

saving_our_streams_05

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

plants, banks, tree limbs, bayou, bioengineering, hershey, erosion, waterways, habitat, sediment, leaves, native plants, manicure, willow trees, people, caused, nature, shores, concrete, grow

SPEAKERS

Don Payne, Eddie Seidensticker, Terry Hershey, Eric Ruckstuhl, Norm Uhl

N

Norm Uhl 00:05

Many of us are drawn to water. Some are fortunate enough to live on the banks or shores of beautiful waterways. We all love a great view. But in some cases, the steps people take to get a better view ends up destroying it. Most erosion and destruction of habitat is caused by people. In the fifth and final part of this series, we will visit Paradise Lost.

E

Eric Ruckstuhl 00:31

The only way to see the bayous is really to canoe down them.

N

Norm Uhl 00:36

It's also the only way to see the erosion of banks caused over the years by pollution, severe weather, and by human beings.

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Eric Ruckstuhl 00:44

Most of the major erosion problems have been caused by the landowners themselves trying to manicure the bayou too much to have a view for themselves.

N

Norm Uhl 00:53

Once native plants are removed, the banks are vulnerable to the force of the water. So the quest for a better view ends up destroying it.

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Eric Ruckstuhl 01:01

It's already failed once as you can see in the middle, and that's what they've done for repair work. You would think that they'd learned their lesson by now. This on your right is interlocking concrete. This hasn't worked very well either. Another unorthodox erosion control approach that's failed. Pretty ugly.

N Norm Uhl 01:22

Experts say the best way to fight nature is with nature, by putting back what was there before.

E Eric Ruckstuhl 01:28

I really think that the bioengineering method is the best. They put a limestone toe at the bottom and then covered with soil and plant thousands of willow trees, and the willow trees grow so fast, and the roots go in that it holds the banks together really quickly.

T Terry Hershey 01:45

Those are willows that are coming out. But that's bioengineering and it will get stronger than that concrete thing you saw over there, which was built and that's 30 years old and it's about to fall over.

N Norm Uhl 01:56

Terry Hershey practices what she preaches. She's a longtime advocate of bayou preservation. She uses native plants to protect the banks of the bayou which passes by her property. Of course, it's more than just erosion control. It's restoring lost habitat where birds and animals eat, live, and reproduce. In 30 years, Terry Hershey has created a nature sanctuary out of what used to be three acres of finely manicured lawn. What did you do to change it from manicured to this?

T Terry Hershey 02:25

I left it alone.

N Norm Uhl 02:28

Hershey also uses what nature throws away, such as leaves for compost that will provide nutrients for her garden. Most people don't do that. And as a result, lawn clippings, leaves, and tree limbs waste a lot of landfill space.

D Don Payne 02:43

One third of all of everything that we pick up on the heavy trash program are large tree limbs

One third of all, of everything that we pick up on the heavy trash program, are large tree limbs and branches and wood. So rather than landfilling that we thought well why don't we recycle them?

 Norm Uhl 02:54

The City of Houston now has contracts with several companies which produce compost. It saves landfill space and it saves the city money. This wood was removed from the shores of the Houston Ship Channel. The Houston area has 3000 miles of waterways that all empty into the Galveston Bay system.

 Eddie Seidensticker 03:14

Put the plants in about a foot and a half apart.

 Norm Uhl 03:17

Here on Morgan's point past oil spills and pollution have killed off native plants that used to keep the beaches in place. Students with AmeriCorps are now restoring habitat as they do community service in exchange for help with college tuition.

 Eddie Seidensticker 03:31

And in about six months, they will be thick and they will establish a good healthy root system and they'll look like the plants in the foreground up here.

 Norm Uhl 03:39

At high tide young marine life uses the area as a nursery to feed and grow up and when the tide recedes the plants trap sediments and sand. The beach literally rebuilds itself, and since less sediment returns to the bay, water quality also improves.