

## Statement to Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Protection and Restoration

November 15, 2018

Beginning in 1991 I served 1 year as assistant to David Chambers, Gov. Buddy Roemer's principal coastal advisor; 9 years as head of the governor's office of coastal activities during the terms of Governors Edwin Edwards and Mike Foster; 5 years as coastal science advisor to Gov. Foster and Kathleen Blanco; and finally 9 months in Gov. Jindal's coastal activities office, ending in October, 2008.

During that entire time I argued (to no avail) with consecutive DNP secretaries for the need to incorporate the entire Atchafalaya River Basin (ARB) system into the coastal restoration planning program. The corps claimed jurisdiction of the ARB as a vast landscape of jurisdictional wetlands and DNR incorporated the ARB into its coastal management (permitting) program in coordination with the petrochemical industry.

Three agenda items involving the ARB are under discussion today:

### **Issue 1: USACE role and initiatives in the Atchafalaya River Basin" Durund Elzey, USACE**

The ARB includes the Old River Control Structure (ORCS) at Simmesport, one of the world's largest water control structures, which has been used primarily to maintain a constant flow ratio of 70:30 between the mainstream Mississippi and the Atchafalaya. The Corps has long been adamantly opposed to any discussion of using the ORCS to vary the river flow between the two distributaries. Thus the ORCS remains virtually unused except during rare flood events on the lower Miss. R. This "rule" must change so as to take advantage of opportunities to maximize sediment input to the delta complex.

### **Issue 2: Integration of the State Atchafalaya Basin Program" Brian Lezina, CPRA**

The title of this issue implies the long overdue acknowledgment that comprehensive coastal protection and restoration is fundamentally impossible without including the ARB. In July, 2009 I posted a two part essay on the ARB and how it should be managed to improve our odds of restoring our delta complex. Strongly recommend that the CPRA Part 1 was published on July 9

- <http://lacoastpost.com/blog/?p=10516> and Part 2 on July 11
- <http://lacoastpost.com/blog/?p=10603>.

I strongly recommend that someone in a policy role with the CPRA read this essay. I also recommend that the CPRA engage the consulting services of Bryan R. Piazza, Ph.D., with The Nature Conservancy, who recently authored a book on the current status and function of the ARB: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18796255-the-atchafalaya-river-basin>.

### **Issue 3: Increase Atchafalaya Flow to Terrebonne Project Update. "Micaela Coner, CPRA**

I support this position and have recently been advocating the expansion of the list of official coastal parishes to include the entire ARB as well as EBR Parish, which experienced catastrophic backwater flooding, a coastal phenomenon during August 2016.

Dr. Leonard Bahr, Former Executive Assistant for Coastal Activities,  
[leonardbahr@gmx.com](mailto:leonardbahr@gmx.com)