Wetlands talk, music highlight of Miss. cruise

By BOB ANDERSON
Environmental editor

A noon cruise on the Mississippi River aboard the Samuel Clemens, which will include music and a discussion about wetlands conservation and the river, highlights today's Earth Week festivities.

The Baton Rouge League of Women voters also is sponsoring a citizen's dialogue with local experts on the subject of groundwater pollution this evening at the Unitarian Church, 8470 Goodwood Blvd. at 6:30 p.m.

On Tuesday, the Alliance for Affordable Energy gave an Earth Week presentation downtown on how consumers can help to protect the environment by saving energy.

Replacing a 75-watt incandescent light bulb with an 18-watt fluorescent lamp, which lasts 18 times longer, provides the same light, according to the alliance. Saving energy helps — depending on the source of the energy — to slow global warming, reduce acid rain or reduce the creation of radioactive waste, the alliance states.

"In addition to saving about a ton of carbon dioxide emissions from a coal-fired power plant, which would otherwise contribute to global warming, these light bulbs also save a ton of money," said Thomas Lowenburg, the alliance's research director.

More accurately, replacing a 75-watt incandescent bulb with an 18-watt fluorescent bulb will save about $45 in electricity over the life of the bulb, he said.

"Energy efficiency and renewable technology is the one-two punch that can knock out global climate change, dependence on energy imports, acid rain, cancer-causing radioactive waste and rising energy costs," said Gary Groesch, executive director of the alliance. "If you can change a light bulb, you can change Louisiana."

A Southern University group is trying to help businesses and industries reduce energy consumption by going through their facilities and making recommendations.

"We're currently doing about 20 energy audits a month," said Lavern Smith of the Industrial and Commercial Energy Reduction Program.

"We've been able to cut people's bills 20 to 30 percent when they follow our recommendations," she said in a telephone interview.

That program is funded through the Department of Natural Resources with a federal grant. Companies wishing to have an energy audit can call 771-4734.

Thursday's Earth Week program will focus on air quality.

Friday's program deals with endangered species and other wildlife.

Saturday is recycling day at the Kmart parking lot on College Drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. It will include a chance to get rid of household hazardous wastes and to exchange cans of used paint.

Earth Week climaxes with a day of activities downtown on Sunday.

Cost of participating in today's ride on the Samuel Clemens is $1. Lunch can be purchased aboard the vessel.

After Lisa Creasman of the Nature Conservancy speaks about the river and wetlands, Cloud Nine will entertain with jazz. Passengers can board from the levee downtown. The cruise lasts from noon to 1 p.m.