

ATCHAFALAYA BASIN WATER MANAGEMENT UNIT INFORMATION*

Name of Unit: Upper Belle River

Location and Boundaries: Located in the southeast portion of the Atchafalaya Basin. The unit is bordered on the east and south by the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee, on the southwest and west by east by Six Mile Lake and the Atchafalaya River Main Channel, and on the north by Little Bayou Pigeon. The unit also includes a peninsula encompassing the area between Grand Lake and the Atchafalaya River Main Channel, extending generally northerly from the mouth of Little Bayou Pigeon along the east side of Grand Lake and Keelboat Pass to Flat Lake Pass, and then to the east bank of Lake Chicot at Bayou Sorrel.

Issues: The Upper Belle River and Flat Lake Water Management Units (WMUs) have degraded due to inadequate capacity for the system to drain, and by water movement being blocked by sediment and spoil deposition (thereby causing low oxygen levels and loss of aquatic habitat).

Primary hydrological inputs from the main channel are through Coon Trap, Dog Leg, a wellhead canal, Blue Point Chute, 21-inch Canal, American Pass and Dog Island Pass immediately east of American Pass. A new input at the Texaco Canal has also been recently identified. Primary hydrological inputs from the east (GIWW) are through Bayou Sorrel, Bayou Postillion, the 21-inch, 16-inch, Sandra Thompson, and Shell Oilfield canals, and Bayou Long at Flat Lake.

The only major outflow into the main Atchafalaya River channel is at the south end of Flat Lake. A minor outflow may occur at American Pass under certain river conditions. The primary outflows into the GIWW are through Old River and Little Bayou Sorrel. Outflows from the 21-inch, 16-inch, Sandra Thompson, and Shell Oilfield canals may occur under certain river conditions.

Strategies: Identify, prioritize and implement specific projects to improve water quality and reduce sedimentation of waterways and lakes in these water management units.

Implementation Status: The project "East Grand Lake (EGL) Project" was funded through the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) Atchafalaya Basin Program's (ABP) Fiscal Year 2009/2010 Annual Plan process. This project will analyze water flow and sediment deposition throughout the study area including analysis of five inputs into the system: American Pass, Bayou Sorrel, Blue Point Chute, Coon Trap Weir, Dog Leg Canal and Indigo Bayou. The goal of this project is the development of a plan to realign water flow patterns and strategically redirect sediment. The result of this action will be a specific list of construction items to accomplish water and sediment realignment in these WMU's, and thereby improve water quality and habitat and reduce the sedimentation of waterways and lakes.

Several projects in the Upper Belle River unit have been approved and funded for engineering and design only, including: dredging of nearly 7 miles of Big Bayou Pigeon; clearing debris and vegetation from Little Bayou Pigeon from the crossover to Grand Lake, and dredging if needed to provide access to that lake; and dredging the entrances of the 16-inch and 21-inch canals and

providing additional cuts in the banks of those canal banks to allow for historical sheet flow through this large swamp area.

Available Funding:

Federal: None. The Upper Belle River WMU was one of the 13 water management units identified in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) 1982 Feasibility Report for the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System (ABFS) project. Only five of those thirteen WMUs were recommended for federal improvements by the Corps as part of the ABFS project; the Upper Belle River WMU was not one of those recommended for federal improvements.

State: As part of the FY 2011 Annual Plan, the Research and Promotion Board approved and allocated engineering and design funds for the following projects in this unit: Big Bayou Pigeon (\$50,000); Little Bayou Pigeon (\$50,000); and 16-inch and 21-inch Pipeline Canals (\$50,000). \$700,000 funded for planning of the East Grand Lake Project area (Flat Lake and Upper Belle River WMUs) in the FY2010 Basin Annual Plan.

Additional Funding Needed: Construction cost estimates will be provided as part of the engineering and design work.

* Focus is on measures needed to address issues related to maintaining, restoring and/or enhancing the Basin's aquatic and associated wetland habitats.