

20141223 - FOA Board meeting - 9:00 PM - Fryling Residence

Attendees

Board Members: Charlie Fryling, Jim Delahoussaye, Charles Caillouet, Ray Brassieur, Carolyn Delahoussaye

Advisors and Guests: Pam Caillouet, Lu Cutrera, Mary Lu Cutrera, JoAnn Fryling, Woody Martin, Harold Shoemaker, Sarah Shoemaker

The social gathering and open discussion started at 6:30 PM.

President Fryling opened the official meeting at about 9:00 PM.

The Board approved the general agenda: this would be a followup meeting on the public input effort for some sort of National conservation area in the Basin

Discussion of the Proposed Conservation Area in the western part of the historic Atchafalaya Basin

The Secretary will add Harold Shoemaker to the Advisors List and to the Committee list.

Harold gave his perspective on the importance of the area and the current status of the effort. He also offered his opinions on how we should approach the task and offered his cooperation and support.

Harold's observations:

There are several mounds or middens in the Lake Fausse Pointe area, created at least 4,000 to 5,000 years ago in pre-pottery times, when the area was essentially the Gulf coast. The area at the edge of the lakes is mostly unspoiled, except for the human-induced sedimentation in the lakes. Many of the cypress trees, although not large, may be one to two thousand years old and so are effectively irreplaceable. They are particularly valuable as an ecological, tourism and recreational resource.

In 1890, the Atchafalaya Basin Levee District was created, serving 16 parishes, and was transferred State land in those parishes, along with future land acquisitions. In 1900, the Levee Board sold the land to the Atchafalaya Land company.

In 1918, the LA Governor wanted to lease the land but found out that the Levee Board had no title to it and may have sold it, contrary to the State Constitution. A lawsuit was filed by the Levee Board to force the State to issue a title and Atchafalaya Land Company intervened to direct the State to issue the title to the Company. In "Board of Commissioners of the Atchafalaya Basin Levee District vs. Capdeville", the State contended, the Twenty-Second Judicial District Court in East Baton Rouge Parish concurred, and the LA Supreme Court confirmed, that the beds of Lake Rond, Lake Fausse Pointe, Lake Dauterive, and Little Lake Long belong to the State of Louisiana and cannot be transferred to private ownership. Unlike some other lands, that judgement determined State ownership of the lakes in question.

The area is intact geologically, historically, biologically, and legally and should be preserved as such.

The lakes should be designated as a park, while the adjacent land continues to be exploited, commercialized and developed.

By preserving the remaining natural areas, we preserve the option of learning more about our history and environment as our research tools continue to evolve and develop in the future.

Each National Park designation is a Federal law unto itself and can be molded to the conditions of the designated area, so traditional uses could be preserved in the creation of a Park.

The swamp area is currently poor hunting habitat and siltation is degrading fishing areas, but the area contains unusual fauna and may house unique species. A restoration element in the designation might halt or even reverse the degradation that is currently harming the habitat.

We need a US Senator or Legislator to take the lead and he is in the process of setting up a meeting with Senator Vitter's staff to discuss the idea. It is also likely that we might get support from new Senator Cassidy.

The area would involve the parishes of St. Martin, Iberia and St. Mary and so would need support from officials and citizens in those parishes.

There are currently posted signs on the “last tree in the lake” so the landowners are claiming more than their legal property and the State needs to mark the boundary of the lakes. According to State Law and historical findings, that would be the average high water level from gauge readings of the past 18 years. It might be possible to push the limits to the historical high water mark when the land was initially surveyed but it is probably more practical to go with the current marks so that we get less push-back from landowners around the lakes.

FOA should start a process to determine the current legal high water mark around the lakes and Board member Paul Kemp might be a good person to lead that effort.

A public meeting in February is a good idea.

Woody will work on a date in February and Jim will release the January date for the Henderson site.

We need to contact State Parks and find out the status of the planning for the Catahoula State Park and Boy Scout Camp.

Woody will research examples of National Parks that are set up the way we think this one should be, e.g. with traditional hunting, fishing and recreational uses allowed.

Old Business

Reports

Charles

Secretary’s report

The minutes for the previous two meetings are out but contain some interpretations of third party notes and summary of detailed discussions. The Secretary asked the Board to review them for misinterpretations and comment via email on them.

Treasurer’s report

A check was issued to Immense Networks for \$179 for semi-annual web hosting renewal. A contribution check for \$100 was received from LA Tourism for our support of their efforts. The current balance across all accounts is \$1,892.93, before the \$100 deposit from Tourism.

Web site update

The web site continues to be updated.

IndieGoGo Atchafalaya Crowdfunding Campaign

The campaign is up and running and is already more than halfway toward meeting the goal.

New Business

Plans for upcoming activities

Mississippi River Commission high-water-trip meeting is set for March 27, 2015, in Baton Rouge.

Partnership activities

The Atchafalaya Crowd-funding campaign with LWF and the Boy Scouts will continue to February 14, 2015.

Upcoming Events

ANHA/Trace Commission Meeting January 7, 2015, 10AM, Capitol Park Welcome Center
Mississippi River Commission river trip meeting - March 27, 2015

Next meeting place and time

January 27, 2015 (fourth Tuesday)
Audubon Office at 6:30 PM

adjourned at 10:20 PM