

LOUISIANA

OFFICE OF THE LT. GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, September 30, 2010
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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR SCOTT ANGELLE ANNOUNCES OPENING OF PALMETTO ISLAND STATE PARK

ABBEVILLE – Today, Lieutenant Governor Scott Angelle announced the opening of Palmetto Island State Park. By finding cost-savings in the Office of State Parks budget, Lt. Gov Angelle said Palmetto Island State Park will officially open on October 28, 2010. The Lt. Gov. also announced the formation of the “Palmetto Island State Park Fund,” a public-private partnership with the Community Foundation of Acadiana, area elected officials, the Vermilion Parish Tourism Commission, the Abbeville Chamber of Commerce and community organizations to seek private funds to help supplement the operation of the park into the future. Calling the park a Louisiana treasure, Lt. Gov. Angelle said the park opening is nearly 30 years in the making and represents a sign of the state’s recovery following the 2005 storms.

Lt. Gov. Angelle said, “I am proud to announce the opening of Palmetto Island State Park. The opening of this park is almost 30 years in the making, and I am honored to stand with the people of this region to finally open this Louisiana treasure to the people of Louisiana and the world.

“Many folks worked tirelessly to make this day a reality and the announcement represents a unique partnership between public and private entities. Indeed, the opening of this park is similar to building and sustaining a church. It requires faith and the support of its community members by way of hard work, volunteerism and charitable giving. Palmetto Island State Park will be the model for Louisiana as we move toward utilizing public and private partnerships to sustain our state tourism opportunities during this time of budgetary strain.

“As we are in the midst of the fifth anniversaries of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, it’s critical to remember that the devastating storms of 2005 put this project on hold and today’s announcement is yet another sign of our recovery and that the people of Louisiana are coming back stronger and better than before.

“Opening this park is consistent with our plan to attract more nature based tourism. The Palmetto Island State Park is an asset that will help reintroduce the Sportsman’s Paradise to America following the oil spill, and while we’ve all heard of ADD, Attention Deficit Disorder, this park will help cure ‘NDD,’ Nature Deficit Disorder.”

For the announcement, Lt. Gov. Angelle was joined by Stuart Johnson, Assistant Secretary of the Office of State Parks; Senator Nick Gautreaux (D-Abbeville); Senator Mike Michot (R-Lafayette); State Representative Jonathan Perry (R-Abbeville); Abbeville Mayor Mark Piazza; Raymond Hebert, Director of the Community Foundation of Acadiana and Wayne Touchet, Vermilion Parish Police Jury President.

“In light of these tough economic times, the uncertainty created by the offshore drilling moratorium, it is important, now more than ever, that families have somewhere to go that is affordable and fun,” said Raymond Hebert, Director of the Community Foundation of Acadiana. “Donors to the Palmetto Island State Park Fund through the Community Foundation of Acadiana can be sure that 100 percent of their contributions will go directly to keeping this park open and available to the people of Acadiana and its visitors.”

“Despite the adversity this area of the state has seen, through hurricanes, oil spills and budget constraints, when people come to Vermilion Parish and the Palmetto Island State Park, they will understand why the people of south Louisiana stay in south Louisiana. It’s the passion of the people that has opened this park, and it’s the passion of the people that will keep it open for many years to come,” said Senator Nick Gautreaux (D-Abbeville).

Representative Jonathan Perry (D-Abbeville) announced an upcoming fundraiser for the park to be held on October 30.

“I encourage everyone to show support for the future of this park by coming to Stir the Pot for Palmetto,” said Rep. Perry. “This will be a day of music, seafood, cooking contests and good music as we gather together to raise money to support the Palmetto State Park. This really is the people’s park.”

Stir the Pot for Palmetto will begin at 10:00 a.m., and live music featuring Wayne Toups & ZyDeCajun, Jaryd Lane and Stephen Matthew Perry will begin at 11:00 a.m. Admission for the event is \$10 per person, with all proceeds going to the Palmetto Island State Park Fund.

“Cajun people really know how to entertain when people come to visit us from out of state,” said Abbeville Mayor Mike Piazza. “We’re definitely going to show them a good time. Thank you to Lt. Governor Angelle for getting the job done and opening this park not only for the people of Vermilion Parish, but for all of the visitors to this area.”

Background On Palmetto Island State Park

Land for the park was acquired in August 1981, at a cost of \$1.5 million for 1,200 acres. The funds were provided through the State Bond Commission per the state’s Capitol Outlay Act. Mineral rights to the land were donated to the state. Construction funding through the State Bond Commission was made available during the 2002 Regular Legislative Session and ground was broken on the site in November 2002.

Damage to already-completed utilities and infrastructure and budget constraints in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita put the project on hold in 2005. Funding again became available to repair the damage and construct the buildings during the 2007 Regular Session and the project restarted in December 2007. While construction was completed in March 2010, there were budget constraints which held up the park’s opening.

Recently, Lt. Gov. Angelle worked to find savings in the Office of State Parks in order to open the park for three months. In an effort to keep the park open through the end of the fiscal year, the “Palmetto Island State Park Fund” has been established with the Community Foundation of Acadiana (CFA) to generate operational funding. CFA will act as a clearinghouse for donated funds specifically for Palmetto Island State Park.

Lt. Governor Angelle is also working with the Office of Facility Planning at the Division of Administration to expedite the repair of some of the water lines in time for the park’s opening on November 1. The Louisiana Army National Guard (LANG) will also contribute to site improvement by replacing and repairing individual campsite waterlines, checking and repairing electrical pedestals and removing dead trees along the roads and near buildings.

The Office of the Lieutenant Governor and the Office of State Parks is also cultivating a partnership with the Louisiana Serve Commission in order to bring volunteers to perform park operations services which will help reduce costs.

“We’re currently compiling the application to bring AmeriCorps members to Vermilion Parish,” said Janet Pace, Executive Director of the Louisiana Serve Commission. “These bright, dedicated young people can come not only to help with park operations, but also help to establish a sustainable volunteer program at Palmetto Island State Park.”

Details On Park Amenities

The park includes an entrance station, park office, six two-bedroom vacation cabins (each sleeping up to 8 people), a 96-site campground, a visitor center, splash pad complex, four picnic pavilions, a ¾ mile nature trail, floating pier, aquatic interpretive pavilion, manager’s residence and maintenance buildings.

Information On Reservations

Reservations for overnight accommodations can be made beginning Wednesday, October 20, through the Call Center at 1-877-226-7652 or online at www.ReserveAmerica.com, for stays beginning the night of October 28.

For more information about Palmetto Island State Park, visit www.lastateparks.com or call 888-677-0094.

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