Cheniere Au Tigre Natural Beach Awaits Discovery

Did you know that in this wondrous land of Evangeline there is a natural white sand beach next to a vast expanse of Gulf of Mexico water extending 20 miles along the Louisiana coast? Those who have been there say it is a lovely sight to see, that next to it Lake Pontchartrain is a mere puddle, and if you could find a way to get there, well, Biloxi, Gulfport, and places like that might just as well close up shop.

The area is the rich, undeveloped stretch of beach along a good portion of the south shore line of Vermilion Parish, at Cheniere Au Tigre. That’s around Pecan Island, just a few miles south of Abbeville on the way to Intracoastal City thereabouts. What makes this beach so unusually promising is that, unlike most of Louisiana’s coastline, the beach is formed on a huge sandbar and free of silt and mud deposits or formation. The gigantic sand bar formation extends probably a mile out into the Gulf, filtering the water clean and clear, and building up a natural sandshell beach with the rise and fall of the tides.

The only catch is that there is no road from Pecan Island to this undiscovered paradise in our midst. As long as 15 years ago, area legislators, civic officials and other interested citizens from Acadiana scouted the beach site after a circuitous nine-mile journey by mud boats across the marshes through ditches, canals and bayous, from Pecan Island to the Gulf. They came away in their own words, “dazzled,” “amazed,” “dumbfounded.”

And that was all. Coordination with state officials was lacking and efforts to develop the beach never got off the ground. The visitors all were unanimous in that a five-mile road would give Louisianans a Riviera of their own, but their pleas fell on deaf ears.

Now the state legislature has interested itself again in the developing of this area which could bring a tourist bonanza to Southwest Louisiana. The solons have endorsed a resolution by Rep. J. Luke LeBlanc of Lafayette to set up a committee of 4 representatives and 3 senators to study the feasibility of making Cheniere Au Tigre the Riviera of Louisiana. All that remains is for the governor to name the committeemen and give the study his endorsement. The area is rich in industrial and recreational potential, as was brought out recently in a joint survey by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and fifth-year USL architectural students. But to bring this potential to fruition, there must be strong support from the administration.

We recall with dismay the millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money squandered on the Cypremort Beach Bubble with nothing to show for it but mud flats, disreputable surroundings, and a run-down “beach.” We think of the million dollars that the legislature just approved to “save” Grand Isle, a worthy project to be sure, but we would wish to see the same concern to develop a natural wonder just a few miles away.

We view the development of Cheniere Au Tigre primarily as an accessible spot for the thousands of Acadiana residents who would want a fine beach to take their families to during the long Louisiana summers. We also see it as an unlimited tourist attraction. As we pointed out in our recent editorial series, “9 Challenges For ’71”, Acadiana and the state should overlook no idea that could pull in the tourist dollar.

There are some beaches that Acadiana residents visit during the summer. Two of the best known are Holly Beach and Rutherford Beach, and the smaller one at Lake Charles. Not as many families take the longer trip to Pontchartrain, the Mississippi Coast, or Galveston. Practically in our own backyard is the loveliest beach of all. The waves of the Gulf of Mexico in endless procession over the years have whipped seashells and sand against the low-lying carpet of marsh to build up a beach that is a wonder of nature.

Cheniere Au Tigre only awaits a new route of discovery.