

New regulations target retaining walls along False River

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NEW ROADS – Homeowners along False River will have to adhere to new parish regulations if they want to build retaining walls and erosion prevention structures to pro-

tect their properties along the oxbow lake.

The Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury on Tuesday adopted ordinance amendments requiring property owners to obtain engineering plans before submitting permit applications to build seawalls

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before any construction can take place. The permitting fee is \$250.

However, if a property own-

er is using natural materials like dirt and rocks to build an erosion wall, engineering plans are not required for a permit application.

Retaining walls, also referred to as bulkheads, are man-made barriers that prevent erosion on waterfront

properties. Retaining walls also give property owners more land to erect such things as boat launches.

The new regulations will apply only to new construction and to repairs on existing

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structures.

The amendments were adopted by a 7-1 vote. Juror Mitch Langlois was the lone opposing vote. Jurors Stephen Smith, Anthony Hurst, Kurt Jarreau and Edward Bazile were absent from Tuesday's meeting.

The jury's approval came after a lengthy, and sometimes heated, discussion surround-

ing the changes.

Several property owners at the meeting voiced their concerns and opposition to the new regulations.

But state Rep. Major Thibaut, D-New Roads, and Arthur Ewing, a member of the False River Watershed Council, told jurors that managing the construction of retaining walls will help in ongoing efforts to improve the water quality of the lake. The proposed permit process should also cut down on the number of structure failures, which have been hap-

pening with greater frequency since the parish has instituted annual drawdowns of the lake's water level.

Thibaut and Ewing, who together drafted most of the amendments, said the inconsistency in construction quality for bulkheads now in place has been a contributing factor in the 20-year decline of the lake's water quality.

"Because we have so many vertical walls, it's kind of like dropping a ping pong ball down in the lake," Thibaut said. "Anytime we have boats on the

river, you get all this wave action. And that's constantly stirring up mud and silt."

But one homeowner said there's no definitive proof the new regulations will lead to reducing turbidity in the lake. And several others told jurors the ordinance needed to have construction and material specifications that more clearly spell out what type of retaining walls will best prevent property erosion.

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