False River to be lowered by 3 feet for 6 months

BY TERRY L. JONES

After more than 20 years of talking about it—a discussion that has often polarized Pointe Coupee residents—state and local authorities are taking their biggest step yet in trying to restore False River by instituting a man-made drawdown of the alluvial cove lake.

State officials have given the Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury the OK to reduce the lake's water level from 16.5 feet to approximately 13.5 feet for the next six months. That process was scheduled to start Tuesday, one day after the Labor Day holiday that traditionally marks the end of summer.

Residents with homes and businesses along the lake's 22-mile-long shoreline are buzzing with excitement about the effort to restore the lake, even though the drawdown is likely to have a negative impact on businesses for a time.

"Yeah, I'm going to lose a little business because it's still warm, but it's going to be a great outcome on the backside," said Jim Major, who owns a local pub and entertainment called Jim's Place at the north end of False River.

He said the drawdown will prevent boaters from accessing his business via the lake because the water near his business will be too shallow.

But Major doesn't care. He's far more concerned with returning False River to its former glory as a trophy lake for bass fishing. "I've been fighting to see this happen since '90," he said. "I'm pumped about it."

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

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries officials say the drawdown will have a multifaceted effect on improving False River's water quality. The most important is the lake's current multi-year drought and a drop in water levels that have left the lake's natural (endogenous) filtration system out of commission.

Pierre Lemoine holds on to his son Jacques-Pierre Lemoine, 4, while the family dog, Marley, a 5-year-old golden retriever-Lab mix, leaps from the dock after a stick on False River in New Roads on Sunday.

以上是文档的自然语言表示。
The Advocate  theadvocate.com  Tuesday, September 2, 2014  5A

LEFT: A group of teenagers enjoy the Labor Day weekend by being pulled on a tube behind a boat on False River.

Below: From left, Austin Broussard, 19; Isabelle Smith, 13; Morgan Broussard, 13; and Kathy Broussard, of Lafayette, ride jet skis on False River on Sunday.

The first phase involves dredging the sediment buildup on the lake's floor and using it to build a containment dike that will act as a dam to block further sediment buildup in the rest of the waterway.

Although much work has been going on behind the scenes to improve conditions, this will be a very visible sign that actions are being taken to improve this great natural resource," said Stephen Cheu," assistant secretary of the state's Department of Natural Resources' Office of Coastal Management.

"The work that is being done will lead to improved fisheries and water quality and will further complement the previously completed spawning beds, fish stockings and commercial fishing season, which are all part of the multifaceted plan to restore the lake," Chais wrote in an email.

Officials said previously that the dike will take approximately seven months to finish. In the meantime, the use of the lake by boaters and property owners should take advantage of the opportunity while the water level is low to do any maintenance or clean-up work that may be needed around their pier.

Major Morel, whose family owns the lakeside eatery Morel's Restaurant in Toled, said he has every intention of doing exactly that.

"I want to make sure all our paddles are good and everything is stable," Morel said. "With the lower water level, you see things you normally wouldn't if you would have stuck with a six-foot drawbridge, you could have done a bunch of work under my building."

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In the past, more likely than not, the water levels at False River would have been brought back up by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to try to keep the lake full and provide recreation.

But the Corps decided to let nature take its course at False River, which means the lake is draining naturally due to a dam on the bayou that feeds into the lake, said John Devlin, a Corps spokesperson.

"We're letting nature take its course on False River," Devlin said. "We're not trying to keep the lake full for recreation purposes.

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