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An open letter to all Friends of the Atchafalaya and partner organizations working in the Historic Atchafalaya Basin:

The Board of Directors of the Friends of the Atchafalaya have agreed to meet with representatives of the New Orleans District, US Army Corps of Engineers on a regular basis to offer recommendations for Corps Projects in the Atchafalaya Basin Area. We also plan to solicit Federal and State funding for Corps and Atchafalaya Basin Program projects that we consider supportive of our overall goal of conserving and restoring the quality of the quasi-natural ecosystem remaining in the Historic Basin.

We define the Historic Atchafalaya Basin as the entire drainage area of the Atchafalaya River (formerly the lower Red River before the Red joined the Mississippi in about the 15th century.) We also believe that the fate of the Atchafalaya is tightly linked to that of the Mississippi and that managing them together is an important element of any attempt to restore the damage to the Louisiana coast.

Successful promotion of any restoration project will require the support of many organizations and individuals with interests in the health of the plant, fish and wildlife habitat in the affected areas. A balance must also be maintained between long-term environmental health requirements and processes which affect short-term human survival and economic well-being within the affected areas (e.g. flood control, resource extraction, and product transportation.) When trade-offs are required between competing land uses or resource usage, decisions will require both objective impact analysis and subjective public demand.

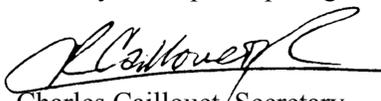
In order to identify projects and approaches that might meet the goals as defined, satisfy the largest segment of society, and incite the least vocal resistance, we have created a list of potential approaches to dealing with the management of the area of interest.

The attached "Atchafalaya Basin Protection and Restoration Action Table" solicits your opinions as an organization or an interested individual. The results will not commit you or your group to any course of action but will be used to identify the approaches that are most likely to produce a consensus. We intend to provide a report listing the approaches with the highest degree of support and offer those as a basis supporting policies currently in place or for recommending changes or new approaches to some of the issues that surface.

Please feel free to add to the list, attach your own goals or suggestions, or add sheets for comments to the items in the list. This document is being distributed in PDF form for printing and in Microsoft Excel file format for electronic completion.

Please come to a Friends Board meeting or mail or email your opinions to us.

Thank you for participating in this project.



Charles Caillouet, Secretary
Friends of the Atchafalaya

The “Atchafalaya Basin Protection and Restoration Action Table” contains four sections.

1. First is a simple question to determine how your group defines “The Atchafalaya Basin.” We often use the phrase as if it is an absolute, while we are actually referring to a subset of the Historic Atchafalaya Basin, such as the system of floodways from Old River to the Gulf of Mexico; the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System, LA Project - from US Highway 190 to Wax Lake Outlet and Morgan City; or the green areas that remain undeveloped inside and outside the floodway protection levees. There is no correct answer and you don’t have to weigh your answer. A simple (or complex) statement in the “Comment” column is fine.
2. Second is a list of “General Approaches” to protection and restoration of whatever part of the Historic Basin that you are interested in. Most of the entries are high-level suggestions that might be used to achieve one or more results. We ask that you rate them according to how Desirable you think each is as a method of achieving your conservation and/or restoration goals, from zero as “not an option” to ten as “most desirable.” Then, use the same scale to indicate whether you think each approach is feasible as a tool. You might feel that a specific approach would be the best one in a perfect world but in today’s political climate, that it is not worth much effort and should be tabled for the time being.
3. Third is a list of “Specific Actions for a Government Entity.” This is intended to be a more specific list of proposals for submission to the Basin Program for its Annual Plan or to the Corps for project consideration, but it could be directed toward another entity with responsibility in the Basin.
4. Fourth is a list of items that the Friends of the Atchafalaya Board of Directors has selected as objectives to be pursued in the furtherance of our overall goal as defined in our mission statement below. You are welcome to comment on these items and to weigh in with your opinion of the feasibility of each of them.

“The mission of the Friends of the Atchafalaya is to promote conservation of the historical, cultural, and natural resources of the greater Atchafalaya Basin region, while increasing awareness of the value of these resources in sustaining whole and healthy lifestyles.”

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Visit <http://www.atchafalaya.info> for meeting information and Basin news.