

# Red River Development Commission

**Prepared for:**

**Louisiana Department of Culture,  
Recreation and Tourism**



**The Louisiana Research Team**



## **Acknowledgements**

This report was prepared by **Janet Speyrer, Ph.D.**, Associate Dean for Research, College of Business, **Marianne Hawkins Marcell**, Research Analyst, and **Kathryn Hashimoto, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Hotel Restaurant and Tourism Administration, at the University of New Orleans. Assistance was provided by **Melody Alijani**, Assistant Tourism Research Analyst, at the University of New Orleans. Thanks and recognition is also given to **Dek Terrell, Ph.D., Director** of the Division of Economic Development and Forecasting, College of Business, LSU, for helping with the survey data collection. Recognition and thanks also go to **Chuck Morse**, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the DCRT and Director of the Red River Development Commission, for his valuable help in providing information and feedback, and for his cooperation and help with the project. Finally, recognition is given to various other members of the **Louisiana Research Team** who provided specific information relevant to the results reported.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Return on Objective**

**Goal:** Build awareness, expand economic opportunity and strengthen region near the Red River.

- Louisiana residents are aware of the Red River, but are not associating tourism sites close to the Red River with the associated development area (or with the Red River, itself).

The RRDC is making progress toward meeting two of three of its stated objectives:

#### **Objective 1:** Corridor management plan developed

- Currently, the corridor management plan is estimated to be about 25% complete. A federal grant is being pursued. RRDC has developed a cooperative relationship for marketing with several entities and the website is being developed. Progress is being made toward the 2010 goal.

#### **Objective 2:** Increased Welcome Center visitation

- Measured by visitation at the I-49 Welcome Center, RRDC has already considerably exceeded its stated objective. Based on the first nine months of FY 2005-2006, visitation increased 120.9% from the same time period in the previous year. Other welcome centers could be included in the analysis.

#### **Objective 3:** Enhanced rural tourism

- Information on meeting this objective is not yet available and/or there is no indication that any progress toward meeting this objective has been made.

### **Return on Investment**

According to Leland Scoggins the economic impact of the Red River was \$150 million in 2004. Even if the \$150 million is correct, this impact is likely to be the result of the combined investments of the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas, and other organizations, such as The Waterway Commission, The Red River Valley Association, and others. Efforts to attribute the total economic impact of the Red River to the Red River Development Commission alone result in an ROI of 1,891, an excessive return on investment.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The RRDC has clearly stated measurable objectives. However, the key indicators are not readily available and/or are not being monitored regularly. It is, therefore, recommended that the promotion campaign for the Red River Development area establish a clear brand with associated collateral materials. These could be distributed at the I-49 Welcome Center and others in the

area. Research on visitors to the area could determine the value of the Red River Development. Conversion studies and associated economic impact studies are recommended.

## **Introduction**

This report examines the role of the Red River Development Commission (RRDC) in terms of its contribution to the mission, goals and objectives of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.

The Red River Development Commission serves the entire Red River Basin in Louisiana. Parishes include: Caddo, Bossier, Red River, Natchitoches, Winn, Grant, Rapides, Avoyelles, and Edge of Concordia. The region contains beautiful, dense, wooded areas that are great for hunting, fishing, and boating. The Red River is included in 22 state parks over 4 states, but it is primarily used for recreational boating; the Army Corps of Engineers have built loading sites all along the river.

The Goal of the Red River Development Commission is:

*To promote the region along the Red River in Louisiana as a premier tourist destination, thus building awareness, expanding economic opportunity and strengthening place.*

## **Methodology**

Several methods were used to gather information for this report. First, related websites and a review of relevant literature and was conducted. Second, the executive director of the Red River Development Commission, Leland Scoggins, Ph.D., was interviewed. Third, Louisiana residents were surveyed by telephone to determine their awareness and use of facilities along the Red River. Fourth, a personal interview with new director, Chuck Morse, was conducted by telephone. Finally, Mark Northington, Research Director, Office of Tourism, Louisiana Department of Culture Recreation and Tourism, provided visitor information for the I-49 Welcome Center.

## **Information Review**

A search of the Internet, using the Google search engine, did not yield a website for the Louisiana Red River Development Commission (RRDC). An impressive site did come up for the Red River Waterway Commission, <http://www.redriverwaterway.com/>. When a site for the RRDC was not found, a search within the Department of CRT was then executed. No information for the RRDC was located there, either. If the RRDC does, indeed, have a website, it is not readily accessible or identifiable.

In a search of available tourism literature, just three small books on Louisiana by local publishers with information on the Red River area were found. *Louisiana* by Richard Bizier (Pelican Books) includes 28 pages out of 400 on this area. *Off the Beaten Path – Louisiana* by Gay Martin (Insiders' Guide) covered Central Louisiana in 26 pages out of 175. Finally, *Weekend Getaways in Louisiana*, Mary Fonseca (Pelican Press) had 2 out of 36 trips for Alexandria and Natchitoches.

Daryl Burckel of McNeese State University provided the following recent budget history for the Red River Development Commission.

**Budget for Red River Development Commission**

Actual 2003-2004	Actual 2004-2005	Requested 2005-2006	Average 2003-2005	Average 2003-2006
\$77,247	\$79,317	\$174,233	\$78,282	\$110,266

**Interview with Executive Director of the Red River Development Council**

Leland Scoggins, Ph.D. was the Executive Director of the Red River Development Council in March 2005. At that time, he provided a number of facts about the Division to Kathryn Hashimoto.

The total budget includes: the salary of the director; the salary for a part-time secretary; and office equipment, telephone, and supplies; travel. Office space is donated by Northwestern State University. The budget does not have funds for anything dealing with tourism or anything other than the operation of the office.

In 1991, the master plan, *Master Plan to Utilize Water in the Red River for Economic Development*, was created by Dr. Scoggins. It was reorganized in 2001. Copies are available in: the State Library; the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism; the Louisiana Department of Economic Development; parish libraries in each of the seven parishes paying property taxes; and the Red River Development Council office.

There are two main organizations that oversee the Red River Development in Louisiana: the Waterway Commission, and the Red River Valley Association.

The Waterway Commission receives funding from 7 parishes, which are assessed a property tax for maintenance, administrative use and construction when necessary. However, two parishes, Concordia and Winn, do not use their taxes for this purpose. Federal funding is received from the Army Corps of Engineers. Finally, funding is received from the Louisiana Department of Transportation Development.

The Red River Valley Association, located in Shreveport, is a non-profit, member-supported organization whose purpose is to advance the economic development and well-being of the millions of citizens who reside in the area traversed by the Red River in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas.

In addition, there are many other organizations that monitor the Red River development within the four states along the river.

According to Scoggins, 2.8 million people used the Red River, and its economic impact was \$150 million in 2004. Projects of the Red River Development commission include: Agricultural restocking of the river, Red River Chloride Project (federal funding), and Retirement Task Force.

## **Survey Results**

As a means of measuring the Red River Development Commission's goal of increasing awareness of the unique cultural, natural and native resources along the Red River, The Louisiana Research Team conducted a statewide telephone survey of Louisiana residents that included several questions designed to determine the awareness and use of facilities along the Red River in the state. The survey is included in the report as Appendix A. The survey was conducted by LSU during the period of May 1- 6, 2006, using random-digit dialing within the known Louisiana area codes and exchanges. There were 290 responses to the questions pertaining to the Red River Development Commission.

### **Are you familiar with the Red River in Louisiana?**

Response	Percentage
Yes	50.7%
No	49.3%
Total	100%
Valid Cases	290

- Just over one-half of the people asked responded that they are familiar with the Red River.
- However, it is somewhat surprising that almost one-half of respondents are completely unfamiliar with the Red River, a prominent feature of Louisiana's geography.

**The region close to the Red River contains many tourism opportunities including, state parks, historic sites, museums, tourism/hospitality amenities and roadways. Have you heard of any of these?**

Response	Percentage
Yes	36.7%
No	60.5%
Don't Know	2.7%
Total	100%
Valid Cases	290

- When asked in an unaided format whether they were aware of various sites close to the Red River, just over one-third (36.7%) said that they knew of them.
- Again, in this unaided format, almost two-thirds (60.5%) were unaware of the tourism sites close to the Red River.



**If yes, which ones have you heard of?**

Response	Percentage
Shreveport Riverview	25.9%
Natchitoches	14.8%
Coushatta	11.1%
Alexandria Levee Park	11.1%
North Caddo/Bossier	5.6%
Stoner Avenue	5.6%
Colfax	5.6%
Red Bayou	5.6%
Red Oak Lake	5.6%
Lock & Dam #2	5.6%
Teague Parkway	3.7%
Bishop Point	3.7%
St. Maurice	3.7%
Montgomery	3.7%
Boyce	3.7%
Fort Buhlow	3.7%
Ben Routh	3.7%
El-Camino Real Route	1.9%
Grand Ecore	1.9%
Brouillette	1.9%
Fort Randolph	1.9%
"Other"	3.7%
Do not remember	59.3%
Total	192.6%
* total greater than 100% due to multiple responses	
Valid Cases	54

- The most often remembered site was the Shreveport Riverview (25.9%).
- Natchitoches (14.8%), Alexandria Levee Park (11.1%), and Coushatta (11.1%) were also recalled by more than other sites.
- Despite the fact that these respondents said they recalled tourism sites close to the Red River, 59.3% of them could not name a specific site.

**Have you ever visited any of these? If yes, which ones have you visited?**

Response	Percentage
Natchitoches	90.7%
Coushatta	75.9%
Colfax	61.1%
North Caddo/Bossier	59.3%
Shreveport Riverview	57.7%
Alexandria Levee Park	57.4%
Boyce	44.4%
St. Maurice	40.7%
Red Bayou	38.9%
Lock & Dam #2	37.0%
Stoner Avenue	31.5%
Fort Randolph	31.5%
Brouillette	29.6%
Teague Parkway	27.8%
Bishop Point	27.8%
Montgomery	25.9%
Fort Buhlow	25.9%
Grand Ecore	24.1%
Red Oak Lake	20.4%
El-Camino Real Route	14.8%
Total	833.5%

\* total greater than 100% due to multiple responses

Valid Cases	52
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- The most often cited tourism site close to the Red River is visited Natchitoches (90.7%), which is followed by Coushatta (75.9%), Colfax (61.1%), North Caddo/Bossier (59.3%), Shreveport Riverview (57.7%), and Alexandria Levee Park (57.4%).
- When assisted in their recall by the name of specific sites, memory of specific sites near the Red River improved substantially.

**When did you last visit one of these sites?**

Response	Percentage
Last year	51.9%
1 to 2 years	15.4%
3 to 5 years	17.3%
Do Not Remember	15.4%
Total	100%
Valid Cases	52

- Most sites (51.9%) were visited within the last year. There is also a history of visitation of sites in the Red River region; almost one-third of respondents who did visit sites said they visited them from one to five years ago.

**Will you be likely to travel to the Red River Region in the future?**

Response	Percentage
This Year	51.9%
In 1 to 2 years	9.3%
In 3 to 5 years	7.4%
Not Sure	29.6%
Not planning to do that	1.9%
Total	100%
Valid Cases	54

- More than half of the respondents who traveled to sites near the Red River in the past said they planned to do so again in the next year. Just 1.9% said they were not planning to visit sites near the Red River again.

**Phone Interview with Chuck Morse**

When Leland Scoggins retired, Chuck Morse, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the DCRT and Director of the Red River Development Commission, assumed oversight of the Red River Development Commission. On May 4, 2006, he spoke to Marianne Marcell and Janet Speyrer at length about the baselines for and measurable impact on the metrics identified for each of the division's objectives. He answered questions such as whether a federal grant had been received,

whether a Corridor Management Plan had been completed, and whether strategic partnerships had been created (and with whom).

### **Correspondence with Mark Northington**

<b>I-49 WELCOME CENTER</b>			
	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>Change</b>
July	5,298	7,663	44.6%
August	3,601	9,354	159.8%
September	5,042	25,815	412.0%
October	3,208	4,076	27.1%
November	3,101	5,588	80.2%
December	3,439	5,680	65.2%
January	2,422	4,341	79.2%
February	2,755	4,628	68.0%
March	4,783	7,191	50.3%
<b>Total YTD</b>	<b>33,649</b>	<b>74,336</b>	<b>120.9%</b>
April	3,951		
May	5,149		
June	7,244		
<b>FY Total</b>	<b>49,993</b>		

Mr. Northington stated that the most representative state welcome center for the Red River region is the I-49 Welcome Center. The baseline number of visitors to the I-49 Welcome Center is almost 50,000 people in FY 2004-05. (This welcome center opened in November of the previous year.) Year-to-date comparison reveals that the I-49 Welcome Center has experienced a robust (120.9%) growth since FY 2004-05.

### **Return on Objective**

As the stated goal of the Red River Development Commission is to promote the region along the Red River in Louisiana as a premier tourist destination, thus building awareness, expanding economic opportunity and strengthening place, questions were placed in a survey to measure how well the RRDC is meeting its goal. Summary responses to the survey are as follows:

- When asked to recall tourism sites close to the Red River in an unaided format, just over 60% were unaware of the tourism sites close to the Red River.
- The most often remembered site, in an unaided format, was the Shreveport Riverview. Despite the fact that these respondents said they recalled tourism sites close to the Red River, 59.3% of them could not name a specific site.

- Awareness may be greater than suggested by these questions. When prompted with names of specific sites, many remembered specific sites near the Red River. This fact suggests that respondents are aware of the sites, but are not associating them with the Red River.
- The majority of sites were visited within the last year and virtually all respondents planned to visit them again.

The RRDC is making progress toward meeting two of three of its stated objectives:

**Objective 1:** Develop a corridor management plan (CMP) by June 30, 2010.

*Performance Indicators*

*Federal grant received* – RRDC is working toward a federal grant; CRT has been successful in obtaining a similar grant for scenic byways in the region.

*Corridor management plan developed* – At this point in time the plan is approximately 25% complete.

*Number of cooperative marketing opportunities* – El Camino Real is proposed to become a four-lane highway. The RRDC is working with the Louisiana Department of Transportation Development, The Federal Highway Commission, and the five-state El Camino Real Commission on this project. They are also trying to work with the Red River Waterway Commission, but no one is currently in the director position of that organization.

*Number of links on the website* – The web site is currently in development. A private consultant, NetCom, has been hired to upgrade all of the CRT web sites; the Red River Commission is one of those on their list. A baseline of website hits should be obtained and tracking of hits and unique users should be regularly monitored once the site is complete.

*Summary*

Currently, the corridor management plan is estimated to be about 25% complete. A federal grant is being pursued. RRDC has developed a cooperative relationship for marketing with several entities and the website is being developed. Progress is being made toward the 2010 goal.

**Objective 2:** By June 30, 2010, increase visitation to designated Welcome Centers along the Red River corridor by 5%.

*Performance Indicators*

*Percent increase of visitors to designated Welcome Centers* - through the first nine months of FY 2005-06, visitation at the I-49 welcome center is up 120.9%. The objective is to increase the number of welcome center visitors by 5% by 2010. This welcome center has exceeded that target by 24 times since FY2004-05.

*Baseline number of visitors to centers in region* – 49,993 in FY2004-05

*Number of website hits* – again, the web site is in development; this number is not yet available.

*Number of visitors to centers in region* – not available

*Number of brochures and itineraries downloaded from website* – not yet, there is no director of the program

*Number of tradeshow appointments and contacts* - none

*Summary*

Measured by visitation at the I-49 Welcome Center, RRDC has already considerably exceeded its stated objective. Based on the first nine months of FY 2005-2006, visitation increased 120.9% from the same time period in the previous year. Other welcome centers could be included in the analysis.

**Objective 3:** By June 30, 2010, enhance rural tourism by increasing the product in the Red River Development Area by 3%.

*Performance Indicators*

This information is not yet available.

*Percent of new products specified*

*Baseline number of products (FY 03-04)*

*Number of new products specified*

*Federal dollars appropriated*

*Number of strategic partnership opportunities developed*

*Summary*

Information on meeting this objective is not yet available and/or there is no indication that any progress toward meeting this objective has been made.

## **Return on Investment**

According to Leland Scoggins, 2.8 million people used the Red River, in 2004. Also according to Scoggins, the economic impact in 2004 was \$150 million. Efforts to locate the source of this number were unsuccessful. If the \$150 million figure is accepted, the ROI could be as high as 1,891. That is, for every \$1 invested by the state in the RRDC, \$1,891 could be returned to the state in economic impact. However, it seems unreasonable to think that this very high return is attributable only to the investment by the state of Louisiana in the RRDC. In particular, the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas, and other organizations, such as The Waterway Commission and The Red River Valley Association are also important in determining the impact of the Red River. That is, attributing the total economic impact of the Red River to the Red River Development Commission alone results in an ROI of 1,891, an excessive return on investment.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The RRDC has clearly stated measurable objectives. However, the key indicators are not readily available and/or are not being monitored regularly. Louisiana residents are aware of the Red River, but are not associating tourism sites close to the Red River with the associated development area (or with the Red River, itself). It is, therefore, recommended that the promotion campaign for the Red River Development area establish a clear brand with associated collateral materials. These could be distributed at the I-49 Welcome Center and others in the area. Research on visitors to the area could determine the value of the Red River Development. Conversion studies and associated economic impact studies are recommended.

## **APPENDIX A**



## **Introduction**

### **RED RIVER COMMISSION**

Are you familiar with the Red River in Louisiana? Y/N/DK (If no, go to Atch. Questions)

The region close to the Red River contains many tourism opportunities including, state parks, historic sites, museums, tourism/hospitality amenities and roadways. Have you heard of any of these? Y/N/DK (If no, go to Atch. Questions)

If yes, which ones have you heard of? **(Do not read the list)**  
(Check all that apply)

El-Camino Real route  
North Caddo/Bossier  
Stoner Avenue  
Teague Parkway  
Bishop Point  
Colfax  
Coushatta  
Natchitoches  
St. Maurice  
Montgomery  
Red Bayou  
Boyce  
Red Oak Lake  
Grand Ecore  
Fort Buhlow  
Alexandria Levee Park  
Ben Routh  
Brouillette  
Fort Randolph  
Lock & Dam #2  
Shreveport Riverview  
“Other” \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever visited any of these? Y/N/DK (If no, go to “will you be likely”)  
If yes, which ones have you visited?

(Check all that apply)  
El-Camino Real route  
North Caddo/Bossier  
Stoner Avenue  
Teague Parkway  
Bishop Point  
Colfax

Coushatta  
Natchitoches  
St. Maurice  
Montgomery  
Red Bayou  
Boyce  
Red Oak Lake  
Grand Ecore  
Fort Buhlow  
Alexandria Levee Park  
Ben Routh  
Brouillette  
Fort Randolph  
Lock & Dam #2  
Shreveport Riverview  
“Other” \_\_\_\_\_

When did you last visit one of these sites? (read responses)

LAST YEAR, 1 TO 2 YEARS, 3 TO 5 YEARS, DO NOT REMEMBER

Will you be likely to travel to the Red River Region in the future? (read responses)

THIS YEAR, IN 1 TO 2 YEARS, 3 TO 5 YEARS, NOT SURE, NOT PLANNING TO DO THAT

### **ATCHAFALAYA TRACE HERITAGE AREA**

Are you familiar with the Atchafalaya Basin? Y/N/DK (If no, end)

The region close to the Atchafalaya Basin, called the Atchafalaya Trace Heritage Area, contains many tourism opportunities including, state parks, historic sites, museums, tourism/hospitality amenities and roadways. Have you heard of any of these? Y/N/DK (If no, go to end)

If yes, which ones have you heard of? **(Do not read the list)**

(Check all that apply)

A Bear’s Café  
A Cajun Man’s Swamp Cruise  
Acadian Cultural Ctr., Jean Lafitte Nat. Historic Park  
Acadian Swamp Tours  
Acadian Village  
African-American Museum  
Airboat Tours, Inc.  
Alexandria Mouton House and Lafayette Museum  
Alligator Bayou Swamp Tours  
Angelle’s Whiskey River

Annie Miller's Son's Marsh and Swamp Tours  
Atchafalaya Basin Backwater Adventure  
Atchafalaya Trace Heritage Area Online  
Avoyelles Commission of Tourism  
Bayou Black Airboat Swamp Tours  
Bayou Country Bed & Breakfast  
Bayou Teche Visitors Center  
Bayou Terrebonne Waterlife Museum  
Bayou Vermillion Boat Tours  
Bayou Vue Café  
Beau Reve Cruise  
Bergerons on the Bayous Campground  
Brownell Memorial Park  
Bunkie Train Depot and Welcome Center  
Cajun Houseboats and Rentals  
City Café  
David's Cottage Café and Bed & Breakfast  
Delta Music Museum  
Dr. Jules Charles Desfossee House  
Frogmore Plantation and Gins  
Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge  
Honeysuckle Bed & Breakfast  
Hypolite Bordelon House  
Louisiana's Old Governor's Mansion  
Louisiana's Old State Capitol  
Ma Mama's Kitchen  
Magnolia Mound Plantation  
Marksville State Historic Site  
Nottoway Plantation  
Plaquemine Lock State Historic Site  
"Other" \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever visited any of these? Y/N/DK (If no, go to "will you be likely")  
If yes, which ones have you visited? (**Do not read the list**)  
(Check all that apply)

A Bear's Café  
A Cajun Man's Swamp Cruise  
Acadian Cultural Ctr., Jean Lafitte Nat. Historic Park  
Acadian Swamp Tours  
Acadian Village  
African-American Museum

Airboat Tours, Inc.  
Alexandria Mouton House and Lafayette Museum  
Alligator Bayou Swamp Tours  
Angelle's Whiskey River  
Annie Miller's Son's Marsh and Swamp Tours  
Atchafalaya Basin Backwater Adventure  
Atchafalaya Trace Heritage Area Online  
Avoyelles Commission of Tourism  
Bayou Black Airboat Swamp Tours  
Bayou Country Bed & Breakfast  
Bayou Teche Visitors Center  
Bayou Terrebonne Waterlife Museum  
Bayou Vermillion Boat Tours  
Bayou Vue Café  
Beau Reve Cruise  
Bergerons on the Bayous Campground  
Brownell Memorial Park  
Bunkie Train Depot and Welcome Center  
Cajun Houseboats and Rentals  
City Café  
David's Cottage Café and Bed & Breakfast  
Delta Music Museum  
Dr. Jules Charles Desfossee House  
Frogmore Plantation and Gins  
Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge  
Honeysuckle Bed & Breakfast  
Hypolite Bordelon House  
Louisiana's Old Governor's Mansion  
Louisiana's Old State Capitol  
Ma Mama's Kitchen  
Magnolia Mound Plantation  
Marksville State Historic Site  
Nottoway Plantation  
Plaquemine Lock State Historic Site  
"Other" \_\_\_\_\_

When did you last visit one of these sites? (Read responses)

LAST YEAR, 1 TO 2 YEARS, 3 TO 5 YEARS, DO NOT REMEMBER

Will you be likely to travel to the Atchafalaya Trace Heritage Area in the future? (read responses)

THIS YEAR, IN 1 TO 2 YEARS, 3 TO 5 YEARS, NOT SURE, NOT PLANNING TO DO THAT

## **CULTURE**

1. The state is providing current information for rebuilding arts and culture.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

2. Do you feel it is the role of the state of Louisiana to provide arts and culture programs and events?

Yes

No

Don't Know

3. What do you see as Louisiana's most pressing needs regarding the preservation of historic buildings?
4. Thinking about hurricanes Katrina and Rita, what is the number one resource that the state of Louisiana needs to rebuild the cultural economy?
5. What does your parish need to recover and prosper in arts and culture?

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

What is your home zipcode?

Use same demographics as from statewide phone survey:

Ethnicity

Education level

Gender

Family Income