraught with ugly-looking logs. Is this what you guys call a "strainer"? There were gaps just barely wide enough for a canoe to squeeze through, but you would have to run a tight obstacle course, in fast-flowing water, with some quick turns. My adventuress side was tempted to try it, but my wiser half prevailed, and I ruled it out.



**This shows** the "straight-ahead" option. The old iron girder lies at the water line, sticking up a few inches above the water, and has accumulated a lot of logjam material up against it. We got out into the ankle-deep water at the shoreline, lifted the bow of the canoe up onto the girder, pushed the boat over to the other side, and then climbed back in the boat. We did this at the point where the girder is free of debris, right in front of the concrete chunks. This was relatively trouble free and easy - it just requires wet feet. But watch out for the uneven rocky footing underwater. At higher water levels, I suppose you could glide right over top of this.

A portage would also be possible, but you would have to contend with large

rocks and uneven ground. And with the ease of pushing the boat over the girder, a portage was only my second choice.

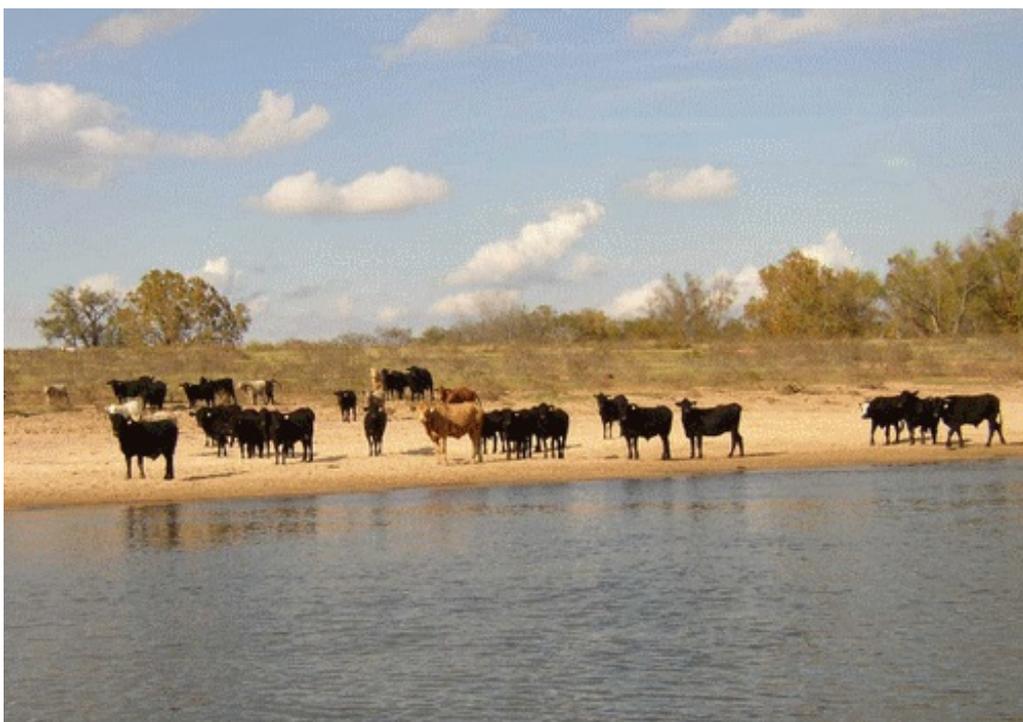
Beyond this point, there are no other obstacles except sand bars, logs, and a few rare protruding rocks, all easily avoidable.

And on the bright side, this obstacle ensures that below this point you won't have any pesky noisy motorboats spoiling your quiet canoe trip.

What about wildlife?

Well, we saw a lot of birds, most of which were ducks. They included great blue herons, egrets, kingfishers, grebes, widgeons and a blue-winged teal. There weren't large numbers of them, and most were in small groups, with only a few larger flocks. My duck identifications come from Kay, who has spent a lot of time duck hunting. There were other types out there spotted, but which she couldn't identify for sure. The kingfishers are one of my favorites, and there almost always seemed to be one buzzing around no matter where we went. The grebes swim with their body completely submerged, and only their head and neck protruding above water. Then they'll dive under to chase a minnow, and re-appear somewhere else a minute later. The teal was beautiful with the baby blue color under his wings when he took flight. Oh, and also those little pointy-winged birds that dart around over the surface of the water. And something that looked like a sandpiper like you see on ocean beaches.

Mammals? There were tracks of deer, pig, coyote and raccoon in the sand banks, but none were spotted in daylight. **Image #10** shows the only mammals spotted on the trip: cows. There were grazing herds from the adjacent ranches that loitered near the water. I get the impression that they don't see a lot of people in canoes. This particular herd was curious enough to follow along on the riverbank for a while, parallel with us. They quit only when it became apparent that we weren't going to feed them anything.



The FM-159 road bridge take-out point. You can see that the daylight is

fading. Yeah, we were pushing sunset, and barely got out of the water before dark. We didn't start until about noon, due to sleeping late, eating breakfast, a flat tire, etc. So we did about five and a half hours of paddling to cover those 12 miles, with a half-hour break for lunch, and several other very short breaks ashore. So those of you thinking of doing this trip during short daylight hours like we have in this season, plan accordingly. I wouldn't want to be out there in the dark. And the moon was just a tiny sliver, and didn't provide any decent light for tying the canoe down on top of the truck. It wouldn't hurt me to pack a flashlight, even though I don't plan on needing it.

The parking area for the FM-159 bridge is on the east side, or to the left in this photo. There is a wide dirt path going right down to the water, but it's steep. I wouldn't try driving down there unless you have four-wheel drive, and really not even then. But it provides a clear path for portage, and it's only about 100' up to the top where the parking area is.



You can see a sandbar in front of the bridge. You can either swing wide to the right and come back left up under the bridge, or you can take a narrow channel around the left side of the sandbar. Either way I think will get you there. We took the left.

An extended family of Mexicans, about 10 people in all, with kids of all ages, all from a single pickup truck, was checking out the location for a fishing spot. They graciously helped us carry our boat to the top of the hill. They asked repeatedly if we "caught anything", and couldn't seem to comprehend that we were canoeing just for fun, without fishing.

The bridge area emanated the stench of fishing debris: rotten fish heads, garbage, and even excrement. So watch where you put your feet. You could smell it coming from 100 yards away on the river. Welcome back to civilization.

That's all I have to offer from this trip. I hope you enjoyed the story, and if you picked up some good pointers for trying it yourself, it's all good. Thank you for listening.

- John Rich

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## Trip Report: Cedar Bayou

by Natalie Wiest

I put a last minute notice out on the HCC List about an exploratory trip on Cedar Bayou; Will, Travis, and Emily Blumentritt, and Marilyn Kircus took me up on the challenge and we duly met on the banks of the bayou on Sunday morning, September 17th. Marilyn and I dropped her car at Thompson's Bait Camp on the bay; and met the Blumentritts at Holloway Park about 10 miles upstream on Cary Bayou, a tributary of Cedar Bayou. The forecast for the day was building rainshowers, and it was overcast but comfortable as we shoved off.

The tributary bayou was more than adequate to float our boats to the much wider Cedar Bayou. My understanding is that it is paddleable for several miles upstream as well, but I haven't located other public access points less than the 10 mile or so marker where the right of way to the feeder road of I10 has some potential; but lots of saplings and trees in the water that would make maneuvering a bit of a challenge. Some day I will check it out, but not this one.

We quickly noticed how commercially navigable the bayou was; within a mile or so we came to a barge and pushboat at what Will told us was the Bayer Chemical plant. I characterize this bayou as the one with the most metal in and on it – beside the very seaworthy barge and pushboat here, there were derelict boats rusting in the water, active gravel mining,



Gravel mining apparatus

major steam power plant, steel beam storage, and a most interesting railroad liftbridge just downstream of Roseland Park. Power boat traffic was very limited, no doubt thanks to the forecast, because we know Roseland Park is a popular place for water skiers and jet skis.



Electric generating plant



Going, going, going – sinking shrimp boats in the bayou

Will wisely decided he would limit his family's canoe trip to the 5 miles to Roseland Park; Marilyn and I pushed on for the bay in our sea kayaks. One short rain shower came over us upstream of Roseland; but Marilyn and I didn't make it much past the railroad bridge when the bottom fell out of the clouds. This shower too was of short duration, but we noted the dark clouds forming on the horizon and decided we'd go for the shortest path to the cars, not the meandering path through the lower wetlands and swamps I'd hoped for earlier.

We took a shorter man-made cut to the bay. I noticed from a quarter mile back that the bay waters were rough, and the wind was in our faces. The storm was building – we had decided to not wear sprayskirts, and quickly came to rue that decision. A squall line of heavy downpour and high winds caught us several hundred yards out into the bay.



### Stormy weather ahead – those dark storm clouds delivered

I slowed my pace into the wind, knowing that one big wave over the cockpit was going to fill the boat with water. I was paddling my little EPI Sea kayak, so low to the water I had good reason for my concern. Marilyn was paddling the Eddyline Falcon 16 that I'm usually in – and hung over me with her camera every time I got in and out of the little boat, sure I'd turn it over. Thankfully she never got the opportunity for the shot she really wanted, me falling in the water. However, even in the much larger (by comparison of these 2) Falcon, she too was very worried in the wind and waves. Ellington Field reported gusts to 35 mph – I wouldn't be surprised that they reached that level where we were in the bay, with a long and unprotected reach of open water. Despite the odds against two blondes at sea in a rainstorm and high winds, we made it just fine to the bait camp, only to discover Marilyn had left her keys in my car at the putin! Oh well, all's well that ends well, and this was a swell trip. We'll be doing it again, and next time, explore more of the marshes. The five mile trip at the top is a very pleasant one and would be a good place for club trips – although perhaps not advised on warm days when the skiing and motor boat crowd is running about at high speed.

Natalie Wiest

HCC Paddler

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## **Oyster Creek Trip Sharing a little canoeing story** by John Rich

Sunday, October 15th, I dipped my new (used) canoe (Old Towne Discovery 15'8") into Oyster Creek, in Sugarland, Texas, to take it out for a trial run and determine if it is seaworthy. I'm a novice canoeist, so I needed this easy paddle to gain some experience.

The recommended put-in site was from Cullinan Park, just north of the Sugarland Airport, down a dirt road. However, due to the extensive rainstorms the day before, this road was a mud bog, and even with 4-wheel-drive, I didn't want to try it. I hiked down the dirt path to see how far it was to the creek, and it was many hundreds of yards - way too far to portage an 80-lb. canoe and gear, alone.

So, I set out to find a good alternate put-in location, and settled on the Sugarland Airport just on the other side of Oyster Creek. The north end had a large empty field bordering the creek, and airports are public property, so no problem, right? (More on this later...)



my put-in site.

Due to the rain, the water level was probably higher than normal, and the current faster than normal. But I haven't observed this creek before, so I can't say how much higher

from "normal". The forecast was for more rain, but I decided to do the paddle anyway, as I needed to test the boat, and refresh my rudimentary skills, for an upcoming Rio Grande trip. It rained plenty, but I saw no lightening. I was soaked, but it was a warm day, and I was not uncomfortable. A wide-brim hat helped. The creek varies from about 150-feet wide to 50-feet wide. The current flow was maybe 1 mph.

I paddled for three hours upstream, to the west. Due to the water flow, if you wanted to rest, you had to pull over to the side, or the current would quickly take over and make you lose ground.

The first section borders the Sugarland airport and Cullinan Park, and is a pretty tree-lined area.

An old, low, wood bridge is encountered next, with a log-jam of junk and hyacinth piled up underneath it. You can squeeze through on the south side, with some pushing.



Following that area is the Texas prison farm, with dilapidated old farm buildings, and a white water tower. I decided not to stop and rest here, so the guards in the watch tower wouldn't think I was trying to break in. If someone in black and white striped clothes comes running towards you, paddle away - fast!

There is a side creek which goes up to Pumpkin Lake, which I did not explore. Above Pumpkin Lake, I would swear that the water flow slowed down a bit. My theory is that the large lake absorbs a lot of the rain that was falling, and all that water flows out into the narrow creek, creating a Bernoulli Principle effect. But what do I know.

Next up was a high-end residential community on one side with creek-front homes. A few of the homes have fences made with iron bars so that the residents can see through from their picture windows and enjoy the water scene. But most have the standard Houston six-foot high solid cypress fence. Why pay extra for waterfront property, and then block off your view of the water? Go figure. It makes no sense to me.



The next landmark is the concrete FM1464 road bridge. Underneath are the mud nests of swallows, along with clusters of tiny little iridescent water bugs, which will jump off into your boat and flounder around in the bottom, if you get too close. On the other side of this bridge is a trailer park on the banks, and following that is the Houstonian Golf Club, and some bulldozer land preparation for residential home construction. I thought it would be fun to paddle past golfers, but they're not close to the water. This area is open on both banks and is not very scenic.

At this point I was getting tired and bored, and turned around to go back. The next landmark would have been the Grand Parkway Road 99 bridge, but I didn't get that far. On the way back, I did a lot of relaxing and drifting with the current, just dipping the paddle enough to keep me in the center of the creek. I laid down in the bottom of the boat, stretched my legs out, leaned back against the seat, and enjoyed the float.



Critters observed: Herons, small ones and big ones. Hawks. Egrets. Kingfisher! Ducks. I love watching the ducks take off and the pattern of intermittent splashes they make on the water as they struggle to get airborne in front of you. Turtles. Fish would break the surface, but not enough for me to identify what they were. Oh, and a snake.



The snake was on a collision course with me, and I was torn between getting my camera out and taking emergency evasive action. Can a snake climb up the sides of a canoe? I went for the camera, and fortunately, the snake spied me, and turned and went the other way.

Throughout the entire paddle, you are never far from the sounds of planes, trains and

automobiles.

Even being lazy, it took only two hours to return to the put-in site, with the water flow favoring me.

The boat was sound, and an old patch on the bottom did not leak. I practiced dodging logs, overhanging limbs, and giant spiders on webs strung across the creek. I reacquainted myself with the various strokes, like the sweep, the pry, the draw and the J-stroke. I could make myself go in a straight line with no problem while paddling on the right, but for some reason i had great difficulty doing that on the left. Hmmm... So I feel she and I are ready for Big Bend next week. At least until the first time I'm rushing towards a giant boulder at 20 mph in whitewater, and then all bets are off. Ack!

Lessons Learned:

1) Don't casually lay your paddle across the gunwales (sides), as it will slip off into the water faster than you can say "oh heck!" I didn't go for the spare paddle, but instead just hand-paddled back to the floating rascal. After that, I laid the paddle across my lap, and kept a forearm on top of it.

2) You can get sun-burned on an overcast day in the rain. And you can get poison ivy rash even though you never hiked in the woods.

3) I got a good taste of what the wind can do to a canoe. About 100 yards from my take-out, the wind kicked up to about 25 mph. It kept blowing me sideways into the far riverbank, and it took a lot of effort to stay in the middle of the creek. Wow. I was glad I was near my take-out, and not in the middle of a large lake, downwind from where I needed to be.

4) Oh, and remember how I promised to comment again about the airport put-in location? Well, it turns out that there is some kind of directional antenna that pilots use to find the end of the runway, and the presence of my truck parked in that area was throwing off the readings a bit, causing pilot complaints. Ack! I found this out when, as I was pulling my canoe out of the creek, an airport truck pulled up and a man told me this info. He was very nice about it, and didn't make a big deal of it, but I felt bad. I could not have imagined that simply parking your truck in a field could cause such a problem. There were no fences or warning signs to protect against this problem I felt lucky that my truck wasn't towed away to resolve the issue for pilot safety.

- John Rich



## **Hidalgo Falls Rapid, Brazos River October 22, 2006**

by Christy Long

**14 feet on Bryan gauge and 24 feet on Hempstead gauge  
Putting Hidalgo at approximately 10 feet (if I understand  
Steve's calculations).**

**The water was flowing river wide and a lot of areas to play.  
The river was very different from just the month before. The  
red sandy color had returned because of the increased flow  
and the islands had water surrounding them. In September,  
the water was more on the green side and you could walk to  
both islands on river left because instead of islands they  
were mushrooms with water on only one side.**

**Sunday, there were twelve people at the rapid playing,  
practicing and enjoying the river flow. The day was sunny and  
cool, very close to perfect. A couple of 'yakers were playing  
on the Rodeo Wave making it look easy. The Big Wave at the  
bottom was small but several were making a day of trying to  
stay on it.**

**Eight of us floated down to the 105 bridge for a quick float  
downriver, to top off the afternoon. Of course there was  
mud at the bottom of the bridge so we all got mud-therapy  
on our legs. People pay big bucks for that kind of therapy, at  
Hidalgo its free. Next time, I will make sure we have a rope  
to haul up the boats.**

**Once again, another great day on the river.**

**Christy Long**



## **Beach and Bay Access in Brazoria County**

The main access road is State Highway 332 which comes into the beach at Surfside. There is a small West Marine store in Bridge Harbor on the mainland side of the bridge if you forgot any boat equipment. An \$8 annual permit good from January to December is required to park or enter any of the beaches actually in the city of Surfside. The city extends from the jetties to a couple of miles down the road going northeast to Galveston. A left hand turn at the light just off the bridge gets you on the Bluewater Highway (County Road 227) which continues on to San Luis Pass and a bridge to Galveston. The restaurants in town along the Bluewater Highway include the Red Snapper Inn (seafood) and Kitty's Purple Cow (open for breakfast, lunch and dinner). Once you get out of the city, you get to various access roads for the county beach. The beaches are posted at a 20 mph speed limit. You do not really need to go faster than that on the beach. The county beaches are one-way (toward Galveston) during the summer. You can get back to the Bluewater Highway to return in the opposite direction. Also, I believe glass bottles are prohibited on the beach for good reason.

Drum Bay can be reached from a small ramp accessible on County Road 257F, which is in the San Luis Beach subdivision. Drum Bay is the furthest west of the bays that make up the Galveston Bay system. Both Drum Bay and Christmas Bay are shallow. You can see a previous unused canal through Drum Bay that was dredged by slaves in the 1850s. The Intercoastal Canal now runs further inland. Christmas Bay can be reached from the Bluewater Highway by turning left on County Road 257S. Christmas Bay is usually considered the most scenic and natural of the bays that make up the Galveston Bay system. Christmas Point divides Christmas Bay from Bastrop Bay. There is often good fishing at Christmas Point because the current has to flow through a narrow pass, so the fish can wait just outside the current for smaller fish to pass by.

Almost to San Luis Pass, there is a county park on the left. There was a small entrance fee, but the park has a boat ramp, restrooms, campgrounds etc. Also, there are about 3 rooms for staying in which my sister has used it in the past for sea kayak courses.

Possible sea kayak trips from San Luis County Park are Titlum Tatlum Bayou (named from something in a 19th Century poem), Cold Pass (maybe should Coal Pass since it was probably named for a sunk boat carrying coal) and San Luis Pass. It is not recommended to swim in the beach close to San Luis Pass because there are often strong currents near the pass.

Back to Surfside, some Houston Canoe Club kayakers have gathered for surfing their whitewater kayaks in the surf. The meeting place has usually been the park at the jetties because the jetties has outdoor showers to rinse off once you are finished being in the surf. Other facilities available at the park include a small store and restrooms. The kayak surfing usually occurs when someone

thinks there will be some good waves at the beach. Also, we do not usually have surfing at the jetty beach during the summers because of the crowds of swimmers. The kayaking is usually announced a day or two in advance on the Houston Canoe Club and Bayou City listservs. The beach by the jetties is not the only beach where it is possible to kayak surf, but we are used to meeting there. I will be going to Surfside quite often on Sunday mornings during January and February, because I am on the planning committee for the Surfside St. Patrick's Parade. The parade will actually be March 17 this year because that is a Saturday. The parade usually starts around 1pm at City Hall and will end near the corner of 332 and Bluewater Highway. Usually, it is best to get to City Hall a couple hours before to see the floats and the trophy presentations. I will be marching with the Confederates in the SCV in the parade. The gathering places are the bars in Surfside. My favorite is the Jetty Shack, which is on the way between the jetties and Surfside City Hall. There will also be an Irish Costume Contest at Stallman Park on Saturday night, March 10, 2007 which is a week before the parade.

Quintana and Bryan Beaches are reached by continuing through Freeport on FM 523 and FM 1495. A new fixed bridge has recently replaced the old swing bridge. Quintana County Park has the beach closest to the jetties. There is no vehicle access to the beach there and it is too far to take a boat from the parking lot. However, it is possible to drive on the beach further down. Also, no parking permits are required for Quintana and Bryan Beaches. It may be possible to drive down the beach all the way to the mouth of the Brazos. Another way to get to the mouth of the Brazos is by a way of a boat ramp off a levee road which can be reached off State 36. It is about one mile from the ramp past the Intercoastal Canal to the mouth of the Brazos. It is probably best to have a sea kayak to get to the mouth of the Brazos. There is no vehicle access between the mouth of the Brazos and the mouth of the San Bernard. I have heard that the mouth of the San Bernard has become silted up so you can no longer count on getting down it to the beach. The way to the San Bernard mouth was by a boat ramp at the end of FM 2918, but I would not use it again until someone gets the sand dredged out of the San Bernard.

The Waterline is the monthly newsletter of the Houston Canoe Club, Inc. The Waterline is made possible by your dues and critically depends on member contributions. Please submit items to the Editor at [joanne8678@yahoo.com](mailto:joanne8678@yahoo.com)



## Huntsville Weekend

by Ken Anderson

Roughly 35 people were in the piney woods of Huntsville State Park over the weekend of September 29th to October 1st for this annual HCC event. Everyone got a chance to paddle one another's boats, swap stories, and eat some rather good dutch oven cooking. Two of the cooks practiced their dutch oven skills in order to sharpen their edge at a dutch-oven cookoff scheduled for the following



week.

**Two relatively-new HCC'ers who drove up for the weekend with their boats with their grandma Christy Long**

The event was well organized by Mary Z. We had great weather with neither rain nor bugs and low humidity with mild temperature.

If you got tired from paddling on Lake Raven, or hiking the 15 miles the park offers or even biking the 11- mile trail there were the Boundary Waters cooking lessons taught by experienced outdoor cooks. Here, for example, is our very own Cecilia learning how to cook from experienced hands:

The cooks or were Mary Z and Rudy Rivers, and Chirsty Long. And we ate it all...



Almost everyone helped with the cooking...



Ron Nulley brought one of his hand made boats. He says he builds them to be paddled but some of us think they should be framed as works of art.



One reason for going to Huntsville is we can try out each other's boats on flatwater just to get a feel for what other boats are like and you get to do so on the edge of a national forest.

Already looking forward to next year!

# Annual Clear Creek Cleanup

by **Natalie Wiest**

Have a Say in Galveston Bay

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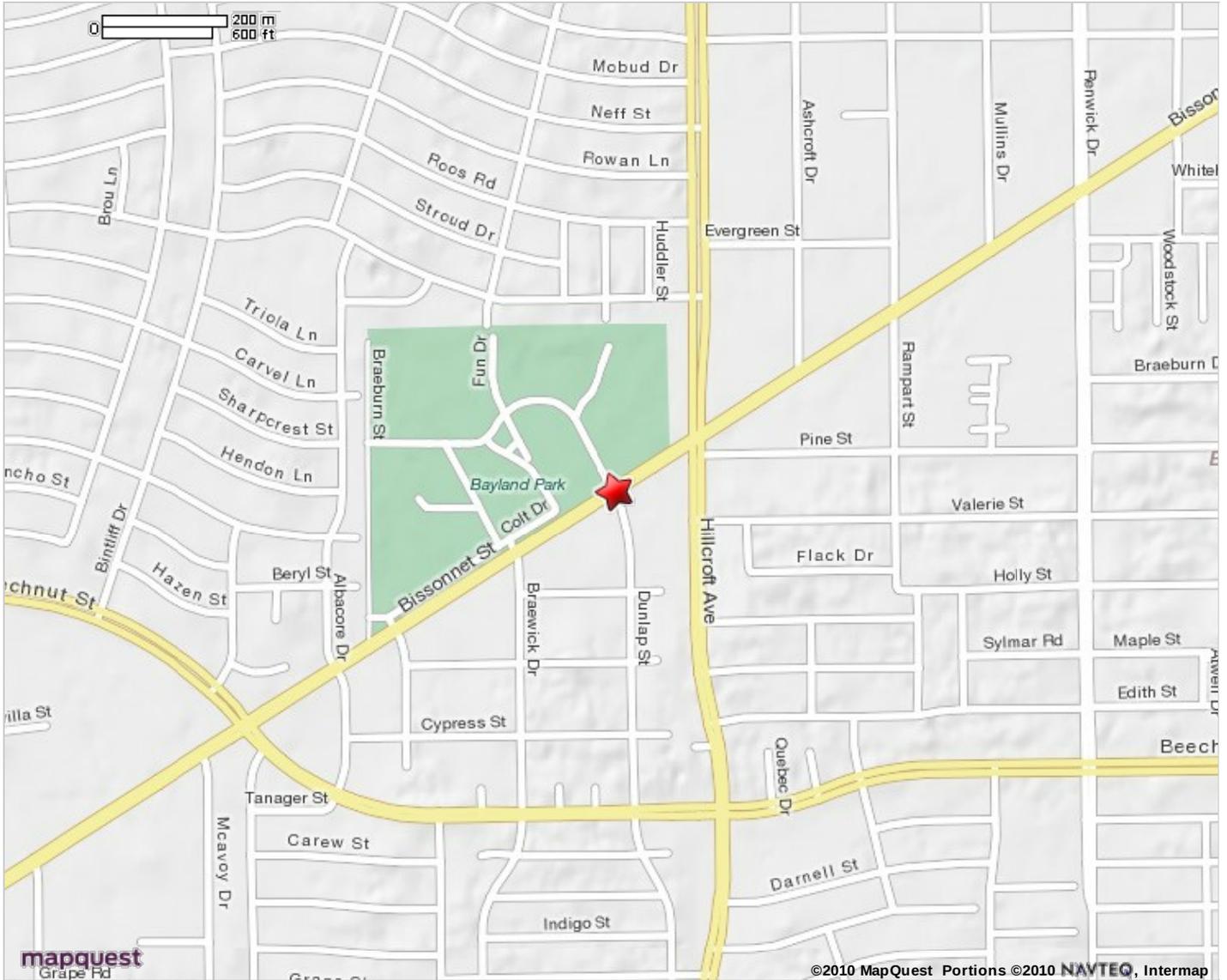


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