

**Minutes – Atchafalaya Basin Program (ABP)
Research and Promotion Board Meeting
November 3, 2016**

Meeting was called to order at 9:32 AM by the Interim Chair: Keith Lovell

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

Bijan Sharafkhani, Ray Berthelot, Keith Lovell, Paul Naquin, Melissa Kaintz, Jonathon Robillard, Brad Spicer, Myles Brumfield and Charles Sutcliffe.

Sign-in sheet is attached to document all attendees.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Paul Naquin, seconded by Melissa Kaintz, and passed unanimously by voice vote of the members.

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

Don Haydel provided a summary of public meeting comments. He said that three meetings had been held. No one attended the Morgan City meeting, and most attendees at the other meetings were not in support of previously approved projects. The majority of comments were in opposition to the East Grand Lake Project, which is being pursued in partnership with The Nature Conservancy on land their organization recently purchased.

Mr. Haydel said that the ABP still recommends that the plan moves forward, since the project is previously approved by the board, the TAG, and has gone through the legislature. He asked that the board move the 2018 Annual Plan forward to present to CPRA in their 11/30/2016 meeting.

Paul Naquin moved to approve; Brad Spicer seconded the motion.

Keith Lovell opened the item for public comment.

Dean Wilson offered public comment on behalf of his organization, the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, which he stated represents over 1,000 members. He said that the Atchafalaya Basin has a huge accretion problem and that it is designed to silt in wetlands. He said that freshwater in wetlands fills them in. He stated that he had offered to take DNR to the site but was refused and that Don said he will never go with him. He further stated that it has been claimed that the areas are impounded, and cypress cannot regenerate. He said that they are making up science and that public funds are being used to benefit private landowners. He said that landowners are on record saying that they want the area filled in so that they can harvest trees. He said that the people oppose. He offered to take anyone on a trip to show where wetlands are filling in, and he asked the board to take this seriously and look at the facts.

Jode Meche offered his comment. He said that he has been using the Atchafalaya Basin for 30 years and that his daddy used it before the Corps built the levees. He stated that he is a board member for the Atchafalaya Basin Levee District, vice-chair of the Crawfish Promotion Board, and has spent 15-16 years on Louisiana Crawfish Producers board. He said that he recently visited the site, and though the area was 8-10 feet deep 10-15 years ago, it is now only 3-4 feet at the deepest places. He said that the lake is filling with sediment already and that it will continue to fill thousands of acres of wetlands. He said that the basin is for us to pass flood times and that it is critical that it be able to handle water so that people don't flood. He said that with projects like this, the process has been accelerated. He said that the biggest detriment to water quality is spoil banks, which are elevated 15-16 feet. They were left behind by oil and gas companies. He said that he would be in favor of Oil and Gas removing those spoil banks. He said you cannot put silt laden water into wetlands until that problem is fixed. He said that he is adamantly opposed and he wishes that they could do something else; there's not enough money to fix all the problems. He offered to take board members on a field trip. He provided for the record an article from a publication called "The Independent."

Dan Collins offered his comment. He stated that he had worked for DNR for over 12 years and was a successful whistleblower, winning a judgment of

\$750,000 from this organization. He said that we are talking about sedimentation. He said that Dean's group has over 1,000 members and that he is speaking for the majority of folks. He said that Bayou Postillion is all about accretion. Mr. Collins stated that the ABP dredged an oil field canal over 3 miles long, and the state retained only 25 feet in the middle of a 250 foot wide channel. This [East Grand Lake] project seems to be a "we're gonna do whatever we're gonna do no matter what the people say." If it carries further, the record will state that there was opposition. He said that the process he went through took years. He said that the public has spoken about this project, that it would be changing the flow of water at the opposition of the public for the benefit of the private landowner. He said if it has to go to Washington, they will do it. If it takes a federal lawsuit, they will do it.

Paul Naquin asked if the public comments from Iberville and St. Martin parishes voiced the same concerns. Don Haydel said yes. Mr. Naquin asked how the program had decided to do this project.

Mr. Haydel said that the first step in the process was the East Grand Lake study from the 2010 Annual Plan, and then the project was nominated for construction in the 2012 Annual Plan. In the 2012 annual plan process, comments in opposition were received at one public meeting, but that the TAG, the Research and Promotion Board, CPRA, and the House and Senate Natural Resource Committees (with no one speaking against or indicating opposition by submitting a red card) and the full House and Senate approved the plan. The project was approved as part of the 2012 Plan and funded. Since then, the ABP made several attempts to obtain landowner cooperation to construct features but was not successful. In 2015, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased 5,300 acres in the area, and now the ABP plans to move the construction project forward in partnership with TNC on their property and state-owned land and water bottoms.

The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote of the members.

Keith Lovell asked for general public comments.

Chris Tauzin introduced himself as a council member for District 5 in St. Martin Parish. He wanted to ask for spoil bank removal. He said that he knows the program is limited by money, but asked that they use that money to remove spoil banks instead. He said that every time you open up a cut, you get silt. He asked that the program concentrate on removing spoil banks.

Dean Wilson wanted to comment that the statement Don Haydel provided was not correct. Mr. Wilson stated that there was opposition to the project from the beginning. He said that the project approved by the TAG was different and that this project is different.

Jody Meche stated that one of the arguments made is that the area is filled with water, and that's why cypress can't regenerate. He said that a young cypress that is under water for 45 days dies. He said there is talk about forcing water out of the area, but the only way to do that is to build hills. He said that he is going to fight it. He thanked the board for their time.

Old Business: Paul Naquin wanted to provide an update on Wilson's Landing. He said that the parish had put the project out for bid and that they expect to receive them on Dec. 6.

New business: Don Haydel said that the Office of the Legislative Auditor has begun the process of auditing the program. He said we will give them all the cooperation and information that we can.

A motion to adjourn was made by Paul Naquin. The meeting adjourned at 9:57 am.



Atchafalaya
BASIN

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EVENT/LOCATION _____

DATE: _____

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