

LICI report to the Friends of Palmetto Island State Park



April 2023: LICI set up a meeting at the Palmetto Island State Park boardwalk during the iris bloom in response to numerous requests from some followers of the LICI Facebook page to have the boardwalk swamp included on LICI's annual map of places to see irises blooming. Friends of Palmetto Island State Park's Roxanne Burnette, President, and Shannon Neveux, Advisor to the Board of Directors of the non-profit, spent two hours meeting with LICI volunteers Henry Cancienne, Kent Benton, Forest Benton, and LICI's President Gary Salathe. By the end of the meeting, LICI had accepted the offer by the Friends group to take over the management of the Abbeville Red iris display at the boardwalk swamp.

April 2023: LICI organizes a trip to the property of the largest landowner within the Abbeville Swamp while the Abbeville Red irises are blooming. The purpose of the trip is to locate irises, estimate how many may still be growing in this area of the swamp, and look for the causes of their depletion over the last few decades. They discover that vast areas of that portion of the Abbeville Swamp no longer hold any irises.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/lici-invited-to-tour-parts-of-privately-owned-abbeville-swamp-home-to-the-i-nelsonii-iris>

May 2023: The Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism's Louisiana State Parks approves LICI's proposal to manage and increase the number of *I. nelsonii* (Abbeville Red) Louisiana irises growing in Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk swamp.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/departement-of-louisiana-state-parks-approves-lici-s-iris-management-proposal>

May 2023: The Friends of Palmetto Island State Park board of directors agrees to participate in the LICI iris restoration project in the park and issues a grant to LICI to fund the effort.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/friends-group-to-partner-with-lici-to-manage-irises-at-palmetto-island-state-park-boardwalk>



June 2023: LICI expands its iris nursery in New Orleans to grow out Abbeville Red iris seedlings being donated by Kent Benton.

July 2023: LICI agrees to help the Vermilion Parish Tourist Commission market the 2024 Louisiana iris bloom at Palmetto Island State Park.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/lici-to-help-vermillion-parish-tourist-commision-with-marketing-iris-bloom>



July 2023: Kent Benton donates hundreds of Abbeville Red iris seedlings he created through his Captive Breeding process. (Only two of the many pots Kent donated are shown in the photo.)

The seedlings were planted in the LICI nursery to grow out for planting in Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk swamp in December.

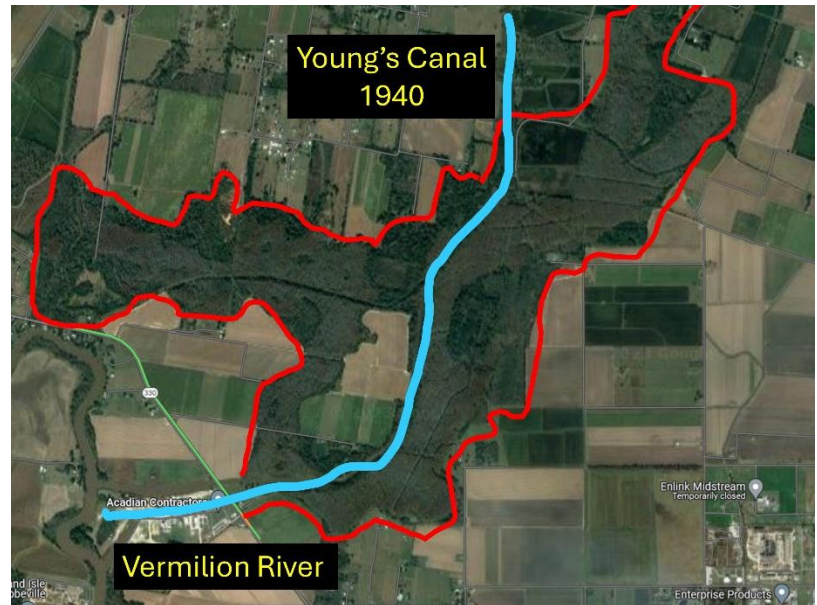
July 2023: With the owners' approval, LICI does its first annual Abbeville Red seed collection in a portion of the Abbeville Swamp and then uses various groups to pot the seeds and germinate them. The irises will be planted at Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk swamp in December 2024.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/first-annual-abbeville-swamp-iris-seed-collection-is-completed-by-lici>



August 2023: In response to concerns that the Abbeville Red irises were dying in Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk swamp due to an extended drought, LICI organizes an emergency watering when the cypress tree leaves turn rust-color and fall off the trees. Water was pumped 400 feet into the dry swamp from a pond.

August 2023: LICI's Gary Salathe does a presentation to members of the Vermilion Parish Policy Jury and other interested members of governmental commissions on the Abbeville Red iris and its threatened native habitat in the Abbeville Swamp and Palmetto Island State Park. Shannon Neveaux, a Friends member and coastal activist, organized the meeting.



September 2023: LICI organizes a Chinese Tallow tree (Chicken tree) removal event in the Palmetto Island State Park boardwalk swamp using volunteers from the Friends group and various community organizations.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/lici-leads-chinese-tallow-tree-removal-event-at-palmetto-island-state-park>

October 2023: LICI's Gary Salathe, along with Donald Sagrera, Executive Director of the Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water District, give presentations during the Chenier Plain Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority meeting in Abbeville about saltwater intrusion caused by the extended drought. Salathe's presentation highlighted the threats this creates to the Abbeville Red irises in the Abbeville Swamp and at Palmetto Island State Park.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/lici-gives-a-presentation-on-the-abbeville-red-iris-to-cpcrpa>

October 2023: LICI organizes a second emergency watering of the irises in the Palmetto Island State Park boardwalk swamp, which appeared to be dying due to the now historic drought. Water was pumped 400 feet into the dry swamp from a pond.



November 2023: Kent Benton donates two hundred mature Abbeville Red irises from his nursery for the December planting at the Palmetto Island State Park boardwalk swamp.

November 2023: The Abbeville Red iris seedlings growing at LICI's New Orleans iris nursery, which Kent Benton donated in July, are ready to be transplanted into the Palmetto Island State Park boardwalk swamp.



December 2023: LICI organizes an iris-planting event at Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk swamp. Kent Benton donated the 700 Abbeville Red irises that are planted, either as full-size plants or, earlier in the year, as seedlings. Volunteers from LICI, the local community, and the Abbeville Garden Club braved harsh weather conditions to plant the irises.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/lici-complets-first-annual-iris-planting-at-palmetto-island-state-park>



December 2023: Two signs created by LICI are installed at the Palmetto Island State Park boardwalk after extended negotiations with the State Park's Baton Rouge main office on the wording to be used. These signs are the first time anything has ever been mentioned within the park that removing plants is against the law.

December 2023: LICI collects the Abbeville Red seedlings from the three groups germinating the seeds collected in July from the Abbeville Swamp. The 800 seedlings are planted into containers at LICI's New Orleans nursery. They will be planted into Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk swamp during the winter of 2024.



February 2024: LICI adds Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk to its interactive map of places to see Louisiana irises blooming. Three months later, at the end of the spring iris bloom season, over 46,500 people will have clicked on and viewed it in Google Maps.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/lici-s-2024-louisiana-iris-viewing-location-map-acheives-record-number-of-views>

March 2024: The Friends of Palmetto Island State Park's board of directors votes to allow LICI to hold an iris bloom event at the same time as the Friends' annual Stir the Pot fundraiser. Both organizations hope to benefit from introducing new people to each other's group.



March 2024: LICI's Gary Salathe gives a presentation to a Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) conference on the Abbeville Red iris and its threatened native habitat in the Abbeville Swamp and Palmetto Island State Park. The organization is comprised of representatives from industry and small businesses, fisheries, farming, oil and gas, government agencies, individual citizens, landowners, civic organizations, hunters, scientists, engineers, environmentalists, economists, and urban planners.





March 2024: LICI organizes a tour of portions of the Abbeville Swamp to better understand the threats to the swamp and why, over the last decades, the Abbeville Red irises are disappearing. Some of the landowners and a Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries staff member with experience in water control structures took part in the tour.

April 2024: LICI markets its iris bloom event at Palmetto Island State Park on social media in the Lafayette and Baton Rouge areas. The postings are placed on over 8,000 Facebook newsfeeds.



LICI bloom event
April 6, 2024



April 2024: The Palmetto Island State Park manager, Andrea Jones, approves LICI's plan to use the boardwalk swamp as a clearing house to relocate some of the Abbeville Red irises back into the Abbeville Swamp each year. The plan is to grow out between 1,500 to 2,000 seeds each year that will be collected from the Abbeville swamp. The irises from the seeds will be planted into the park's boardwalk swamp. Iris experts will confirm that they are pure Abbeville Red irises as they bloom the following spring. Many of them will then be relocated back into the swamp later that year.



April 2024: LICI holds its first Abbeville Red iris bloom event during the Friends' Stir the Pot event.

The educational event included a guest speaker, Patrick O'Connor, who gave a presentation in the park's meeting room on Louisiana irises and the history of the Abbeville Red iris being named a separate species of Louisiana iris. Other iris experts answered questions at the nearby boardwalk's displays.

Each of the estimated two hundred event attendees paid the entrance fee for the Friends' Stir the Pot event.



April 2024: LICI organizes an investigative trip to the property of the largest landowner within the Abbeville Swamp while the Abbeville Red irises are blooming. The purpose of the trip was to better estimate how many irises can still be found in their area of the swamp and to look more closely at the causes for their slowly disappearing. They confirm that vast areas of that portion of the Abbeville Swamp no longer hold any irises, and the number of irises there could likely be numbered by only hundreds of plants, not thousands.



May 2024: Patrick O'Connor, the guest speaker at LICI's iris bloom event in April, returned to Palmetto Island State Park to give the same presentation to members of the Lafayette Parish Master Gardeners Association in the park's meeting room. The presentation was followed by the group touring the boardwalk and walking some of the nearby trails.

That afternoon, Patrick repeated his presentation to members of various governmental agencies and some of the Abbeville Swamp's owners. This was followed by LICI's Gary Salathe giving a presentation to the group about the threats to the Abbeville Swamp and Palmetto Island State Park from extremely high tides and saltwater intrusion.



May 2024: LICI's Gary Salathe is invited to give a presentation to the Vermilion River Alliance at their meeting in Abbeville on the Abbeville Red iris and its threatened habitat. After the meeting, one of the organizations in attendance offered to help fund the protection of the Abbeville Swamp from saltwater intrusion and extremely high tides

June 2024: LICI's Gary Salathe visits the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in Cameron Parish, where he sees numerous examples of large and small water control structures that could be used at the Abbeville Swamp to combat saltwater intrusion and extremely high tides.



June 2024: During their June Greater New Orleans Iris Society (GNOIS) general membership meeting, its president, Patrick O'Connor, gives a revised version of his May presentation in Palmetto Island State Park on the Abbeville Red iris. His presentation now includes the threats to the Abbeville Swamp and Palmetto Island State Park's irises. He also tells the group he supports LICI's efforts in southern Vermilion Parish and will look for ways the GNOIS can help.

July 2024: For the second year in a row, LICI completes its annual collection of the Abbeville Red seeds from the Abbeville Swamp in Vermilion Parish. Five different organizations volunteer to germinate the 2,187 seeds for LICI. The seedlings will be collected from the five groups in December and planted into containers to grow out at LICI's New Orleans nursery. The irises will then be planted into the Palmetto Island State Park's boardwalk swamp during the winter of 2025.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/second-annual-abbeville-swamp-iris-seed-collection-is-completed-by-lici>

July 2024: The Greater New Orleans Iris Society (GNOIS), as stewards of the Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project, donates multiple pots of Abbeville Red irises to LICI's iris restoration project at Palmetto Island State Park.

<https://www.licisaveirises.com/post/louisiana-species-preservation-project-donates-abbeville-red-irises-to-lici-s-project>

The GNOIS is also considering a proposal by LICI for the two groups to partner in using a portion of the GNOIS Louisiana iris nursery in New Orleans' City Park to propagate Abbeville Red iris plants and also grow them out from seeds for use in the Palmetto Island State Park's iris restoration project.

**POSTPONED
UNTIL 2026**

New Iberia, La &
Palmetto Island
State Park

**Bayou Teche Native
Louisiana Iris Festival**



*Celebrating our four species of
native Louisiana irises*

August 2024: The Louisiana Iris Festival group votes to postpone the first festival until 2026. The second day of the festival was to be held in Palmetto Island State Park.

State grants for festivals have been discontinued at their past levels. The organizers are worried that not hearing from other grants yet is pushing the envelope on putting the festival financing in place early enough to be certain it is fully funded in time for commitments that need to be made soon.