Atchafalaya Basin Protection and Restoration Action Table

May 31, 2013

This survey is intended to gather subjective information about policies and goals of organizations operating in the Atchafalaya Basin Area.
It will not be taken as a commitment from your organization but may help us select projects that are likely to get wide support from the community.
Feel free not to answer any questions that you deem inappropriate, but a numeric response or comment will register an opinion, positive or negative.

Key to responses:

Desirability/Feasibility scale:

10 = Should be highest priority action/Most Feasible
7 = Should be employed as an action
5 = Possible action
3 = Should not be employed as an action
0 = Should be rejected as an action/Least Feasible
Desirability applies to your desire to use an approach.
Feasibility indicates your current assessment of the likelihood of success.

Sample Comments:

Apply to entire Nation
Apply to entire State
Apply to entire Mississippi Delta
Apply to entire historic Basin
Apply only to all floodways
Apply only to lower floodway
[Alternative approaches or interpretations]

How does your group define the Atchafalaya Basin?
[Heritage Area, Floodway, Lower Floodway, Other?]

General Approaches:	Desirability	Feasibility	Comment
Attract tourists and visitors to the area to increase awareness and appreciation for the Basin.			
Purchase private land and turn it into public land for access and restoration.			
Sell public land to private entities and allow them to develop it.			
Use developmental control and environmental protection easements to direct land usage.			
Improve enforcement of existing land use restrictions.			
Restrict access to sensitive areas of the Basin.			
Restrict construction in sensitive areas of the Basin.			Directional drill from already compromised areas
Restrict resource extraction in sensitive areas.			
Restrict consumptive recreation in sensitive areas.			
Create special use areas to serve different users of the Basin.			Support traditional activities

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General Approaches: (cont.)	**Desirability**	**Feasibility**	**Comment**
Modify floodway design to accommodate environmental protection and habitat improvement.			
Modify floodway operation to improve water quality.			
Sacrifice floodway efficiency to achieve effective environmental gains.			May cost big dollars to change priorities
Allocate more funds for floodway maintenance to achieve environmental gains.			Efficiency changes may require higher maintenance costs
Develop recreational features inside the levees.			Primitive campgrounds, Visitor Centers
Subsidize recreational features outside the levees to relieve pressure inside the levees.			
Improve public access to the Floodway with better roads and boat landings.			Boat landing are now defined as Public Access features; previously were designated as Recreation features
Improve public information delivery to communicate the value of the resources in the Basin.			
Improve K-12 education programs to teach students the value of the resources in the Basin.			
Increase funding for partner programs with area universities supporting research and restoration.			
Increase funding for resource agencies doing management work in the Basin.			
Create funding opportunities for private entities that agree to improve environmental quality.			
Create tax incentives for positive environmental action.			
Create ongoing State funding for Water Management Maintenance functions (e.g. dredging of threatened waterways.)			
Modify State laws to prevent loss of State land to private landowners because of unnatural accretion.			
Generate Best Management Practices for ongoing management of public and private lands inside and outside the floodways.			
Generate Best Management Practices for construction and public works projects inside and outside the floodways.			

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General Approaches: (cont.)	**Desirability**	**Feasibility**	**Comment**
Pursue litigation against public agencies and private entities that threaten the public good through bad practices.			
Identify potential “signature” areas and target those for restoration or progression to a new usage.			Work is being done on this by The Nature Conservancy and will presumably be part of an upcoming report/ publication.
Identify natural methods of improving water flow into impounded areas and implement those methods.			Lowered channel depth to provide continuous scouring from tidal action and stage changes?
Close unnatural channels wherever possible to prevent unwanted siltation and erosion.			Point source sediment introduction
Reopen closed natural waterways into impounded areas.			Return to more natural configurations.
Add control structures at key water introduction points to allow more targeted water and sediment control.			Could be useful within a water management unit but requires operation and maintenance
Shave spoil banks wherever possible to provide more natural sediment distribution.			Build ridges behind natural levees rather than dumping sediment into channels.
Add cuts and gaps to existing spoil banks to reintroduce water (and potentially point-source sediment) to impounded areas.			Traditional assumption of best approach to inexpensive water quality improvements
Reduce some or all mitigation requirements for modifications to unnaturally created features like spoil banks.			Could be contentious discussion
Require mitigation to be performed in the same water management unit as the mitigated damage.			Fix it where you broke it?
Apply uniform criteria when determining mitigation requirements for projects constructed by USACE and by other public agencies and conservation organizations.			Mitigation requirements should not impede projects with positive habitat quality evaluations. Mitigation criteria should include habitat health and aesthetic considerations.
Allow some areas to collect silt in order to protect other desirable habitat.			Managing “natural” progression of ecosystems in an unnatural environment requires hard decisions.
Use high maintenance sediment control features like traps.			Maintenance has traditionally been difficult to fund and continue across changing political climates.
Use chemical agents to combat introduced invasive species.			Which approach is more destructive.
Use chemical agents to treat potentially toxic spills.			BP dispersant arguments...

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Specific Actions for a Government Entity:	**Feasibility**	**For**	**Comment** (Proposals for Annual Plan)
Improve water flow through Sherburne Areas and across Interstate-10 to isolated areas on east side of Floodway.		ABP	
Pursue bank shaving as an option along the Work Canal as part of water introduction into Upper Grand Flats.		ABP	Previously pursued project with landowner resistance
Pursue bank shaving as an option along portions of the Atchafalaya Main Channel as an alternative to contested openings into the impounded swamp areas.		ABP	i.e. Coon Trap Weir discussion
Continue to pursue data analysis and modeling as tools of project desirability determination.		ABP & USACE	Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment System and Audubon Hydrologic Modeling Project
Tighten permit restrictions for maintenance of hydrologic modifications associated with wetland projects		USACE	
Improve enforcement of permit restrictions.		USACE	
Rewrite floodway management guidelines to improve habitat quality outside main flood-carrying channels.		USACE	

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FOA Objectives		**Feasibility**	**Comment**
Improve the health of each area of the Atchafalaya Basin			
Achieve a more natural progression from marsh to swamp to bottomland hardwood forest, but attempt to slow changes caused by human intervention			
Designate a government agency with a conservation mission to share management of the Floodways with the Corps of Engineers			
"..balance national security and comprehensive flood damage reduction with environmental sustainability and recreation, infrastructure and energy policy, water supply and water quality, and movement of agricultural and manufacturing goods." (USACE, "Room for the River: 2011 Post-Flood Summary Report", p 32, 2012)			
Connect the wild Atchafalaya areas with other Wildlife Management Areas and Refuges along the Mississippi River to increase contiguous habitat			
Reduce ecosystem fragmentation, especially within each Water Management Unit			
Restore natural processes wherever practical			
Improve water flow through impounded areas			
Reduce height of spoil banks wherever practical			
Bury new pipelines adjacent to old ones and back fill old channels with old and new spoil			
Prohibit pipeline installation above low water marks, especially in existing and new spoil banks			
Support traditional activities in designated areas of the Floodway			
Support the survival of endangered species in the Basin			
Require the protection of aesthetic and environmentally important resources in all Floodway decisions			