

Six new state paddling trails opening at Caddo April 21

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Caddo Lake is now the home of six new Texas paddling trails.

To celebrate this new venture, the new paddling trails will be launched during the first annual Caddo Lake Earth Day Regatta on Saturday, April 21, in Uncertain.

“The first 50 to sign up will get T-shirts just to get the word out about this,” said Robert Speight during a Cypress Valley Navigation District meeting.

This past September, the Cypress Valley Navigation District approved to enter into a partnership agreement with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to create and maintain a Texas paddling trail. The community partner for the project is Back Water Jacks Landing and RV Park.

“It is a great eco-tourism opportunity – one that both Harrison County and Marion County will benefit from greatly,” CVND board chair Jeff Thompson said previously.

Texas has 37 official Texas Paddling Trails.

Admission to the launching event of the six new ones at Caddo Lake will be free, and free lunch will be served, 1 p.m., at the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

The purpose of the Earth Day Regatta is to raise awareness of Caddo Lake paddle trails, promote tourism and increase traffic to local merchants. According to a press release, community groups, businesses and agencies around Caddo Lake have banded together to create paddling trails through some of the most scenic waterways in Texas.

“We want the paddle trails to benefit all the community, all visitors within the area and to all of the people who want to come and enjoy Caddo,” said Speight.

Paddlers will register for the event from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Caddo Lake State Park, located off State Highway 43, about 14 miles northeast of Marshall. According to organizers, registrants must obtain a free entrance permit from the park office for their windshield before taking their canoe or kayak for a beautiful morning on one of six new trails.

“Each has unique features and all are good for birding and photography,” a press release said.

Several of the trails start in Uncertain, on the shores of Caddo Lake. The trails range from four to nine miles long.

The trails include:

Hell's Half Acre – 9 mile up-and-back trails with put in at the State Park. Lovely pond, river, canal and bayou trail.

Carter's Chute- 7.7 mile up-and-back trail with put in at Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area launch. A beautiful bayou and swamp trail. Not much boat traffic.

Old Folk's Playground – 4.7 mile loop that begins and ends at Crip's Camp in Uncertain. Passes by the National Wildlife Refuge.

Turtle Shell – 4.4 mile loop that puts in and ends at Johnson's Ranch Marina in Uncertain. Spectacular lotus blooms in mid to late summer.

Cathedral – 4 mile up-and-back trail that begins at Shady Glade Resort in Uncertain. Makes its way through towering, Spanish moss-covered Cypress trees

Backwater Jack's – puts in at Backwater Jack's Resort.

“After paddling, head over to Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge for a free lunch and festivities at 1 p.m.,” organizers urged, noting festivities will include birding trail tours led by Friends of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

Refreshments, trail maps and other information will be available. For more information about the event call 903-472-5733 or 903-679-3351 or e-mail info@caddolake.us.

Sponsors for the event include: Greater Caddo Lake Association Texas, Friends of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Caddo Lake Catering, Bulldog Steel, Dennis O'Bryant/Smart Advertising, City of Uncertain, Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Caddo Lake State Park, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Caddo Lake Institute.