

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMITE RIVER BASIN DRAINAGE & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Location: **Louisiana State Capitol, 900 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802**

**October 14, 2025**

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT DURING ROLL CALL: John Clark, Jack Harris, Lionel Bailey, Clint Cointment, Brin Ferlito, Fred Raiford, Roy Schmidt, III

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT DURING ROLL CALL: Ryan Byrd, Randy Delatte, Pete Dufresne

VACANCIES: 3

ALSO PRESENT: Brian Lezina, CPRA; Larry Marino, Oats & Marino; Randy Clouatre, Sr., PLD; ARBC Executive Director Paul Sawyer; ARBC Executive Secretary Toni Guitrau; ARBC Legal Counsel Larry Bankston, Bankston & Associates

ALSO ABSENT: Ed Knight, LADOTD

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by ARBC President Clark.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Roll Call:** See above.

- 4. Guest Speaker:** Mayor Yates, City of St. George - Mayor Yates stated the City of St. George is the newest municipality in the state of Louisiana; the fifth largest city in the state; approximately 65 square miles; and with about 90,000 residents. The City of St. George wants to be a great partner with all the entities that do things that are not only within the city bounds of St. George, but its region. Drainage is always on the top of people's minds. It doesn't only have an effect on St. George and East Bouge Parish, but our neighbors in Ascension, and Livingston Parishes. Mayor Yates stated he wants to publicly say that the City of St. George wants to be a viable partner and help move projects along and get things going.

**5. Minutes.** There were no public comments.

The Board unanimously approved a motion by Cointment, seconded by Bailey to approve September 9, 2025, regular meeting minutes, as presented.

**6. Financial Statements.** There were no public comments.

The Board unanimously approved a motion by Bailey, seconded by Cointment to approve the August 2025 General Fund and CRDC Fund financial statements, as presented.

**7. Report by Executive Director.** There were no public comments.

- Upper Amite Restoration Project. Sawyer stated with respect to the Upper Amite Restoration Project, due diligence continues. He believes the firm working on the environmental portion of this should be completed within the next two weeks. Appraisals and title research are underway and will be reported soon. Thursday, October 16, 2025, the State Bond Commission will review ARBCs Capital Outlay request. \$2 million is expected to be approved and made available for spending, as needed.
- Louisiana Watershed Initiative Region 9. A summary report of projects that are taking place inside Region 9 was provided to board members. Sawyer explained that on some of these projects ARBC has more responsibility than on others. For the most part, the applications take place on an individual basis from individual applicants that are not involved directly with ARBC. Sawyer has asked the Office of Community Development to work with ARBC to get better reporting and analysis of what is going on with the projects in Region 9. In Region 9, there is \$359.8 million underway or approved in the Amite River Basin watershed. \$26.14 million has been spent, which means there is more than \$333 million remaining. There are projects that are moving more quickly than others. He explained that before you get to the expensive work of turning dirt and construction, there is preliminary work that is underway. As soon as this preliminary work is underway, you will see a burn rate that is pretty significant. Sawyer stated that the first of two most significant projects in

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terms of burn rate is the University Lakes Restoration Project. He said it is probably the most conspicuous project since tens of thousands of people drive over it every day. Second, is Livingston Parish drainage. These are the two projects that have spent the most money quickly. Even though a lot of these projects have not drawn down money or they have stopped spending since the last report, that does not mean activity is not going on. It just means that those funds haven't yet been drawn down. He explained it is similar to ARBC and what it does through CPRA and RCBG. ARBC does its work first, gets reimbursed next, and then the money is drawn down. One project that is experiencing significant burn rate is the Marvin Braud Pump Station Levee Elevation Upgrade. He mentioned that a couple of these projects, Livingston Parish and Marvin Braud, are represented by board members on this commission. He also mentioned the \$100 million that was allocated to ARBC, and then sub-allocated to four parishes in the lower part of the Amite River Basin. Despite the appearance that no money has been drawn down, that belies the notion that there is not a lot of activity. He reminded the Board that St. James Parish President Dufresne and his team presented their project report 2 months ago to the Commission. Later in this meeting, the Bayou Manchac Project will be discussed. The Ascension New River Stormwater Management Pump Station is moving along. The Lower Amite River Basin Sediment Removal Project is in the permitting phase at the USACE. It was decided to request that each parish submit an update to OCD so that the numbers/amounts are up to date. Cointment requested that totals at the bottom of the spreadsheets be provided, so the Board knows what was given in all rounds, as well as the burn rate.

- LWI RCBG Grant. As mentioned at the last ARBC meeting, a one-year extension was granted. Sawyer is currently working with Garvin Pittman, the Water Institute of the Gulf, to develop a plan and Scope of Work. Once a draft is prepared it will be presented to ARBC Commissioners for consideration. Sawyer stated that the Office of Community Development has established an LWI construction deadline. If applicants are not under construction by January 2027, they are going to revisit the viability of those projects.
- Comite River Diversion Canal Project. Sawyer stated that the USACE has rounded out all of their remaining major construction contracts. 85 out of original 89 required parcels acquired with 4 additional parcels required for Brook Lake under appraisals. There are currently additional parcels required for C&S three bayous. 49 of 63 relocations are complete. The remaining utilities are under various stages of relocation. USACE is currently analyzing whether additional relocations are needed for C&S three bayous. LA 964- 99.4% complete. LA 67 is 99.9% complete, LA 19 is 11% complete. The reimbursement agreement with Florida Gas has been signed.
- ARBC Website. Sawyer reported that the ARBC website is being modified through a different web host/website platform. There are capacity issues with the current website so this change will allow for more data intense files to be stored, such as the ARBC Master Plan. The plan is to provide the public with more resources to review, and to make it more user friendly.

**8. Report by Legal Counsel.** There were no public comments.

- Upper Amite Flood Reduction and Restoration Project. (Capital Outlay) Bankston stated he has been working with Sawyer and the ARBC consultants on the issues of title, appraisals and the completion of Phase 1 EA. There is a 120-day due diligence period. If issues arise with the appraisal or Phase 1 then an extension on time may be needed. A discussion was held on the status of the appraisal. Clark expressed concern over how long it is taking since the 120-day period is nearing and what might become necessary to get the job done. Bankston stated the contractor was working on the issue of direction from ARBC to start Phase 1 EA. This assessment may be finished within the next 10 days. They are only doing Phase 1 EA, not a wetlands determination at this time. Some of the issues relate to spending money, as ARBC has been trying to be conservative. Clark stated that if the appraiser can't determine the worth of property on the surface and beneath the surface or what the market may be, ARBC may need to find someone else to do it.
- Renewal of Contracts/and other. Bankston stated he has been working with ARBC staff regarding the contracts up for renewal; Resolution 1194/inclusion of St. George/Bayou Manchac Intergovernmental Agreement; Resolution 1195/OCD requirements every 2 years, all of which are on today's agenda. He will discuss with the Board the RFQ matter under Old Business on the agenda.
- DRAFT RFQ/Pre-Approved List/Template: The purpose of doing this in advance is for ARBC to have the ability to call upon an engineering and/or acquisition firm(s) that has been designated or chosen by the board. Bankston stated a pre-approved list of firms is something ARBC needs to have in place in anticipation of receiving future federal fund reimbursements. At the last ARBC meeting on October 14, 2025, it was decided to break it down into separate consulting services. One would be a Master Plan implementation, floodplain management and general engineering; second would be environmental services; third would be land survey; fourth would be real estate acquisitions and related services. It would be task order driven and the Board would need to set a "not to exceed" amount. It would be set up as a 2-year contract that could be renewed for an

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additional 2 years. Cointment suggested having multiple firms in each category. The Board discussed funding mechanisms and the budget. Lezina explained the way CPRA handles these, including the difference between consulting and professional services. He advised the commission to discuss in detail what is necessary and required for ARBC and that it gets the best firms. Cointment suggested getting this over to CPRA as they are a tremendous asset to ARBC. They can enhance the language and make sure nothing is missing. Bankston stated he will contact Sawyer and CPRA to make the revisions.

**9. Old Business.** There were no public comments.

- ARBC Contractor – Garvin Pittman, The Water Institute Report: LWI Region 9 Coordinator: Mr. Pittman reported that the current Dewberry invoice has been sent for approval noting this will not be Dewberry's last invoice. There should be another small one remaining. Pittman was working with OCD because they wanted to change the way ARBC was seeking reimbursement for overhead expenses.

**10. New Business.** There were no public comments.

- Renew Contract – Amite River Solutions, LLC (Paul Sawyer, Exec Director). The Board unanimously approved a motion by Harris, seconded by Raiford to approve said contract, as presented. Several Board members commended Mr. Sawyer on a job well done as ARBC Executive Director and they look forward to working with him in the future. This is a 3-year contract with no monetary increase.
- Renew Contract – Hebert Interests, LLC (ARBC Office Lease). The Board unanimously approved a motion by Cointment, seconded by Harris to approve said contract, as presented. This is a 1-year contract with no rent increase.
- Renew Contract – Diez, Dupuy, Ruiz (ARBC Auditor). The Board unanimously approved a motion by Bailey, seconded by Cointment, to approve said proposal/contract, as presented. This is a 3-year contract to perform the annual audit and agreed upon procedures services for years ending June 30, 2026, 2027, 2028.
- Resolution 1194 - ARBC Support of Bayou Manchac IGA to include City of St. George. The Board unanimously approved a motion by Bailey, seconded by Raiford, to approve Resolution 1194, as presented.
- Resolution 1195 – Delegation of Signature Authority for RCBG. This is an "every 2 years" OCD requirement to update signatures, resolutions, etc. The Board unanimously approved a motion by Cointment, seconded by Bailey to approve Resolution 1195, as presented.
- Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program Comprehensive Management Plan. Presentation by Keesler Morrison (Emergent Method), Lake Pontchartrain Basin Program.

**11. Public Comments and/or ARBC Board Members discussion on General or Non-Agenda Items.** There were no public comments. Cointment mentioned that ARBC Commissioner Mark Harrell resigned as an ARBC Commissioner after the last ARBC meeting on September 9, 2025. He thanked Harrell for his contributions to the ARBC. Schmidt asked Sawyer if the Senate Committee has been rescheduled. Sawyer explained that it is the Comite River Diversion Canal/Amite River Basin Task Force led by Senator Hodges. The USACE is not allowed to make any presentations for the time being due to the government being unfunded. Schmidt asked if the resolutions regarding the ARBC Master Plan by E. Feliciana and St. Helena Parishes will be brought up at the time of the presentation on the Master Plan to the Task Force when it is rescheduled. Sawyer stated the main focus of the Master Plan presentation will be to present the Master Plan and not to focus on any particular project. The resolutions will be mentioned but are not the crux of the presentation to the Task Force. Clark reminded the Board that the next monthly meeting will be on Monday, November 17, 2025, at 10 am at the Livingston Parish Council Chambers.

**12.** The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

APPROVED:

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/s/John Clark/ARBC President  
Date: November 17, 2025

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/s/ Toni B. Guitrau, Executive Secretary