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Pollution protests start at waste site

By Fred Kalmbach/
State-Times writer

A 10-day series of demonstrations to protest toxic pollution in Louisiana kicked off today at a hazardous waste dump in the northern part of the parish.

The Louisiana Toxics Project — a network of environmental and labor groups — held a press conference at a Petro Processors site next to Devil's Swamp.

The series of demonstrations will move along the petro-chemical industrial corridor between Baton Rouge and New Orleans to focus attention on See POLLUTION / Page 2-B

this trip.

Pollution —

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discharges from plants.

Saturday the demonstrators plan to march from Southern University to the State Capitol where they have scheduled an environmental fair.

Today, in front of a fence containing warning signs marked with skulls and crossbones, Jerry Spier, chairman of the local Sierra Club hazardous waste committee, described how toxic wastes ruined Devil's Swamp.

"Over 20 years ago, this place was a real sportsman's paradise," Spier said. "Then a sad thing happened. After five years or so of the operation of a hazardous waste pit, (containment) levees gave away and hazardous materials poured into the swamp."

One hundred head of cattle died in the incident, and the released wastes killed the trees and poisoned the swamp, Spier added.

Petro Processors opened the dump in 1969 and handled the waste from major chemical companies in Louisiana.

A letter released today by the Sierra Club and the Louisiana Toxics Project urges state and federal agencies to hasten the cleanup of the Petro Processors site and Devil's Swamp.

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Federal department praises La. plan to save wetlands

Dec 9 - 1989

Capitol News Bureau

The U.S. Department of Interior cited Louisiana today for drafting "by far the best plan in the nation" for buying up wetlands for preservation.

Gov. Buddy Roemer accepted an award, known as "Take Pride in America," from a federal official who praised the practicality of the plan, which was completed a few months before Roemer took office.

"This is a plan Louisiana can really implement . . . It's not pie in the sky," said Rick Smith, associate regional director for the National Park Service, which made the award after rating Louisiana's plan best among all other states that submitted one.

"Louisiana's wetlands plan is deemed so good that it is being offered to other states as a model for conscientious and expert wetlands preservation," Smith said.

Roemer said the list of potential land purchases is a first step in a long and expensive effort to protect Louisiana's vast but vanishing swamps and marshes.

The list includes about 32 tracts, totaling 395,000 acres and scattered around the state, that the state should consider buying, according to John Glenn, chief planner for the state Division of Outdoor Recreation and chief author of the plan.

Not all the tracts might be for sale, he said, and no estimate has been made of the cost of buying what might be available.

Roemer acknowledged that tight state finances will prevent as many wetlands buys as he would like.

However, he said, having the nation's best acquisition plan puts Louisiana first in line for federal funds to help supplement existing wetlands preserves.

Smith said he can't say how much money the federal government might allot to buy wetlands in the next few years.

But, he said, President-elect George Bush is committed to continuing a wetlands and water resource fund that finances such purchases.