

2024



Atchafalaya

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Annual Report

PREPARED BY:

CAROLINE CASSAGNE



**JUSTIN
LEMOINE**



**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023 was a year to celebrate many successes for the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area program. With the President's signature on January 5th, ANHA received a 15-year reauthorization in congress. Passage of the National Heritage Areas Act is the culmination of tireless work on behalf of heritage area programs across the country showcasing the successful work our programs perform to strengthen our communities and preserve our histories. Program Reauthorization allows ANHA to dig deeper to establish long-term partnerships and develop catalytic projects that enhance the place we call home; a key recommendation of our 2021 Strategic Plan.

This year saw the expansion of our technical assistance to communities, greatly increasing the number of people served by the program. Our staff were able to assist dozens of communities with identifying, developing, and securing funding for projects of all types. This work will no doubt result in the strengthening of our small communities' cultural, natural, and recreational resources.

Through our grants program and partnership development, we've reached an ever-increasing number of communities and organizations throughout the 14 parishes. The projects we're able to support range from small-scale community improvements to a regional recreational trail feasibility study. We're proud of the work we're doing to support and enhance our region and are looking forward to an even more robust 2024!



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

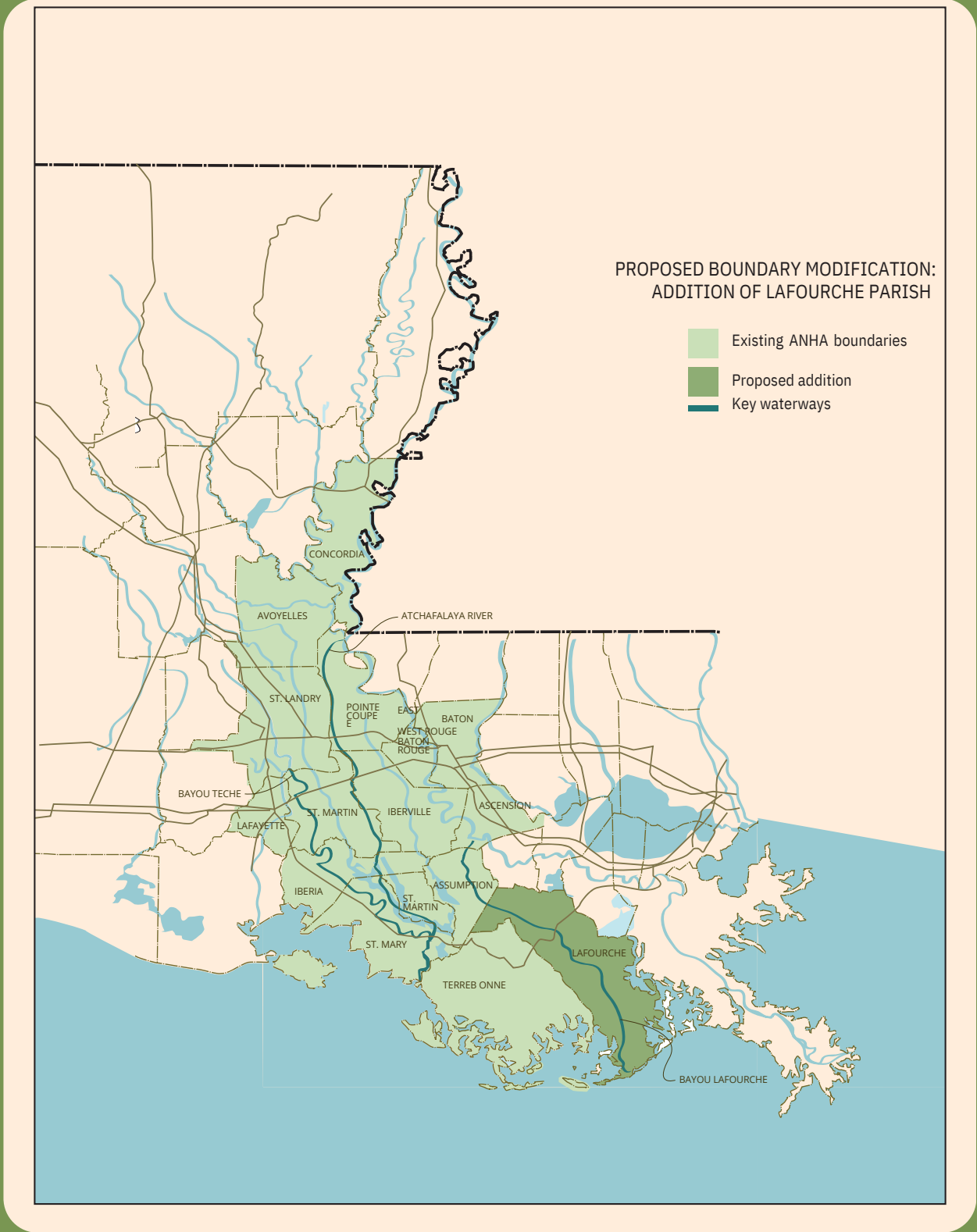
The Mission of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area is to enhance the identity of our unique American landscape by preserving and promoting our heritage and by fostering progress for local champions that create authentic, powerful connections between people, culture, and the environment.

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.



MAP





REAUTHORIZATION

In one of the final acts of the 2022 U.S. Congress, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved the National Heritage Area Act in a bi-partisan vote of 326-95. Prior to the vote, the Senate approved the act by “unanimous consent,” meaning it passed with no objection from any Senator. Championed by Representatives Paul Tonko (D-NY) and David McKinley (R-WV) in the House and Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Roy Blunt (R-MO) in the Senate, the bill creates a standard criteria for the funding, management, and designation of National Heritage Areas nationwide.

In a rare show of bi-partisan support, the bills were co-sponsored by 16 Senators and 138 House members. The National Heritage Area Act of 2022 extends the annual authorization to receive federal funding for the next fifteen years. Extension of the authorizations means the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area can continue the support of the cultural, natural, historical, and recreational resources that make south-central Louisiana so unique.

National heritage areas do not impact private property rights within the designated region. Further, NHAs match every federal dollar invested with an average of \$5.50 in state, local, and private contributions. A 2021 study determined NHAs are responsible for nearly \$13 billion in economic impact in their respective areas.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FUNDING

FY 20	\$336,000
FY 21	\$400,000
FY 22	\$500,000
FY 23	\$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

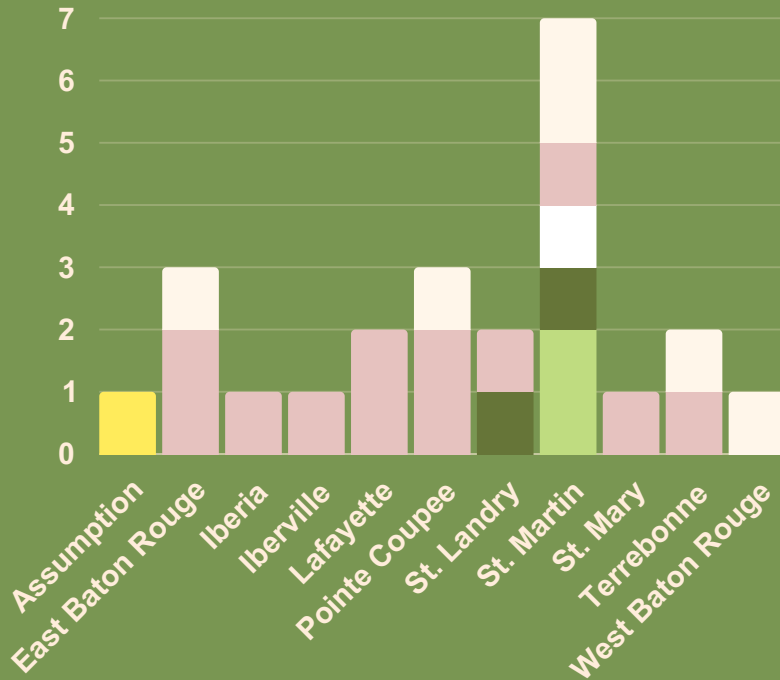
FUNDING CATEGORIES

- **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.

GRANTS PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS



OVER HALF OF THE GRANTS FUNDED IN 2023 WERE CELEBRATION GRANTS.



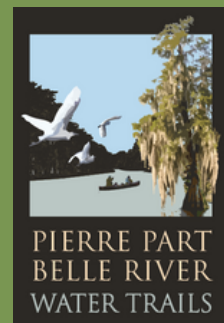
NOTABLE CELEBRATION GRANT



The South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center applied for a grant for the Atchafalaya Narrative Stage at the annual Rougarou Fest. Taking place during October, Atchafalaya Month, the festival celebrates the culture and folktales of coastal Louisiana. ANHA funds went to tradition- and culture-bearers the shared their talents and stories on the Atchafalaya Narrative Stage, creating a learning opportunity for festival-goers.

NOTABLE LEGACY GRANT

The Assumption Parish Recreation District applied for funding to design and install signage on their newly-created paddle trail. The first of its kind in the area, the paddle trail provides guidance and access through the heritage area’s unique waterways. The signs also include education elements, including noting native birds paddlers may encounter and information about the community through which the 60 miles of trails will run. The project is an innovative economic development and tourism product for the rural parish.





GRANTS AWARDED IN 2023

LEGACY GRANTS

Pierre Part Belle River Water Trails Signage	\$14,000
Duchamp Opera House Signage	\$2,000
Teche Woods Nature Trail	\$17,500
...And We Went Art Exhibition	\$5,000
Bayou Pigeon Heritage Folklife Museum	\$2,500
Mapping the Basin: A Digital History	\$7,500
Baton Rouge Blues Festival	\$10,000
Parc des Ponts Breaux Historic Stage Renovation	\$10,000
Atchafalaya Creatives Phase II	\$10,000
Shadows-on-the-Teche Exhibition	\$15,000
Cajun Prairie Documentary Film	\$5,000

CELEBRATION GRANTS

Festival Band Sponsor	\$2,000
Julian Poydras 100-Year Celebration	\$1,500
SugarFest	\$2,000
Shake Your Trail Feather Festival	\$2,500
Folk Roots Kids Camp St. Landry	\$2,700



CELEBRATION GRANTS CONTINUED

Poydras Center Pop Up Art Exhibit 2024	\$1,000
2023 Halloween Art & Nature Festival	\$2,000
Bayou Teche National Scenic Byway	\$1,700
Boo & Brew	\$1,500
Boo at the Zoo	\$1,500
Rougarou Fest	\$3,500
Pour nos langages Summit	\$2,000
Bayou Arts Fest	\$3,500

OTHER PROJECTS & SPONSORSHIPS

Festivals Acadiens	\$1,500
Festival International	\$5,000
Destination Downtown	\$1,000
Atchafalaya Mural: Morgan City	\$1,500
Atchafalaya Mural: Simmesport	\$1,500



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.

CASE STUDY: FRANKLIN, LA

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Franklin is a bayou town of just under 7,000 residents nestled along Bayou Teche in St. Mary Parish. It is a town full of enthusiasm and rich in historic and natural assets. ANHA plans to use Franklin as a guide for shaping the technical assistance program in the following years.

PROCESS

Initial Meeting

- ANHA partnered with the LSU AgCenter to host the Complete Streets Summit and invited Franklin.

Site Visit

- Franklin invited ANHA for a walking audit to determine project priorities for the TAP grant application.

ANHA Assistance

- ANHA helped identify route options for the project, identified material quantities, and provided research and narrative assistance for the TAP grant application.

Grant Submission

- Franklin compiled and submitted a TAP grant application with assistance from ANHA, LSUAgcenter, and other community partners.

Grant Award

- Franklin received TAP grant funding for Phase 1 of their application.

Continuous Follow-Up

- As a member of the ANHA technical assistance framework, ANHA and Franklin remain in constant communication on implementation and future projects.

RESULTS

The community empowerment program process included in partnerships with LADOTD, the Acadiana Regional Planning Council, the LSU Agcenter and Miller Engineering. As a result, the City of Franklin secured \$546,337 from the Louisiana Transportation Alternatives Program to address accessibility and safety concerns.

**OF THE SIX COMMUNITIES
ANHA WORKED WITH ON
LTAP APPLICATIONS, FOUR
WERE AWARDED
FUNDING.**



NOTABALE ACHIEVEMENTS

Received Reauthorization Jan. 2023

Received \$100,000 in LA state budget bill April 2023

Received \$150,000 for bike trial study June 2023

*IMPRESSIONS & REACH



Total Posts 706

Total Reach 119,848

Total Engagement 7,086

Total Likes 3,750

Total Followers 9,335

E-newsletter Subscribers 83

*As of November 2023





THANK YOU



Contact

WWW.ATCHAFALAYA.ORG

@ATCHAFALAYANHA

CBYRNE@CRT.LA.GOV