

I am Charles Caillouet, and despite the name, i have never been the Mayor of Thibodeaux.

Thank you for allowing me to address the Commission.

I represent Friends of the Atchafalaya. We support habitat restoration efforts, and i hope that we are part of General Deluca's "Environment 2.0"

[ed. note: working for the future, rather than trying to stop projects.]

I appreciate the General's observations on the value of restoration, and i appreciate Dr. Mattei taking time to come to Baton Rouge and talk to us last year, after we addressed the Commission.

I'm here this year to say, "Please don't forget about us."

I have prepared a couple of pages laying out our position, but i won't read it to you. You should all have copies of it, and i would rather give you a feel of where we are coming from.

Our members are a cross section of stakeholders interested in the historic Atchafalaya Basin, including the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway system.

Our members don't all define the Atchafalaya Basin the same way, and don't all agree on what it means to "Save the Basin", a popular refrain from the 1970's.

Our members are sportsmen, landowners, commercial fishermen and craw-fishermen, professional scientists, public officials, teachers and students, activists and passive bystanders.

But most of them share a few characteristics:

1. They live outside the levees.
2. They appreciate the success of the Floodway design and implementation for flood control.
3. They depend on a healthy, sustainable environment both inside and outside the levees.
4. They are frustrated by ineffective restoration efforts, extending over 40 years.

Some are concerned about liability issues involving access to private property.

Some see that access as a traditional right that is being taken away.

Others are upset because they see their workplace continually shrinking because of accelerated sedimentation.

Many see wildlife habitat transformed or disappearing and fishable waters filling in.

Most see little future for the signature swampland from which the Floodway was carved. Some want to drain the swamp; others to flush it out.

All of them see government plans that pay lip service to preserving and restoring fragile habitat, yet continue to stall before actual improvements are seen.

They see companies doing business in their backyards and ignoring promises to clean up their messes and maintain government-sanctioned environmental modifications.

We are not trying to turn back the clock, but we **are** concerned about vanishing habitat.

Those of us who try to rally support for restoration efforts are finding it harder to convince frustrated citizens that anything will change.

We now believe that the only viable solution is to raise the priority of wetland and forest damage restoration and wild area protection to a level closer to that of flood control, transportation, and other forms of commerce.

There is significant value in "**Spillway**" tourism, fisheries and recreation that needs to be supported.

So we are again asking that the Commission look at the dire state of the once-natural areas in **our** Floodway, and help us to raise awareness that those areas deserve our attention. We can argue about the details when we get everyone to the table.

Thank you for listening to our pleas.