

NEWS RELEASE

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Pointe Coupee Police Jury Awards Contract for Constructing Weirs in M-1 Canal

Work Project Part of Comprehensive False River Ecosystem Restoration Effort

NEW ROADS, La. – The Pointe Coupee Police Jury on Tuesday (March 28) awarded an \$87,000 contract to a Morganza construction company to begin constructing weirs in the M-1 Canal to reduce the amount of nutrients and sediments that are being dumped into False River.

The police jury accepted the bid from Neal Construction Company, Inc., as the approved low bidder, at the recommendation of the lead engineer for the False River Nitrogen Impact Mitigation Project, which is one component of the overall False River Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Kevin Gravois, vice president for Professional Engineering Consultants, noted that the mitigation of the M-1 Canal is an integral part of a comprehensive effort to restore water quality and habitat of False River. The project will include a series of rock weirs and modified baffles or V-notched weirs in the M-1 Canal to reduce the amount of silt that makes its way into the lake.

Silt runoff into False River has covered much vegetation, damaging the lake's habitat, and it has created shallow areas, hindering boat traffic, and producing excessive muddy water.

"This is one of many projects that has been needed for some time," said State Rep. Major Thibaut, who has led a collaborative effort between the state and local governments to move forward with restoration efforts.

"While many land management improvements have been made along the banks and tributaries over the years by local farmers and property owners, a significant portion of silt makes its way into the lake each year," he said. "By utilizing better erosion control methods

throughout the False River watershed we take another step in the right direction to making one of Louisiana's greatest resources all that it can be."

The M-1 Canal is the primary canal that drains into False River. It releases runoff from approximately 17,600 acres into the South Flats of the lake.

Gravois anticipates construction of the weirs to begin by late summer. He noted that the design calls for standard weirs and V-notched weirs. The rock wall structures could stretch as high as 4 feet and 5 feet tall in some areas, constructed of stones ranging in diameter of 1 foot to 2 feet. The standard weirs will stretch across the full width of the canal, while the V-notched weirs will allow openings in the middle of weirs that are constructed at an angle.

Rep. Thibaut said engineers are also working on final designs for weir structures to be built in the M-2 canal. The work on both the M-1 and M-2 canals is being funded by NRG Energy Inc., which owns and operates the Big Cajun I and II plants, located near New Roads.

He noted that other restoration projects include the dredging of parts of the oxbow lake, constructing an island in the South Flats, and prescribing drawdowns of the lake to reduce turbidity and improve the lake's overall health. State officials also are improving fish spawning areas, aggressively stocking some popular fish species and providing commercial fishing seasons for less desirable species. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries and other agencies have provided much guidance in the restoration efforts, Thibaut said.

All projects are viewed for consideration and recommendation by the False River Watershed Council, which is comprised of state and local officials and community leaders, and then forwarded to the Pointe Coupee Police Jury for final approval and implementation.