



Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority



Atchafalaya Basin Program – Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Louisiana State Capitol

900 North 3rd Street Baton Rouge, LA 70803

House Committee Room #3

10:00 PM – 11:30 PM

The following constitute minutes of the Atchafalaya Basin Program’s TAG Meeting and are not a verbatim transcript of the proceedings. Audio and video recording of the meeting is available for viewing at www.legis.la.gov.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS – ROLL CALL

TAG Members and Associations:

Jonathan McFarland (substitute rep.; LDEQ), Daniel Kroes (USGS), Kayla Kimmel (FWS), Wendy Gibson (substitute rep.; LDAF); Cheston Hill (OSL); Charles Reulet (LDNR); Justin Lemoine (Atch. NHA); Brian Lezina (CPRA); William Kelso (LSU); Raynie Harlan (WLF);

CPRA Members:

Alicia McAlhaney, Joseph “Wes” Leblanc,

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Atchafalaya Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is to review projects that would benefit water quality, water management, and other similar concepts, to ensure projects proposed are implementable and sustainable for benefiting resources and resource-users of the Atchafalaya Basin. Projects selected based on their merit will be included into the ABP Annual Plan and into CPRA’s Annual Plan.

UPDATES & CONTEXT

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes from 2021 meeting were not provided during this meeting. Noted to provide meeting minutes in future meetings.

Report on the Atchafalaya River Basin Enhancement and Restoration Task Force

- The Task Force (TF) is an active body formed through the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities to provide holistic ideas and recommendations (e.g. flood control, navigation, ecological restoration) for management of the Atchafalaya and Mississippi River systems. A Final report was issued by the TF summarizing challenges and opportunities in the basin to pursue. CPRA plans to hold a meeting in 2023 to report on progress.

Report on the Sustainable Rivers Partnership

- This is an ongoing partnership held between United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)



and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) with support from The State, looking at ways to better use/control resources for the betterment of ecological function (e.g. water flow and timeframe management). CPRA plans to update Atchafalaya TAG and ARBRE TF as progress continues.

Presentation 1: Fiscal Year 2023 Project Updates:

- Henderson Lake Spoil Gapping – Dixie Pipeline [Time| 8:27]
 - The project was awarded (September 2022) to construct twenty-five alternating gaps along Dixie pipeline canal. Construction to begin January 2023 and completed within 90-120 days.
- East Grand Lake Hydrologic Restoration [Time| 11:36]
 - This project is a subproject of the FY2010 East Grand Lake Upper Region efforts. Twelve restorative elements are proposed to improve north to south water flow on The Nature Conservancy property and adjacent state lands in proximity to Bayou Sorrel/ GIWW/ Florida gas pipeline canal. Extensive monitoring of project site conditions began in 2016 and are ongoing. Project is currently undergoing permitting, and engineering and design efforts.
- Murphy Lake Depth Restoration [Time| 14:15]
 - Project was originally proposed in FY2015 and has received numerous stakeholder input. Due to sediment deposition the lake has poor water quality/circulation/aquatic habitat and restricted access for recreation and commercial activities. Surveying efforts (Bathymetric, magnetometer, and topographic) are underway to determine feasibility of proposed dredging in the area.

Presentation 2: Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Water Quality Projects-TAG Review:

- Dredging in the Big Bayou Pigeon [Time| 19:50]
 - TAG was in support of the project (USGS, LSU, LDWF)
 - TAG was interested in cost/benefit of dredging the area; how long would benefits of dredging last? How would dredging affect water flow and sedimentation patterns near and within the project area?
 - USGS study from 2008-2009 confirmed sediment in the proposed project area had been deposited post mid-1960s. Data from the study is available for sediment and flow calculations.
 - *Proposer comment: project is similar to the Bayou Postilion dredging project where benefits can be seen over a decade later. Other light dredging projects have proved cost effective.*
 - *Proposer comment: Is the TAG aware of any associated canals with bayou pigeon*



that could be starving the channel and is there something else that could be done simultaneously to alleviate the pressure?

- *TAG response: there are oil field canals in the area that influence flow but suggest not infilling, rather local spoil banks could be targeted.*

- Grimmett Canal Improvements Project [Time| 35:34]

- TAG supports dredging/clearing of Grimmett Canal
- TAG supports the need for improved water flow along the proposed East Extension area located along the power line Right of Way. TAG suggest, rather than dredging extension canals (East and West), to instead add culverts, particularly for the East extension area.
- TAG requested additional details for the proposed West Extension canal; if it's proposed to alter the Indian Bayou, LDWF commented that the outcome would be detrimental to the environment.
- *Public Comment: The Sustainable Rivers Program (USACE and TNC) is investigating this area, looking at difference scenarios with water control structure operations and removing other impediments to flow. Have discussions with program entities for continued updates.*

- Hydrologic Restoration & Vegetative Plantings: Butte La Rose – Lost Lake WMU [Time| 43:20]

- TAG is interested in pursuing this project by only implementing the proposed artesian wells and enhancement of southeast historic channel.
- TAG expressed many questions pertaining to cost/benefit analysis including O&M, pumping capacity and lifespan of artesian wells, characteristics of the well water, area use analysis.
- *Proposer comment: Artesian wells are approximately 120 ft deep and inexpensive to implement. The wells would maintain water during drought periods and reduce sedimentation by improving circulation within the project area. The area receives most water influence via rain thus the artesian well water wouldn't be significantly different.*

- Point Coupee Gravity Flow Drainage District #1 - Culverts [Time| 59:23]

- TAG supports the project concept (reinstalling/installing culverts)
- TAG recommends reviewing culvert types during Engineering and Design to select design best suited for fish passage at each location. Also determine best elevation for culvert placement to improve both water movement and habitat.
- TAG expressed concern of potential impacts to Sherbourne WMA located south of the proposed project area.
- TAG expressed many questions pertaining to prioritization, cost/benefit analysis including impacts to hydrology, culvert functioning capability during annual water levels, influences to biota.



- *Proposer comment: Proposed locations are on private property with willing landowners.*
- *Public comment: Another approach rather than culverts is to construct low water crossings (e.g. ford)*

Next Steps

- Follow-up with project proposers for clarification on proposed project components
- Schedule a follow-up TAG meeting to provide official recommendation of proposed projects.
- Engage the TAG and ARBRE TF in FY24 for recommendations and expert insight during the Update to the Atchafalaya Basin State Master Plan.

Public Comment

- Paraphrased: Lack of maintenance in the Atchafalaya Basin will result in land accrual reverting important navigation infrastructure from public access to private land ownership. The 1998 State Master Plan had a section stating the state should own a dredge that would continuously be used within the basin. Within the update to the State Master Plan, CPRA needs to create an annual budget item for maintenance. Continued maintenance can help a project's lifetime of benefit.

Adjournment