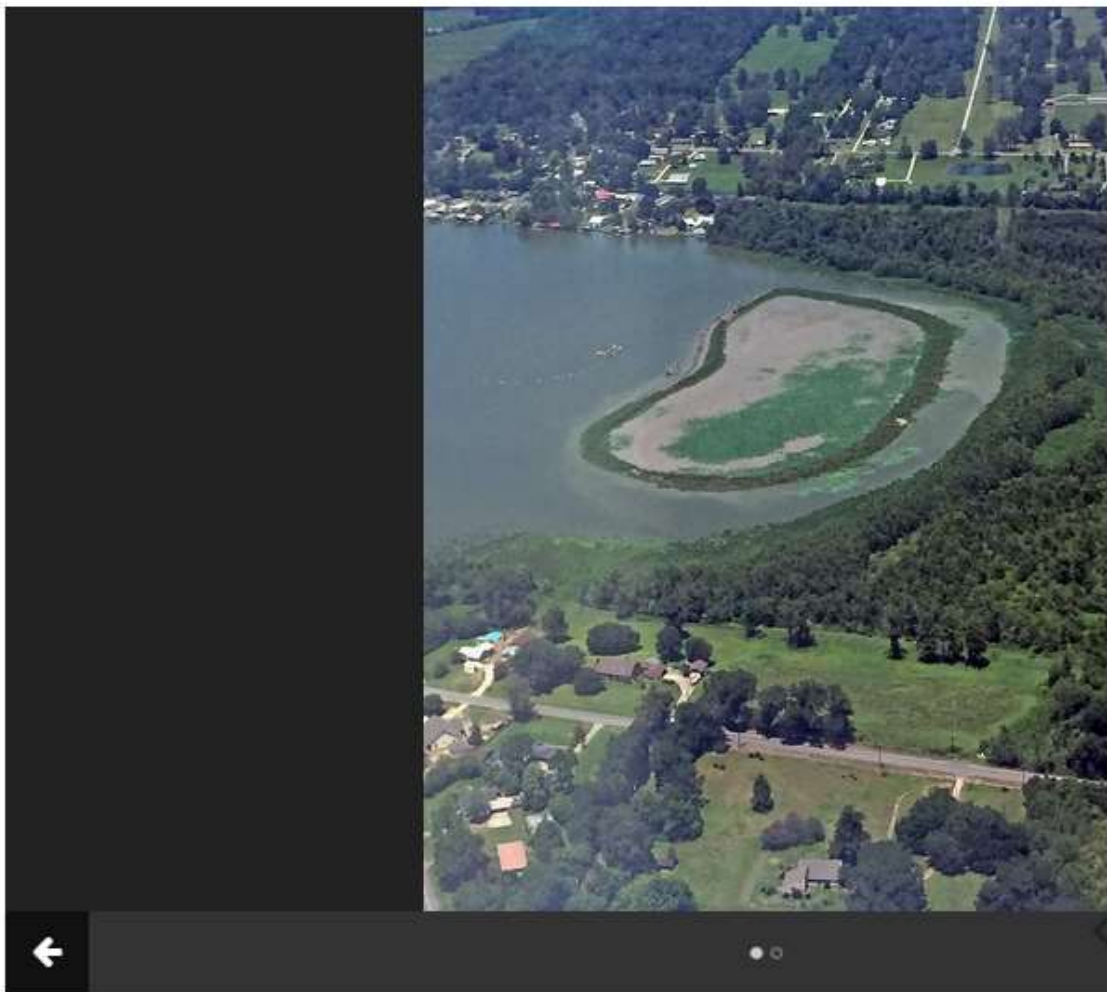


## Extension sought for completing work on False River containment dike



Photos provided by Professional Engineering Consultants Corporation -- Pictured is an aerial photo of a containment dike at the south end of False River as part of the phase 1 of the lake's restoration project.

### Workers nearly finished with containment dike

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As the first phase of restoration efforts in Pointe Coupee Parish's False River nears completion, officials say they're already seeing robust plant growth and a return of the habitats and vegetation most desirable to fish.

But, they say, bringing the ailing oxbow lake back is going to take more time and effort and they've asked the Police Jury for a 90-day extension for contractors to finish building a containment dike near the lake's southern tip.

That dike, or island, has been the cornerstone of the first efforts to restore False River's water quality. The project is being overseen by the False River Watershed Council, a panel of local elected officials and stakeholders.

"We are achieving our objectives," said Gerald Babin, vice president of Professional Engineering Consultants Corporation. "We're not trying to get it done and just move out of there. We're allowing (the contractor) more time to do a quality job."

The man-made island is described by officials as a ring-levee style containment being built from sediment dredged off the bottom of the lake's south end.

Dredging False River, once a fisherman's haven for catching trophy bass fish, provides additional water depth, which keeps the water temperature in a healthier range for fish, encouraging them to reproduce and replenish the lake's population.

**False River's decline over the past two decades** mostly has been attributed to the heavy silt buildup at the bottom of the lake, which state officials have said impeded vegetation growth that helps form fish-spawning habitats.

Babin said the contractor has spent the past few months sucking out roughly 160,000 cubic square yards of material from the lake bed and used it to solidify the island.

"That's equivalent of covering 22 football fields to a depth of 5 feet," he said. "The process of keeping those sediments in the dike is giving them time to settle. So (the contractor) pumps part of the day and then lets it settle overnight."

The 90-day extension, which adds no additional cost to the project, will give the contractor time to dredge the lake more slowly and provide more drying time for the sediment deposited on the containment dike which officials say increases the island's stability.



In the meantime, geotechnical borings and data are being collected as officials prepare the engineering work for dredging in the north end of False River. However, it's unlikely the parish will OK construction of a containment dike on that end.

"There will have to be a different concept because there is too much population on the north end to build an island," said Juror Kyle Olinde.

Olinde said the parish could entertain a proposal from a Pointe Coupee landowner who offered up his property as a dumping site for the sediment removed from the north end of the lake.

"He has some dirt pits that would accept it," Olinde said.

As the ongoing efforts in the lake's restoration continue, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is moving forward with plans to create more spawning beds to **supplement the ones it created in 2013**. The department intends to also create several artificial reefs in False River sometime in the near future.

The third season of commercial fishing is set to begin Oct. 1. Wildlife and Fisheries officials have previously said commercial fishing helps reduce the number of bottom-feeding fish that were eating the lake's vegetation – a vital food source for the catches sports fishermen most desire such as bass, bream and sac-a-laits.

The False River Watershed Council is also seeking approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build weirs and implement other strategies geared toward reducing the sediment load False River receives from the tributaries that flow into the lake.

"The future work done in this area will be anchored by what we accomplish in this first phase, so we have to ensure that the foundation of this restoration project is solid," State Rep. Major Thibaut, D-Oscar, said in a news release.

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