'Cajun Country' Amusement Park Near Lafayette Awaits Adequate Financing

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LAFAYETTE — A swamp, land development project that would blend the colorful history of the Acadian into the natural beauty of the area is planned for the outskirts of Lafayette.

Cajun Country, as the proposed attraction is called, would be near Bayou Lafayette near the airport. The key attraction would be an authentic replica of an Acadian village and genuine bayou-country terrain, complete with alligators, muskrats, raccoons, nutria and other animals of the region.

Plans were revealed for developing the 177-acre tract into the major tourist attraction for the state during a meeting recently in Lafayette.

Project Endorsed

Businessmen and civic leaders joined in endorsing the project, which is expected to attract 250,000 tourists per four-month season and provide employment for about 300 persons, mostly college students.

Cajun Country could open as early as the Fourth of July, according to Bill Daly, one of the men spearheading the venture. Construction can start in February if enough persons pledge financial support of the project by Feb. 1, he said.

Morris Ford, director of the Louisiana Tourism Commission, pledged his support and that of the commission. The project would be a major attraction but also an industry. It could mean millions of dollars to the southwest Louisiana economy, he added.

The project can be a significant factor in the building of Louisiana tourism to a billion-dollar industry by 1975, Ford added.

Swamp Tours

Guided tours and boat rides would be available as tourists could see what a Louisiana swamp looks like. The swamp would contain from six inches to three feet of water. Cypress trees would be left to their natural state, but obstructive undergrowth would be removed so boats could readily move about the water areas, according to Robert Gates, project coordinator.

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) has planned to stock the attraction with various types of wildlife and fish, according to Dan Guillot, director of the LWFC.

The French influence in Louisiana has stirred up the interest of some Europeans and Frenchmen, he said, and this project will increase their interest in seeing Louisiana.

The authenticity of the Cajun settlement will be assured by

Dean Tom Armentrouts of the University of Southwestern Louisiana. He is an authority on Acadian culture and has been a major cultural advisor for the project. Perkins said.

Other Plans

Ben Skerrett III, president of the Greater Atchafalaya Basin Council, pointed out that two other proposed projects for South Louisiana would enhance the success of Cajun Country. They are:

1. A plan for a replica of a saltmine and a Replica of a saltmine and a

2. A plan for a saltmine and a

Bill Daly, Cajun Country investor, gave a rundown of first-year expenditures based on "guessmations." Original outlay pledges is not secured by Feb. 1, he said.

Can this project fail once it's funded? A man in the audience asked. There is now, Daly said. About $20,000 had been pledged as of Tuesday, he said.

The project will be shelved. There is now way, Daly said. By the end of the day, the project will have received about half a million dollars worth of pledges. "It's an impossibility," he said.