

**Minutes – Atchafalaya Basin Program (ABP)
Research and Promotion Board Meeting
June 16, 2016**

Meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by the Chair - Gerald Alexander

Introductions were made by attendees, including Joe Baustian (TNC), Jim Bergan (TNC), Charles Reulet (DNR), and Honora Buras (CPRA).

A Roll Call was conducted and showed the following members in attendance and that a quorum was present:

Gerald Alexander, Ray Berthelot, Gordon LeBlanc (for Lance Broussard), Myles Brumfield, Guy Cormier, Melissa Kaintz, Keith Lovell, Bijan Sharafkhani, Brad Spicer, and Charles Sutcliffe.

Sign-in sheet is attached to document all attendees.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Brad Spicer, seconded by Charles Sutcliffe, and passed unanimously by voice vote of the members.

A motion to approve the minutes from the February 2016 meeting was made Charles Sutcliffe, seconded by Bijan Sharafkhani and was passed unanimously by voice vote of the members.

Board members introduced themselves.

Gerald Alexander mentioned that the ABP typically organizes a field trip for the board members and recommended that members attend if possible.

Don Haydel gave an update of the current legislative session. He stated that the ABP's capital outlay budget of \$5.6 million dollars that had been amended out last week had been restored. He said that the full senate meets today and that there would likely be some discussion on the final version. Last week, he emailed the Research and Promotion board members, Atchafalaya Oversight Committee members, Natural Resources committees (House and Senate),

NGOs, and other interested individuals. Many of those individuals went to work to get the funding restored.

The funding will support two boat launches and depth restoration in Grand Lake. For the Grand Lake project, Mr. Haydel said that ABP is still waiting for the blockage to be restored. The Corps was looking at repairing it, and now the pipeline company is also working on it. ABP currently has \$1.3 million approved to restore the depth in Grand Lake.

Mr. Haydel further stated that the situation for the state's capital outlay budget is that there is \$1.3 billion in priority 1 approvals, which are expected to remain. However, the state's bond capacity is only \$400 million for the next two years, so there is not enough to fund all of the approved projects. It will be a "race to the bank" to obligate funds before they run out. He said that Mark Moses, of Facility Planning and Control (FPC), explained to a Senate committee that the money is not actually locked to a project until FPC concurs, so we need to move more quickly on our projects to make sure this happens while money is still available.

Mr. Alexander remarked that private landowners have caused the current situation where projects cannot move forward because of objections to work on their property.

Guy Cormier said that he appreciated Don's quickness in getting them the information.

Don Haydel presented a funding reallocation for the board's approval. He said that nominations now require prior approval from the landowner unless they are on state property. In December 2015, DNR signed a memorandum of agreement with TNC, who had recently purchased 5,300 acres on Bayou Sorrel that adjoins state property. In order for a water quality project to move forward in that area, we need inputs from Bayou Sorrel and a willing landowner. Now we have both.

Mr. Haydel identified three projects from which funding can be reallocated to this project:

- **Pigeon Bay (~\$520,000):** This project is unable to proceed, because in order for it to work, it needs a drain on the south end, but the landowner is unwilling to cooperate.
- **Old projects (~\$500,000):** This is pre-Annual Plan money that is left over from several projects. It was previously dedicated to construction of a multi-purpose building at Sherburne WMA, but the bids for that project came in too high, and WLF did not want to pay the difference. At a recent meeting, Secretary Melancon and others agreed that the money should be moved to the TNC project.
- **NRIAS (~\$220,000):** These funds are left over from the development of a tool that the ABP uses to assess the hydrologic impact of potential projects. They would be put toward project monitoring.

Mr. Haydel asked the board to approved transfer of these funds to the TNC project in East Grand Lake Water Management Unit. This would bring the total project fund to about \$1.87 million.

Melissa Kaintz made a motion to approve the funding reallocation. Ray Berthelot seconded the motion.

Mr. Cormier asked about the fate of the Pigeon Bay project, which included the project “Dredge Location Canal North of Bayou Sorrel.” Mr. Haydel responded that ABP had worked with the landowners for three years, and in the end, they had only agreed to allow construction on one feature, which was the drain for the unit. Without hydrologic inputs into the unit, the project could not proceed.

Dean Wilson of the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper (ABK) organization asked to provide comment. He said that the 2nd largest landowner in the basin was responsible for this project and that the US Fish and Wildlife Service considers the area “marginal swamp.” He distributed a letter to the board members concerning the Bayou Postillion project. He also presented a letter sent by the ABK to DNR (Don Haydel) asking for the ABK to be included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between TNC and DNR. He presented the letter of response he received from Mr. Haydel declining the request. Mr. Wilson

accused The Nature Conservancy of creating science to support their projects. He accused DNR of working with TNC because they are a landowner while refusing to work with non-landowning stakeholders. He presented a letter from ABK's attorney concerning DNR's response to ABK's request concerning the MOU. He said that when he had expressed his opposition in the past, Mr. Haydel had told him that this project would not move forward. He stated that the water bottoms belong to the public and begged the board to vote against this project.*

Mr. Cormier clarified that the board was not voting for or against the project, but they were voting on whether to reallocate funds to the project.

Mr. Wilson replied that once the funds were there, DNR would proceed with the project.

Don Haydel stated that the East Grand Lake project consists of 171 features on private and state land. The project was previously held up by negotiations with private landowners, but now there is a willing landowner. He said that Wilbert's (the large landowner suggested by Mr. Wilson) had nothing to do with this project except to sell the property to TNC. DNR does not have permission from any landowner except for TNC.

Mr. Haydel agreed that several years ago, he had told Mr. Wilson that the East Grand Lake project would probably not proceed, but at that time, he did not foresee the purchase of property by TNC.

In regards to the letter of response to Mr. Wilson, Mr. Haydel reiterated that he would be glad to use any knowledge and research provided Mr. Wilson for the project. As stated in the letter, ABK cannot be a primary party to the MOU, because the agreement was between DNR, as the funding source, and TNC as the willing landowner.

Mr. Wilson stated that he would be happy to be a partner in developing the project but was denied. He said that once the board approves this reallocation, the funding is there, and the project can only be stopped through the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Dan Collins provided comment on the motion at hand. He stated that a recent water quality project by the ABP, Bayou Fourche, was actually for oil and gas. He stated that the state had no agreements with private landowners for the project and that there is no way the state completed the project on state property only. He pointed out that all over the coast, dredging of canals has led to coastal degradation, so why is the ABP dredging? He said that no one wants to see, years down the road, that this [TNC] project was actually for oil and gas.

Don Haydel stated that Bayou Fourche was only dredged 1 – 2 feet deep on state water bottoms for 1,600 feet and that there's no way it could be an oil and gas project.

Bijan Sharafkhani asked if there was a time limit on moving the funds.

Don Haydel replied that, as we learned this session, the legislature can amend out our funds, and then they are gone. The funding could be reduced in the next legislative session if not obligated.

Jim Bergan commented on behalf of The Nature Conservancy. He introduced himself as the Director of Freshwater Conservation for TNC. He said that TNC has a focus on conservation and that they take pride in building partnerships. They have worked with the state, parishes, businesses, NGOs, and private landowners. They look for constructive ways to achieve conservation on the ground. He said that TNC is a stakeholder in the Atchafalaya River Basin. Their #1 goal is to develop constructive relationships in the ARB, and they are driven by science. He noted that Brian Piazza wrote a book on the science of the Atchafalaya Basin. They have been searching for ways to break the stalemate, and their conservation priorities led them to E. Grand Lake, based on science. He said that relationship building has been difficult as basin landowners are very discerning, but TNC has invested in relationships and trust to break the stalemate. He said that we have a great opportunity here to break the stalemate and show landowners that fisheries and forests can benefit from these projects. He said we must trust that we can leverage our partnership; it's the only way to get work done. He added that the funding TNC recently received

from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) was the first time they had invested in the Atchafalaya.

Guy Cormier stated that he was glad to hear Mr. Bergan state their intent and that he has had positive dealings with TNC in St. Martin Parish concerning Lake Martin. In regard to oil and gas companies benefiting from the projects, he said that he hopes they will. His parish is about to construct Butte La Rose boat launch, and he hopes they will use it. He said that the parish is also working on the Beau Bayou water management project, because “we have to do something.” There are people who say that Bayou Postillion was the best thing ever for crawfish, that at the end of the day, it improved water quality. He also said that he is glad we are moving away from the building at Sherburne and directing those funds toward a water quality project.



Mr. Alexander said that last year, the board went on a visit to Bayou Fourche. He noted that it is a small stream and does not appear to be an oil and gas canal.

Mr. Alexander asked if any member objected to the motion at hand, hearing none, the motion was approved.

Mr. Alexander reiterated the importance of board members taking field trips.

Mr. Spicer remarked that the reason for doing projects is to benefit people.

Mr. Cormier said that he had just gotten news that Plaquemines Parish president, Amos Cormier, had died.

Mr. Alexander asked that a letter of condolence be prepared on behalf of the board.

No old business was discussed.

New business: Don Haydel recognized Mr. Gerald Alexander for his years of service and dedication to the Atchafalaya Basin Program with a certificate of appreciation

A motion to adjourn was made by Keith Lovell. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

***Documents were distributed by Mr. Wilson to all attendees. Copies are available from ABP upon request.**

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Atchafalaya
BASIN

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EVENT/LOCATION Research + Promotion Board Meeting

DATE: June 16, 2016

| NAME | ASSOCIATION | MAILING ADDRESS | ZIP | PHONE NUMBER | FAX NUMBER | E-MAIL ADDRESS |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Don Hayes</i> | | <u>_____</u> | | | | |
| <i>Ronald Alexander</i> | <i>ABLD</i> | <i>On File</i> | | | | |
| <i>B. Jan Swaraska-Klavu</i> | <i>DEA</i> | <u>_____</u> | | | | |
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| <i>Raymond Bernthelot</i> | <i>CRT</i> | <i>on File</i> | | | | |
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| <i>Brad Spicer</i> | <i>LDAF</i> | <i>on File</i> | | | | |
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