The Governor's Atchafalaya Basin Commission on July 8, 1975 purchased three acres of land at Myette Point near Franklin for the construction of a headquarters complex and tourist center.

The center will be adjacent to the 23,500 acre outdoor recreation area in Grand Lake - Six Mile Lake in the Atchafalaya Basin, and after completion will be managed by the Wildlife & Fisheries Commission. Plans include a visitor's pavilion across the levee, camping areas, boat trails and hunting and fishing activities.

"ACT OF SALE"

L to R are Commission member Albert Aucoin; South Coast Corp. VP, U. P. Melancon; Director Sandra Thompson; Commission member Jada Hirschmann; Asst. Atty. Gen. David Kimmel; and Commission member Fielding Lewis.

Sandra Thompson, Director of the Atchafalaya Basin Division, said that in addition to providing outdoor recreation opportunities, primary purposes of the area are to help maintain the wilderness character, establish a wetland management area and establish state ownership of accreted lands.

U. P. Melancon, Executive Vice-President of The South Coast Corporation of Houma, sellers of the three acre tract said, "South Coast Corporation is happy to cooperate with the state in its efforts to preserve and promote the Atchafalaya Basin where our company has been a part of community activities for many years."

Construction work on the center is to begin in the very near future, and it is expected that it will be open to the public during the coming year.
CHANGE IN COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

During the January, 1975 special session of the Louisiana legislature a bill was enacted changing the makeup of the Governor's Atchafalaya Basin Commission in keeping with a provision of the new constitution mandating a separation of the legislative and executive branches of government.

Appointed to the new seats on the Commission vacated by legislators were Charles Hurston of Covington, Paul Selley of Harahan, Russell Ruiz of Charenton, Edgar Veillon of New Orleans, and J. Burton Angelle, Director of the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission.

Another new member is Janet Burt of Baton Rouge who was recently appointed to replace F. W. "Bill" Miller of Lafayette who resigned from the Commission last year.

An act of the 1975 regular legislative session will add an East Baton Rouge Parish representative to the Atchafalaya Basin Commission. Appointment of this newest member will be made in the near future.

LEGISLATION

The Atchafalaya Basin Division was the successful sponsor of three pieces of legislation during the 1975 regular session.

Act 228 declares East & West Cote Blanche Bays and Vermilion Bay to be property of the State of Louisiana, and authorizes the Atchafalaya Basin Division to study the feasibility of constructing a jetty between East Cote Blanche Bay and Atchafalaya Bay. This jetty would protect these three remaining salt water bays from the ravages of approximately 130 million tons of sand and silt deposited there annually. The salt water chemistry of these days will thus be preserved, having a beneficial effect on the oyster, shrimp and salt water fishing industry. The original bill was amended in the House of Representatives to provide that the study be completed thirty days prior to the 1976 legislative session.

SCR 30 urges and encourages the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to enlarge the channel below Morgan City in the Gulf of Mexico to relieve the pressure being placed on those low-lying areas during floods.

Act 615 is a "limiting liability" law which limits the liability of private landowners who offer their lands for recreational purposes. This will be a great incentive for landowners to provide more lands by removing the burden of responsibility for them, and has proven to be most effective in many other states.

We are grateful to those members of the Louisiana legislature who supported and voted in favor of this legislation.

NEW APPOINTMENTS FOR DIVISION DIRECTOR

During the past twelve months, Atchafalaya Basin Division Director Sandra Thompson has been appointed to head two new agencies of the state. In addition to serving as Executive Director of the Atchafalaya Basin Division, Mrs. Thompson is now State Coordinator for the Louisiana Trails Council and Director of the Governor's Beautification Program. The remainder of this newsletter is devoted to those agencies.

LOUISIANA TRAILS COUNCIL

With the signing of Executive Order 68 on June 23, 1974, Governor Edwin W. Edwards created the Louisiana Trails Council and named as its State Coordinator, Sandra Thompson, Director of the Atchafalaya Basin Division. Governor Edwards, in signing the order, emphasized the growing importance of trails as a recreational opportunity for the citizens of Louisiana and the necessity for the state to coordinate the efforts of the several agencies and many local governmental and private groups in the development of a statewide trails program.
Many cities have responded to the need for trails with active programs. Additionally, impetus to develop a statewide program resulted from the First Louisiana Trails Symposium held in New Orleans last June. The enthusiasm generated by this symposium produced, in ten days, a central trails organization, eight regional task forces with appropriate working committees, and an Executive Order formalizing the organization and establishing objectives and responsibilities. Responding to the requirements of the Executive Order, meetings were held throughout the state, more than 500 citizens contributed their time and enthusiasm, and a trails program began to mushroom.

In the thirteen months since the signing of Executive Order 68, Louisiana has come from a position of being one of the last states to sponsor a Trails Council, to having one of the most active councils in the nation. The credit is due the members of the Council who are a dedicated group giving generously of their time and effort in surveying trail needs, searching for existing and potential trails, and wielding the ax, the hoe and the shovel to actually build trails.

To aid the work of the Task Forces in building model trails, the State Board of Liquidation granted the sum of $40,000. This sum, approved by a vote of the legislature, has proved that state leadership, with minimum funds, can produce a balloon effect resulting in a statewide program of massive proportions which generates community-wide enthusiasm and support. The Council feels that the public has been well served by this effort and that the ultimate results of this program will be twofold: a system of trails for the safety and enjoyment of the citizens of this state; and a program generating, and permitting, widespread and enthusiastic public participation.

In order to enable the Trails Council to continue the work begun in each of the eight Council districts, a $400,000 appropriation for trails was granted by the 1975 legislature. Additionally, Region VI (Alexandria) was successful in obtaining $108,421 from Title X funds to hire the unemployed for work on trails in that region.

The Council wishes to express appreciation for Governor Edwards' support and endorsement of the trails program, and also for similar support and assistance from officials in all levels of government throughout the state.

Sandra Thompson, Representative Louise Johnson of Bernice, and Governor Edwards inspect one of the first trails established under the Louisiana Trails Council.

GOVERNOR'S BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Governor's Beautification Program, originally under the direction of the Governor's Council on Environmental Quality, was transferred to the Louisiana Trails Council in July of 1975. The program, headed by Sandra Thompson, will have as its Coordinator, Elinor Craven, formerly consultant to the Governor's Council on Environmental Quality. Secretary to the Beautification effort is Debera Terrel of Covington.

The project includes an ongoing and progressive effort with three primary objectives:

1. To initiate a public education program designed to involve the various state agencies, communities and industries in a crash clean-up and "keep-it-clean" project which will employ all media and publicity available;

2. To make a thorough and complete study of existing laws and fines on litter and, where necessary, adopt and enforce realistic laws and fines on litter whereby the state can arm itself and its
communities with good enforceable and practicable penalties for knowing, malicious and uncaring dumping and disposing of litter; and

3. To study and initiate statutory regulations on the very vital situation existing within the state concerning solid waste disposal problems.

To implement the project the state was divided into eight regions and state senators and representatives from each area were asked to appoint a qualified person to serve on Regional Governor's Beautification Program committees. The overwhelming response to the program by committee members and local public and private officials indicates that the program is a very necessary and vital state function and every precaution should be taken to ensure its continued existence.

To date approximately 45 cities are participating in the program and many more have expressed an interest in participating. Twenty-four cities took part in clean-up campaigns. The staff has distributed films to communities and parishes who in turn are conducting programs in the schools to create an awareness of the litter problem. In addition, the program sponsored a state-wide slogan and emblem contest and the Governor's Community Achievement Awards Program for community-wide achievements.

One of the major efforts this year will be a State-Wide Clean-Up Day on Saturday, the 11th of October, 1975. The goal is to involve thousands of citizens because the more people who participate, the more results we will be able to show both directly through a cleaner Louisiana, and indirectly through a resulting change in attitudes and habits.

The staff will study local and state litter laws and all other laws relative to this problem. The results of this analysis will be the basis of proposed legislation to be presented to the 1976 legislature.

A pilot program to test a warning from whereby a citizen who witnesses some form of vehicular violation will be able to fill out a card identifying the type and place of offense and turn it in to the Louisiana State Police where the owner of the responsible vehicle will be identified. The State Police will send that information to the program staff and a letter will be issued requesting that the person be more conscientious about littering in the future.

An investigation will be made of the latest systems approach to the litter problem and training materials will be developed based on this program which can be applied in any community across the state.