

Update on the False River Ecosystem Restoration Project

January 9, 2013

This is a status report of the on-going progress on tasks undertaken prior and since the November 7, 2012 Public Meeting of the False River Watershed Council (the “Council”).

1. **Task:** Develop Sediment Trap and Channel Maintenance Plan

Status: The revised draft plan developed by Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) has been submitted to the Pointe Coupee Police Jurors for their consideration.

2. **Task:** Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant application for channel landowners to reduce erosion

Status: NRCS has received four applications for EQIP for livestock producers within the Island portion of the False River watershed. These applications are for fences, waterlines, water troughs, and heavy use area protection. NRCS’ cutoff date for the first funding pool was Dec 1, so they will not have any additional applications in the first funding pool. NRCS will begin obligating contracts sometime in February, based on funding availability.

3. **Task:** Develop Water Quality Monitoring Program

Status: Plan is under development - coordinating work being performed by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) and identifying data needs. A draft Scope of Services has been prepared by LSU School of Renewable Resources that was reviewed. Funding sources must be identified for additional work in scope of services beyond what is being performed routinely by LDWF and LDEQ.

4. **Task:** Perform Watershed Drainage Network Assessment

Status: Work proceeding. Representatives from Fenstermaker and Associates placed the data sondes in the field and Chustz Surveying has surveyed the channels profile and the data sonde housings. October and December data has been downloaded and is being processed. One data sonde is experiencing technical issues and has been sent to the manufacturer for repairs. The latest download will be performed on January 9. Local residents have assisted Fenstermaker by collecting time sensitive water samples.

5. **Task:** Obtain and review Pointe Coupee Parish Drainage Master Plan

Status: Plan has been provided by the Parish’s consultant to LDNR. LDNR is evaluating impacts to the False River Watershed and will discuss any suggestions with Parish officials.

6. **Task:** Apply Tree Grant for Habitat Improvement

Status: LDNR submitted on behalf of the PCPJ a request to the Apache Corp. program. The request was not funded by the Apache Corp. program this year. A grant application will be prepared and submitted to Apache Corp in the next grant cycle and additional partners for habitat improvement will be identified. LDNR met with the Baton Rouge Green Foundation (BRGF) to find out whether it could provide trees for the project. BRGF relies on donations to fund their efforts and concentrates its efforts in EBR Parish. They did offer to potentially conduct a reduced-price tree sale as a source of tree, and/or to potentially work with a Pointe Coupee area donor (if donors can be identified) as a way to promote tree planting.

7. **Task:** Submit Beneficial Environmental Project Nomination to LDEQ for funding of sediment trap maintenance

Status: Completed and submitted by Parish Officials to LDEQ on 6/12/12.

8. **Task:** Make request to LDEQ for 319 (Non-Point Source) funding for False River Watershed

Status: Meeting held with LDEQ to discuss project. Chances for funding do not appear good due to lack of recognized water quality impairment in False River. LDNR will continue to monitor other potential non-point source funding sources. Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program funding may be available in 2014. Application for BTNEP funding was submitted on 8/21/12 by the parish for consideration in the upcoming fiscal year budget cycle.

9. **Task:** Determine permitting requirements for work during drawdown if individuals want to perform dredge work other than what is paid for with public funds

Status: Under development – LDNR has discussed with State Lands, LDWF, and the Corps of Engineers what permits will be required for this type of work.

10. **Task:** Develop Best Management Practices (BMP's) for False River Watershed - Work with LDEQ for BMP's related to home construction and other items that may cause runoff issues and provide to Police Jury for consideration to use as part of building permit process or to otherwise make available.

Status: LDNR/LDWF/LDEQ working to develop BMPs to provide to Parish for consideration. A revised erosion and sediment ordinance has been submitted to the Pointe Coupee Police Jurors for their consideration

11. **Task:** Obtain Grant to Expand Sewer System and improve Individual Wastewater Treatment Systems

Status: Parish has grant application in with LDEQ for \$100,000 for island evaluation, implementation projected at \$5-6 million – currently not funded. LDNR is working with Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) to make information on web site available regarding when new sewer systems are required and best management practices for existing individual waste water treatment systems. Information obtained to date has been placed on web site.

12. **Task:** Develop Plan for Habitat Improvement

Status: LDWF has developed a draft brochure for camp/homeowners. LDWF is starting with planning and some preparation, however, LDWF will not be ready to initiate action this winter.

13. **Task:** Perform standardized sampling of fish population in False River to continue fishery evaluation and assist with management decisions

Status: Ongoing effort by LDWF. LDWF completed in April the last sampling round of a 3-year age & growth sampling program for largemouth bass. Analysis and result should be available later this year. LDWF has completed their fall electrofishing survey to estimate fish population. LDWF ran gill nets this past Monday and talked to some commercial fishermen. They are having great success with the commercial season.

14. **Task:** Extend No Wake Zone in North and South Flats

Status: Surveying has been completed and information provided to Parish to review and determine proper placement. The Council approved the modified 6-foot change at its September meeting. A public hearing on the amendment to Sub-section (a) of Section 15-6 of Chapter 15 of the Code of Ordinances re-defining the width of such zones and establish a six (6) feet buoy protection on the North & South Flats of False River was held and the amendment passed by the Pointe Coupee Police Jury on September 25, 2012. The amendment will become effective in 30 days. Chustz surveying will be providing the GIS locations of the buoys to the Kiwanis for relocation.

15. **Task:** Set up fund for individuals and corporations to contribute to False River Ecosystem Restoration effort.

Status: False River Watershed Council discussed at the September and agreed at the October meetings to set up a temporarily account within the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

16. **Task:** Further develop False River Ecosystem Restoration Website

Status: LDEQ water quality data from 2001 and 2011/2012 studies have been posted to website along with a large map of False River Watershed. Frequently Asked Questions have been developed from emails submitted to False River email address and phone calls and have been posted to the False River website. Newspaper articles and other pertinent information have also been posted.

17. **Task:** Develop Public Outreach Plan

Status: In development, documents and presentations have been placed on web site along with news articles and frequently asked questions. Plans are to update website with list of actions completed and in progress. Press Releases will be issued as actions are taken. Other means of communication under consideration are email blasts, flyers, etc.

18. **Task:** Monitor Progress of Mitigation Bank Development in False River Watershed

Status: Two companies have indicated plans to establish mitigation banks in the watershed and are currently in discussions with the Corps of Engineers, but the banks projects have not been approved to date. The Ponderosa Ranch is currently on public notice and the Grand Swamp is currently in draft prospectus. LDNR has drafted a document to evaluate the potential of the Island as a site for carbon sequestration.

19. **Task:** Obtain information from Corps of Engineers on plan that was being developed

Status: Interim Draft Feasibility Study has been obtained and posted to the web-site, and the document has been reviewed.

20. **Task:** Obtain funding through Capital Outlay for Ecosystem Restoration

Status: House Bill 2 was approved by the Legislature in the 2012 Regular Session and includes \$500,000 in Priority 2 funding and \$2.2 million in Priority 5 funding for the False River Ecosystem Restoration project. The Bond Commission granted a line of credit at their November 15, 2012 meeting for the priority 2 funds. Parish Officials are currently working with the Division of Administration to provide them with necessary information. Preliminary steps are being discussed with State and Parish officials to ensure rapid implementation.