Chicot State Park Opens June 6

8000-Acre Tract Near Ville Platte Has 2500-Acre Fish-Filled Lake

Predicting a paradise to match the fondest dreams of nature lovers and fishermen, the rains have sent millions of gallons of water pouring over the concrete spillway into Chicot Park lake, making this the crowning jewel of Louisiana's largest state park which will be formally opened on June 6.

Chicot State Park is in Evangeline parish about four miles from Ville Platte and 42 miles from Alexandria. Comprising 8000 acres of rolling woodland of which more than 2500 are flooded by a natural lake with high hills on the shoreline, long jutting peninsulas and a profusion of cypress trees, it is one of the largest state parks in the South.

Its history goes back to 1928, when a group of civic-minded citizens in Ville Platte, with the assistance of the late Congressman Rene L. DeRouen, won the interest of the national park service in Washington, D. C. It was 1938 before any definite action was taken. That year the Legislature of Louisiana appropriated $25,000 in 1938 $15,000 to purchase the necessary land. The Ville Platte Rotary Club was active in helping to secure the necessary land.

Then under the direction of the national park service the state parks commission of Louisiana began to develop the park. Undesirable trees and growth were cut away, 200 Civilian Conservation Corps men cleared the lake and constructed a mile-long levee and spillway. The state conservation department has been stocking the lake with fish for two years and the area has been posted so that wild duck, squirrel and other animals and birds are plentiful.

In recent years Chicot Park has been entirely in the hands of the state parks commission. Active in its development has been District Attorney E. Herman Guillory of Ville Platte, chairman of the commission. He is a native of Ville Platte and one of the originators of the park.

Using cypress and oak from the park for all structures, 10 overnight cabins have been built near the lake. Besides all the other usual equipment, these each have a barbeque pit and picnic table. The furniture was constructed by the Mamou High school trade school in Evangeline parish.

For parties there are large pits and picnic accommodations and plans for an organized camp area available to the Scouts and other groups are being made. At the two-story boathouse with its pier fishing vessels are available and private boats may be kept for a monthly charge. Five deep wells furnish fresh water throughout the park.

Because of its proximity to Camp Beauregard, Livingston and Claiborne, it is expected that many soldiers will use Chicot Park this summer. Plans are being drafted for 10 more vacation cabins, two additional picnic shelters and a bathhouse and bathing beach on the lake. Ultimate plans are that the man-made portion of the park will be concentrated in the central portion, leaving the remainder as a natural reserve for wildlife.