



STATE OF LOUISIANA  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
BATON ROUGE

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. EWE 95-33

- WHEREAS,** the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and the Department of Transportation and Development wish to address the widespread concerns regarding the deterioration of the Great Mississippi River Road Corridor as a scenic, historic and educational resource; and
- WHEREAS,** The Great Mississippi River Road consists of a corridor approximately 70 miles in length located on each side of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, including the river, levees, and adjacent lands and cultural resources; and
- WHEREAS,** the National Trust for Historic Preservation has designated the corridor to be among the nation's eleven most endangered historic properties; and
- WHEREAS,** legitimate concerns regarding the River Road as an overall scenic, historic, cultural and tourism resource need to be addressed; and
- WHEREAS,** throughout the nineteenth century, the River Road consisted largely of plantation lands, boasting some of the South's most architecturally significant plantation homes, with an agrarian character interrupted occasionally by brick sugar mills; and
- WHEREAS,** during the twentieth century, several developments, most notably the dredging of the Mississippi River for ocean-going vessels, stimulated industrial growth, including coal terminals, refineries, and chemical plants, in the area; and
- WHEREAS,** these major industrial facilities are a significant part of Louisiana's economy. These facilities have provided, and will continue to provide, thousands of jobs to Louisiana citizens; and
- WHEREAS,** the design of these major industrial facilities was completed with no regard for their impact on the historic plantation landscape of the region, many set directly on the River Road with no buffer zones or screening; and
- WHEREAS,** the issue of visual intrusion needs to be addressed as new industrial facilities are developed and obsolete plants are replaced; and
- WHEREAS,** in the 1930's the noted pioneer restoration architect Richard Koch photographed eighty (80) of what he considered to be the finest plantation houses in the River Road region. Today less than half of these are still standing, and some of those that remain face uncertain futures; and
- WHEREAS,** a vast majority of these properties have been lost to demolition by neglect caused by owner indifference, a situation considerably exacerbated by fragmented property ownership. Typically, the numerous owners cannot agree on what to do with the property; therefore the property stands deteriorating year after year, subject to abuse by vandals and wild animals; and

**WHEREAS,** the River Road Corridor has no overall, coordinated interpretive and sign program to inform tourists about important historical events and direct them to available resources; and

**WHEREAS,** the River Road is not presently viewed as a unit or as a marketable corridor. Yet, according to the State Office of Tourism, the area's various resources constitute some of the state's most significant tourist attractions but lacks an overall promotional strategy; and

**WHEREAS,** there is a large amount of apathy and indifference, particularly on the part of River Road property owners, as well as ignorance of various options open to these property owners; and

**WHEREAS,** there is a significant lack of accord among those parties who are interested in the River Road. Industry, hikers, bikers, environmentalists, historical preservationists, development-minded property owners, and conservationists each have their view of the correct way to best utilize this area. Each of the above groups is currently pushing their own agenda without regard for the others. If some measure of accord could be reached among these groups, it would significantly enhance the chances of positive action along the River Road Corridor.

**NOW THEREFORE I, EDWIN W. EDWARDS,** Governor of the State of Louisiana, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Louisiana, do hereby create and establish the Mississippi River Road Commission, and do hereby order and direct as follows:

**SECTION 1:** The Mississippi River Road Commission is hereby established.

**SECTION 2:** The commission shall be composed of at least twenty-six (26) members, including a chairperson, appointed in the following fashion:

1. A delegation of no less than four (4) state legislators from the River Road parishes and/or their designees;
2. The Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development, or his or her designee;
3. The Lieutenant Governor, Commissioner of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, or his or her designee;
4. The Secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality, or his or her designee;
5. The President of the Louisiana Preservation Alliance, or his or her designee;
6. The Director of the Louisiana Preservation Alliance;
7. The Chairman of the Louisiana Preservation Alliance River Road Task Force;
8. The Director of the Louisiana Chemical Association, or his or her designee;
9. Police jurors from at least four (4) of the River Road parishes;
10. At least two (2) representatives from parish-wide Tourist Development boards;

11. At least two (2) representatives from parish-wide Economic Development groups;
12. At least one (1) representative from recreational organizations;
13. The President of the River Road Historical Society, or his or her designee;
14. Four (4) members to be appointed at large;
15. The Pilot-president of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission.

**SECTION 3:** The Commission will first conduct a comprehensive study of the River Road corridor, which will lead to the development of a River Road Enhancement Plan ("the Plan"). The Plan will present the overall picture and focus on specific achievable goals and objectives, including detailed strategies to achieve those objectives. The Commission will then oversee the implementation of the Plan within a specified time line.

**SECTION 4:** Non ex-officio members of the Commission will be appointed by the Governor and will serve for the duration of the project or until replaced. Upon completion of the Plan, non ex-officio Commission members will continue to serve three (3) year terms on a staggered basis during which time they will provide for the plan's long term implementation. Staggering of terms will be accomplished by appointing one third (1/3) of the members for an initial one (1) year term, a second third (1/3) of the members for an initial two (2) year term and the final third (1/3) for an initial three (3) year term. As each of these initial terms expires, the seat in question will be filled by a three (3) year appointee.

- SECTION 5:**
1. The Commission will recommend approval or disapproval at each stage of the phased study and will make recommendations concerning approval of the final report once it is prepared. Finally, the Commission will oversee the long-term implementation of the report.
  2. The project director and his support staff will be domiciled in the offices of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development in Baton Rouge. He may elect to be domiciled elsewhere depending upon the availability of space and the discretion of the Commission.

**SECTION 6:** This executive order shall be effective upon signature.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand officially and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Louisiana, at the Capitol, in the City of Baton Rouge, on this 24th day of October, 1995.

*Edwin W. Edwards*  
EDWIN W. EDWARDS  
GOVERNOR

ATTEST BY  
THE GOVERNOR

*Fox McKeithen*  
FOX McKEITHEN  
SECRETARY OF STATE