

MINUTES
FALSE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2016

The False River Watershed Council met in a regular session at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 25, 2016 at the Courthouse Annex Building in New Roads, Louisiana.

Randy Myers called the meeting to order and directed Ms. Jeanne Hendrix to call the roll:

Present: Messrs. Major Thibaut, Jerry Hix, L.J. Grezaffi, Stephen Tassin, Bijan Sharafkhani, Jimmy Lyles, Arthur Ewing, Randy Myers, Ron Pourciau, Kyle Olinde

Absent: Brad Spicer, Cy D'Aquila, Thomas Van Biersel, Jimmy Chustz, and Rick Ward

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Mr. Ewing and a second by Mr. Pourciau:

Resolved, That the agenda of the meeting of October 25, 2016 be accepted for approval.

Unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Discussion by Mr. Ewing regarding corrections to minutes of September 27, 2016.

Motion by Mr. Olinde to approve with changes and a second by Mr. Thibaut

Resolved, That the minutes of the September 27, 2016 minutes are accepted as amended for approval.

Unanimously carried.

UPDATE PROPOSED FALSE RIVER ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT - PHASE II

Mr. Gerald Babin gave a status of the land search. Lands looked at so far are not acceptable. He is expanding the search area for an acceptable area. The Division of Administration has cut back funding to 60%. Mr. Babin stated that he can get to the permit process with 60% funding. Mr. Lyles asked about the Major property. It was explained that the size and elevation change was the issue. Mr. Thibaut explained why funding has been cut to 60%. Mr. Ewing expressed concerns over lack of progress. Mr. Grezaffi questioned why the Major property was not being considered any longer. Mr. Babin stated that the neighboring property and a levee system that would have to be used on the Major property was not a good option. Additional properties have been identified but owners are looking for financial compensation. Mr. Babin indicated that in future funding

requests additional funds may be needed to cover cost of having to pump to an area further than previously anticipated. Mr. Thibaut requested that the search for land proceed. Mr. Ewing requested cost profiles. There was a brief discussion on pumping into the Mississippi river, which Mr. Babin indicated would have to go through USACE approval. Mr. Thibaut asked Mr. Babin to reach out to the USACE. Additionally it was requested that Mr. Babin at the next meeting provide a cost breakdown on using Major property, results from his conversation with USACE and a list of properties identified further out of the initial search area.

UPDATE FALSE RIVER NITROGEN IMPACT MITIGATION PROJECT

Mr. Kevin Gravois was absent but an update was provided by Mr. Gerald Babin. Mr. Thomas Van Biersel, Mr. Thibaut, and Mr. Gravois met with the landowners last week. Plans were completed, but after looking at the land/canal it was determined that the plan would have to be adjusted. Mr. Thibaut stated the adjustments to the plans were due to limits of the land/canal. The new plan will have more weirs and no baffles. Mr. Gravois is working on the plans changes. Maintenance was a concern of the landowners. NRG funds can maintain for 2 years, after that the police jury will have to devise a maintenance plan. Mr. Thibaut thought that plans would be done and out for bid within 10-14 days. Cost for changes would be zero.

Mr. Myers questioned drainage right of way. Mr. Olinde stated that it would be 100ft on each side. Mr. Thibaut remarked that access is an issue in some areas. Discussion was had regarding coming up with a solution to stop/slow silt from coming into the river from properties adjoining the river.

UPDATE ON FALSE RIVER DRAWDOWN:

Brian Heiman of LDWF gave an update regarding the drawdown. The lake was 4.5 feet below pool elevation. It was dropping at about ½ inch per day but has slowed. Stakes have been set to measure compaction of material. The boat launch and access to the lake was discussed. Mr. Heiman indicated that concrete pads had been ordered to extend the boat launch and would remain in place permanently. Mr. Lyles asked about signs for exposed areas in the lake. Progress seen so far is the presence of vegetation and sediment compaction. Mr. Heiman is pleased with the results so far.

Mr. Grezaffi again questioned the benefits of the drawdown to water quality.

Mr. Sharafkhani asked Mr. Heiman to explain what would happen if there was not a drawn down. Mr. Heiman explained that the water/silt/vegetation issues would only continue to get worse.

Mr. David Greene stated that oxygen levels in the lake and the sudden weather change caused the recent fish kill on False River. The lake “flipped” and caused stress for the fish.

Mr. Thibaut asked why there seemed to be so many fish on the “Island” side of the lake. It was explained that chad are usually the easiest stressed and first to go in this situation. Additionally,

they died in open water and were pushed to the island side by the winds. Tests indicated that dissolved oxygen was low across the lake, not just in the northern end. Last fish kill was 2 years ago when lake was not in a drawdown.

Mr. Thibaut asked if there was cause for concern to humans. Mr. Greene stated it should not be. Mr. Ewing asked if the situation would be less severe with future drawdowns. Mr. Heiman indicated that it should.

Mr. Thibaut asked if DEQ was testing the water given 2016 was the 4th year in the testing cycle. DEQ indicated that it was but no sample was taken for August due to the floods.

Mr. Greene indicated that there are currently 7-8 sights in 5-8 feet of water that are being tested for water quality. Preliminary results indicated a huge dissolved oxygen curve in the lake. High sunlight and algae bloom caused several probes to register at zero oxygen around 3:00 - 4:00 a.m. in the lake.

Mr. Ewing questioned fecal matter in the lake and its effect on lake health.

Mr. Sharafkhani mentioned in review of the data it appears that the lake is healthy. Fecal only survives for 48 hours outside of humans or animals. Algae bloom is from fertilizer/added nutrients in the lake.

Mr. Grezaffi asked what is being monitored. Mr. Greene explained the process.

Mr. Thibaut asked DEQ about testing since 1992 and what does it show about False River. Mr. Sharafkhani stated that the general water quality is showing normal to improving.

Mr. Grezaffi stated he is for reducing sediment.

DEQ will be working with WLF on monitoring the lake. With the new probes we will have increased data for studying the lake.

Mr. Myers opened the meeting to public comment.

Mrs. Jude Grezaffi asked how many draw downs are planned. Mr. Myers referred her to the online plan, but also indicated that there was no drawdown schedule at this time.

Mrs. Betty Fontaine asked what was the estimated time for the lake to return to its normal level. WLF indicated depending on rainfall it could be back to the normal level 1-2 months after the drawdown ends.

Mr. Bourg Langlois expressed his concerns over testing the soil for herbicides. Mr. Heiman stated that it was tested and no risk was indicated. Mr. Langlois also asked if lack of wave action may have contributed to the fish kill. He also questioned if the lake may have been drawn down too fast.

Mr. Heiman said the lakes largest source of oxygen is phytoplankton not being turned by boats.

Mrs. Barbara Major stated that in years past there were problems with vegetation and who is going to control it. Mr. Myer expressed that a drawdown is a tool used to control water vegetation.

Mr. Bill Ruiz questioned if the fish kill would have been as bad if the lake had not been in a drawdown.

Mr. Jimmy Lyles asked about commercial fishermen and if they could remove the dead fish. WLF explained that chad were 95% of the fish killed and under 2 inches in size.

Mr. Tommy Bryan expressed his appreciation for the work of the council.

Mr. Thibaut asked for a topography map for an upcoming event. He also passed on concerns from the public on silt build up in Patin Dyke area now that no water is flowing out.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Ron Pourciau stated that Chenal Bayou has obstructions and now that it is drier it would be time to clean it out. Mr. Olinde stated that the jury would look into it.

Mr. Ewing asked about a clean up day.

Mr. Olinde stated there were no set plans. He also explained that sheriff's office would pick up tires and bring to the parish disposal site. The public could not bring tires to disposal site.

Mr. Thibaut explained process and stated that he would contact Warden Juge to schedule pick up dates.

Mr. Ewing asked about flipped barge in the river. Mr. Thibaut explained that he has spoken to the barge owner and the owner is making plans to remove the barge.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Olinde gave an update on the ordinance on lake levels and closure. The ordinance was adopted by the jury. Mr. Ewing suggested getting a formal recommendation drafted for the jury.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/PERSONAL PRIVILEGE:

Mr. Grezaffi again expressed that he would like meeting to be advertised in Banner. Mr. Olinde explained that advertisement is an expense and meeting notices are posted as required. Mr. Ewing offered to put the meeting notices on the chamber web-site. Additionally, Mr. Thibaut stated that all meetings are posted on the watershed council web-site. He also explained that since the Banner is weekly with early deadline it is difficult to post.

Mr. Thibaut stated that he wanted to make a recommendation to the jury on controlling silt from private properties around the lake and conversion of sewer treatment.

Mr. Ewing would like to see what kind of funding would be available for a sewer system to be run.

Mr. Hix expressed his concern about public perception of the project when there are negative news reports.

Mr. Myer stated he is looking at first week of December for next meeting.

Motion to Adjourn by Mr. Thibaut and second by Mr. Jerry Hix.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.