Atchafalaya Basin focus of French documentary

By Janice Bourgeois
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Fifteen miles down a lonely levee road, despite the beautiful view of nature’s wonders, a stranger might get anxious over ever reaching his destination. But sure enough, right up ahead was the ribbon tied to the marker indicating a right turn to the house in the Atchafalaya Basin.

It makes one wonder what kind of trust the foreigner must have to come all the way from Paris, France to a place appearing so eerie and desolate, yet so familiar—looking from scenes in movies and pictures in books of the Louisiana swamp.

Vincent Steiger, the operation manager of a French documentary television series, *Dans La Nature*, has chosen the Atchafalaya Basin for the location of its next documentary program.

The two-year-old series focuses on man’s relationship to nature, and is broadcast on CANAL, the largest documentary television channel in France. The program is aired five times monthly and is seen by viewers throughout France, Belgium, North Africa and soon, all of Europe.

“Our producer/presenter is Stephane Peyron, a very exciting and energetic 32-year-old innovator,” said Steiger. “His method of filming is to share in the daily life of people who are in direct contact with the environment.” Peyron has the distinction of being a Wind Surf world champion and holds a record for crossing the Atlantic Ocean on a wind surf (surf board with sail).

Steiger said that the Atchafalaya Basin was chosen because of the people’s battle with controlling the Mississippi River and the effects the river has on the livelihood of the Basin residents. Although the director prefers to show “hands on” the action of people without much dialogue, the film will be narrated in both French and English.

Guided by local resident and photographer, Greg Guirard, the film crew will cover the everyday lives of crawfishermen, trappers, commercial fishermen, craftsmen and other facets of life in the Basin.

“It is very important to Peyron, our producer, that relationships are built between the company and the people that are being documented.”

Vincent Steiger

The eight-man crew is expected to arrive in Louisiana in mid-March for a two-week filming. In return for the cooperation of the different Louisiana agencies involved in the project, the “Dans La Nature Company” will have the final taping and the use of the plane available to local and state programs.

According to Steiger, “This method of editing is very unique and high tech. We actually can edit on sight, reducing the risk of ruining the original tape. It also saves a lot of time,” Steiger said.

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