Louisiana: Rich in its culture and diversity

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I believe Acadiana is the greatest place on Earth to live.

I base my opinion on my comparative experience in having worked on just about every continent on Earth during the past 40 years. Nowhere in the world is there a more friendly and opportunity-filled place to live.

Many of the residents of the coastal parishes are descendants of the original Acadians who came to southern Louisiana from a section of Canada then known as Acadia, now Nova Scotia, under coercion of the British in 1765. As a result of this massive immigration, French culture has influenced the style of life in the coastal parishes.

Coastal Louisiana is a "sportsmen's paradise" offering opportunities for fishing, hunting, boating, and other water-related recreational activities, not to mention scenic beauty.

Louisiana's extensive coastal wetlands are great natural producers of food. These vast marshlands and coastal waters sustain renewable resources which serve many commercial and recreational functions year after year.

The warm, humid climate and mixing of fresh and salt water favor growth of vegetation and wildlife. Acadiana is an area of ever increasing activity with unlimited potential.

The diverse nature of Acadiana and the activities which are conducted within it have made the area one of the most active in the country. As a result, the area will soon again realize expansion for commercial and industrial development, water resources development, recreation, tourism, and urbanization.

The estuarine system produces one third of the nation's fishing harvest; the soils and climate produce many of the country's sugar and rice; and the Mississippi River and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway serve as vital commercial arteries for much of the interior of both Louisiana and the United States.

It is estimated that 31/2 million acres in Louisiana can be classified as prime farmland. Rice, sugar cane, and soybeans are the main crops grown in the coastal region.

Coastal Louisiana used to provide 57 percent of Louisiana's tax revenue. Due to high taxes and environmental disincentives, the oil and gas tax revenues dropped from $1.7 billion in 1969 to $630,000 in 1990. The oil production dropped from 850 million barrels annually to 140 million barrels. Gas production dropped from 8.5 trillion cubic feet to 1.5 trillion cubic feet.

Employment in 1991 peaked at 750,000 in the oil and gas industry. In the ensuing years, employment dropped to 300,000. It's apparent Louisiana will have to make the transition to industries that require large volumes of fresh water.

Louisiana has ample supplies of these renewable resources to provide the growth needs of the future.