

The Lufkin Daily News

Canoe path on Neches River cleared in hopes of drawing more people



MELISSA HAYES/The Lufkin Daily News

Freshly sawed trees that have fallen into the Neches River can be seen along the 18.2-mile canoe path from Highway 7 to Highway 94. Crews from Angelina Tree Works have spent the past three weeks clearing limbs and branches to provide easier access for paddlers.

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By MELISSA HAYES/The Lufkin Daily News

The Texas Conservation Alliance hopes a newly cleared canoe path along the Neches River will draw more people to enjoy East Texas' natural beauty.

For the past three weeks, crews from Angelina Tree Works have been wading through the shallow, muddy waters of the river trimming fallen tree limbs from Highway 7 to Highway 94.

The 18.2-mile stretch of the river on Angelina County's western border has been cleared for easier access for paddlers.

"When the river gets low like this, now is the time to do it," conservationist and member of the Texas Conservation Alliance Richard Donovan said. "There is a tremendous amount of wildlife in and around the Neches River, and we hope people will start utilizing the river more. For me personally, I do this with the purpose of introducing people to God's world."

Wednesday morning, Donovan put in his three-seat canoe from a small ramp off the beaten path. As he slowly glided through the water, with the aid of a small Johnson motor, the sight of freshly sawed trees could be seen along the short stretch he traveled.

A cool October breeze sent a slight ripple across the surface of the murky water as the sun peeked through branches of the overhanging trees lining the steep banks. Only the sounds of a small boat motor, occasional conversation and the water splashing the sides of the canoe interrupted the silence only a meandering river and surrounding woods could offer.

Fallen trees and underlying limbs make it difficult for paddlers to pass and thoroughly enjoy the river. Donovan not only wants people to want to come out the Neches, but he also hopes the renewed sense of nature appreciation will be financially beneficial, as well.

“We hope this paddling trail will be an economic stimulus for East Texas, and especially Lufkin,” Donovan said. “But we know that won’t happen overnight.”

Other areas of the river, including the Davy Crockett route from Anderson Cross to Highway 7 has also been cleared of tree debris. This is the route used annually for the Neches River Rendezvous.

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