

False River Watershed Council
Draft Alternative Action Plan Oct. 2012 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 (PCPJ) who has reviewing it and submitted feedbacks.

2. Watershed Drainage Network Assessment

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

Current Status: Ongoing. Representatives from Fenstermaker and Associates met with Jimmy Chutz last week to discuss the survey plan and toured around the False River area. They indicated that they spoke with their equipment provider about the data sondes maintenance/calibration and that the sondes will be ready for pickup this week. They will place the data sondes in the field later this week, and shortly thereafter Chutz Surveying will survey the channels and sondes housing.

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. The 2012 request was not funded by the Apache Corp. program. 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. LDWF has 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.

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 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 scheduled their fall electrofishing survey to estimate fish population for October. Stocking of the lake did not occur this year due to the unavailability of fish stock from hatcheries. LDWF has tentatively scheduled the stocking of hybrid striped bass for spring 2013, pending availability.

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 next commercial season is due to open on November 1, 2012 and will last until February 28, 2013.

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: LDWF has scheduled a survey of rough fish to estimate fish population for January, 2013.

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: LDEQ began their most recent ambient water sampling of the lake in October 2011 and will be collecting samples through September 2012. Updated results will be uploaded on the LDNR website when available. LDWF is collecting water quality data as part of their fisheries surveys. A comprehensive database of existing water quality results is being developed by LDNR; data has been requested from various state and federal agencies.

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: Drainage network hydromodification recommendations will be submitted by the consultant upon completion of the watershed drainage network assessment action (see Action #2).

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. Anticipated to take place concurrent with construction of island/terraces.

Current Status: 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: The creation of island/terrace habitat will be scheduled as funding becomes available. It is anticipated that the funding request will be heard at the October Bond Commission Meeting.

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 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 has been drafted for the council review and assignment. An erosion and sediment ordinance was resubmitted to the PCPJ for their review and comments. Relevant documents, reports, news articles and other information are available on the LDNR website.