

**False River Watershed Council  
Draft Alternative Action Plan June 2013 Update**

**Short-Term Actions:**

***1. Channel and Sediment Basin Maintenance***

Actions: Implement routine cleaning of sediment traps and continued improvements to reduce erosion and sediment runoff into False River. Proceed with the routine maintenance and inspection of False River's drainage network.

Current Status: Ongoing. A revised draft maintenance plan including checklists has been submitted to the Pointe Coupee Police Jury for consideration.

***2. Watershed Drainage Network Assessment***

Action: Determine the current degree of lake sedimentation and turbidity.

Current Status: Ongoing. Representatives from Fenstermaker and Associates placed all the data sondes in the field. Chustz Surveying surveyed the channels profile and the data sonde housings. All the data has been downloaded and processed. Local residents have assisted Fenstermaker in collecting time sensitive water samples. Fenstermaker issued a draft report to LDNR. It is anticipated that the report will be available in June 2013. When approved, the report will be posted on the website. Additional funding is needed to perform the assessment of the remainder of the watershed. It is anticipated that funding from a beneficial environmental project that is being pursued will be utilized for the evaluation of the remaining drainage networks, as well as construction and maintenance of proposed hydromodifications.

***3. Habitat Improvement***

Actions: Develop and implement an artificial reef, spawning beds and vegetative planting projects. The addition of complex cover will improve fish habitat and increase angler success. Work with local sponsors to secure funds, materials and labor (artificial reef, spawning beds and native aquatic vegetation). Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) will take lead on the base project outlined in lake management plan. Encourage others (NGOs, corporate interests or individuals) to help in implementing habitat improvement projects.

Current Status: Ongoing. LDWF is finalizing a draft brochure compiled for shoreline residents and property owners. The brochure will provide these stakeholders guidelines to improve shorelines and provide for fisheries habitat. LDWF is starting with planning and some preparation. Preliminary soundings of the flats to identify spawning bed locations by LDWF have been completed. Funding is being sought for the creation of gravel spawning beds, artificial reefs and other habitats.

***4. Fisheries Evaluation and Stocking***

Actions: Continue standardized sampling of fish populations to evaluate the condition of the stock and evaluate nesting species success. This includes a three-year age and growth study of largemouth bass. Results of study will allow for informed consideration of harvest regulation and stocking. The next planned stocking of False River is scheduled for 2013 (Hybrid Striped Bass).

Potential Funding Source: Funded through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Sport Fish Restoration Act program in Louisiana through LDWF

Current Status: Ongoing. LDWF completed its fall electrofishing survey and has stocked 6,000 Florida bass which were part of phase two. The bass are 3" or longer and have a much better survival rate. In addition, as the result of availability 300,000 readear sunfish were stocked in the lake by LDWF in December 2012. LDWF has tentatively scheduled the stocking of 25,000 hybrid striped bass for May 2013, however limited supply has delayed the stocking. LDWF continues to monitor the fish population and identify additional stocking opportunities that will benefit the lake's population of gamefish.

### ***5. Commercial Fishing Season***

Action: Lift the commercial gill netting ban and implement a special season from November 1 to the end of February each year. Minimum mesh size for commercial gill nets and trammel nets set at 3.5" (the larger mesh is used to help exclude gamefish). This would provide for the return of commercial fishing to the lake and allow for the taking of larger fish species and reduce impacts related to these species.

Current Status: The commercial season opened on November 1, 2012 and will last until February 28, 2013. Initial catch reports (Nov. 1 approximately 2,000 lbs. of buffalo fish, catfish, gaspergou and german carp) are optimistic. LDWF ran gill nets in January and talked to some commercial fishermen, they indicated that they were having great success with the commercial season. Based upon communication by LDNR with commercial fishermen/fish markets, an estimated 28,000 lbs. of rough fish was caught during the commercial season. The commercial season will reopen November 1, 2013. Outreach efforts by local fishing clubs promoted the commercial season to fishermen and fish markets, in order to reduce the population of rough fish in the lake.

### ***6. Monitor Exotic, Invasive and other Deleterious Fish Species***

Actions: Monitor grass carp populations in the lake. Work with U.S. Geological Survey to determine reproductive capability/sterility of the grass carp population. It is also planned to investigate other herbivores in the lake. Herbivore monitoring and characterization is needed to evaluate and plan short and long term aquatic planting strategies for False River, as well as to evaluate commercial and recreational fishing regulations and seasons.

Current Status: Ongoing. LDWF completed a survey of rough fish to estimate fish population in January, 2013, results are pending. LDWF and local fishermen found in the lake a snail identified by LDWF as the "Mystery Snail." LDWF has described the snail as a common aquarium snail which feeds on algae and not on aquatic plants. Grass carp have not been detected in the lake by LDWF since 2010.

### **Mid-Term Actions:**

### ***7. Lake Monitoring/Water Quality Survey***

Actions: Develop and implement a protocol for a lake water quality monitoring (i.e., limnological) survey of the lake. Establish water quality monitoring stations throughout the lake.

These stations would include turbidity monitoring to quantify the total suspended and dissolved solids concentration. The survey is used to (1) determine the productivity, thermocline and overall health of the lake; and (2) evaluate fisheries production conditions/health and establish a baseline for future lake management actions.

Current Status: Ongoing. LDEQ has completed their most recent ambient water sampling of the lake (10/11 to 9/12). Updated results will be uploaded on the LDNR website when available. LDWF is routinely collecting water quality data as part of their fisheries surveys. A comprehensive database of existing available water quality results has been completed by LDNR, and is available upon request.

### ***8. Drainage Network Hydromodification***

Actions: Evaluate and implement beneficial modifications to the network to foster storm flow detention and increase the sediment trapping efficiency of the network to further reduce siltation and turbidity in the lake.

Current Status: Ongoing. Drainage network hydromodification recommendations for the M-1 Canal Drainage network were submitted by the consultant upon completion of the watershed drainage network assessment action. Fenstermaker issued a draft report to LDNR. It is anticipated that the report will be available in June 2013. When approved, the report will be posted on the website. Additional funding is needed to perform the assessment of the remainder of the watershed. It is anticipated that funding from a Beneficial Environmental Project that is being pursued will be utilized for the evaluation of the remaining drainage networks, as well as construction and maintenance of proposed hydromodifications.

### ***9. Lake Level Management***

Action: A 2 to 3-foot water level adjustment between mid-September and mid-January would reduce the construction cost and improve the constructability of islands/terraces in the South Flats, reduce turbidity and improve water quality, be beneficial to the lake's ecosystem and water quality, facilitate the placement of edge habitat, and improve fisheries. Lake level management is anticipated to take place concurrently with the construction of island/terraces.

Current Status: Ongoing. Lake level management tasks are currently scheduled to be implemented in coordination with the creation of Island/Terrace Habitat action (see Action #10). It is estimated that this action will be taken from September 2014-January 2015 based on current construction projections.

### ***10. Creation of Island/Terrace Habitat***

Actions: The USACE, in their proposed restoration strategy for the lake, has indicated they will rely on dredging the lake sediments to create islands/terraces and promote the establishment of aquatic "edge" habitat as a potential restoration measure. Aquatic habitat establishment will provide beneficial complex fish environments which have been lost due to siltation and shoreline modifications. Using Capital Outlay funds, the creation of islands/terraces will improve wildlife habitat, wave attenuation, water temperature cooling, turbidity reduction and water quality improvement within the South Flats and can be scheduled to be constructed in one event or over a two-year period (two events) based upon an estimate of funding that may become available

yearly. Once funding becomes available contracting, project engineering, permitting and public bidding must occur prior to construction.

Current Status: Ongoing. The engineering evaluation and design of the island/terrace habitat will be scheduled as funding. The Pointe Coupee Police Jury selected an engineering firm at their May meeting. A kickoff meeting has been scheduled with Facility Planning so that the work may begin in order to meet the timeline establish. It is planned that this work will be paid with Capital Outlay funding.

### **Long-Term Actions:**

#### ***11. Watershed Management Plan***

Actions: Develop and implement a long-term conservation and watershed management strategy, including establishing best management practices, developing a watershed conservation plan and investigating the acquisition of conservation easements. This would provide for the long-term reduction of sediment flux from areas historically in agricultural use.

Current Status: Ongoing. The False River Watershed Council (FRWC) had its first meeting on August 1, 2012, and is scheduled to meet on each first Wednesday of the month. A watershed management plan outline was drafted for the FRWC review and assignment to subcommittees. An erosion and sediment ordinance has been submitted to the Pointe Coupee Police Jury for consideration. Relevant documents, reports, news articles and other information are available on the LDNR website. The FRWC's interim report to the legislature was prepared by eight subcommittees formed to address the issues set forth in House HCR 123 of 2012, and submitted on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Several comments have been received from stakeholders and will be taken into consideration as the interim report is updated and revised. This evolving document will become the Watershed Management Plan as the information necessary to finalize it is collected and analyzed, and funding becomes available for implementation.