**Atchafalaya Basin Program – Technical Advisory Group**

**Tuesday, November 30, 2021**

**Louisiana State Capitol**

 **900 North 3rd Street Baton Rouge, LA 70803**

 **House Committee Room #6**

**1:00 PM - 3:00 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*](http://www.legis.la.gov)*.*

# **MEETING PARTICIPANTS**

**Roll Call:**

Jonathan McFarland (substitute rep.; LDEQ), Daniel Kroes (USGS), Kalya Kimmel (FWS), Jeremy Rodriguez (substitute rep.; LDAF), Lawrence Rosso (OSL); Cheston Hill (OSL); Charles Reulet (LDNR); Justin Lemoine (Atch. NHA); Brian Lezina (CPRA); William Kelso (LSU); Raynie Harlan (WLF); Brac Salyers (WLF)

**CPRA Members:**

Alicia McAlhaney, Joseph “Wes” LeBlanc, Lauren Durr

# **INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

Brian Lezina provided an overview of the Atchafalaya Basin Program (ABP) and ABP’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Specifically, the purpose of the TAG is to review, evaluate, and approve all water management and water quality projects proposed for inclusion in the ABP Annual Plan. The TAG selects projects that would result in significant water management or water quality improvements that will enhance the wildlife, fisheries, or forest resources of the Atchafalaya Basin. Projects selected by the TAG based on their merit will be included into the ABP Annual Plan and into CPRA’s Annual Plan.

Brian Lezina provided a summary of the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration and Enhancement Task Force (ARBRE TF) that was established by Governor John Bel Edwards in December 2020. The governor established the Task Force, comprised of numerous stakeholders, to address long-standing issues in the basin and raise public awareness of these issues. The Task Force met 13 times during 2021 to discuss ideas for the holistic management of the Atchafalaya Basin including flood control, navigation, and restoration. The Task Force then provided a set of recommendations to address the critical issues of the basin to the CPRA Board (CPRAB). The recommendations were provided to the CPRAB during the November 2021 board meeting where the board requested CPRA refine the recommendations and present at a future board meeting.

# **UPDATES & CONTEXT**

**Presentation 1: Fiscal Year 2022 Project Updates:**

* Buffalo Cove Water Management – Element 10 [Time| 13:56]
	+ After reevaluation of the current conditions this project will be removed from the ABP FY23 Annual Plan. USACE will reallocate funds from the project to other priority projects.
* Flat Lake Sediment Study [Time| 15:14]
	+ Study concluded that due to debris, sediment characteristics, and distance to applicable project locations use of the sediment would not be cost effective.
* Henderson Lake Spoil Gapping – Dixie Pipeline [Time| 16:42]
	+ CPRA is reviewing the 95% design plans (provided Dec. 2021). Twenty-five spoil bank gaps are proposed.
* East Grand Lake Upper Region [Time| 18:23]
	+ The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has continued extensive monitoring efforts while collaboration between TNC-USACE-CPRA have occurred to discuss permitting requirements.
* Murphy Lake Depth Restoration [Time| 19:56]
	+ Priority project for ABP FY22 Annual Plan.

**Presentation 2: Fiscal Year 2023 Proposed Water Quality Projects-TAG Review:**

* East Grand Lake Phase 1: Murphy Lake Restoration Closures [Time| 34:03]
	+ TAG recommended the proposed backfill canal not be infilled due to concerns over loss of fish habitat.
	+ TAG recommended the proposed dredge material from Cannon Bayou be disposed of by spraying rather than the proposed piling.
* East Grand Lake Phase 2: Zadrick, Cow Bayou, Humble & William Canal [Time| 37:57]
	+ TAG supported gapping of Williams Canal and planting trees along Bayou Bridge ROW.
	+ TAG did not support backfilling item “Humble Canal” as it is the drainage outlet.
* Hydrologic Restoration & Vegetative Plantings: Butte La Rose – Lost Lake WMU [Time| 43:34]
	+ TAG suggested all five proposed gaps may not be needed. If the project were implemented it would need to be designed to effectively move water through the unit.
	+ TAG expressed concern of hydraulic head mechanisms and fisheries impacts.
* Lake Natchez Restoration [Time| 51:15]
	+ TAG recommended identifying why the area is impaired for low dissolved oxygen and identifying surrounding land use impacts.
	+ TAG stated that clearing and snagging mechanisms proposed may exacerbate water quality problems and did not support that portion of the proposal.
* Advanced Biophysical Mapping-Improved Fresh Forested Wetland Resilience [Time| 58:29]
	+ TAG recommended the proposer refine project scope for further review ensuring the project deliverables are sustainable, implementable, and not duplicative of other projects.

# **SUGGESTED/ACTION ITEMS**

* TAG requested the proposers of the Advanced Biophysical Mapping project to provide a presentation to visually describe methods/protocols and better understand how the project will be achieved, used, and the benefits of the project.
* TAG requested CPRA collaborate with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative moving forward to potentially pair projects and improve benefits to the Basin.
* TAG suggested a need for detailed data of flow patterns and sedimentation concentrations across the Basin.
* TAG suggested implementing lessons learned from previous pilot projects (*i.e.*, Buffalo Cove).