

Key Terms

See below for explanations of key terms commonly used in the development of the Plan.

- **Objectives** - define the specific, overarching pillars that the Plan seeks to accomplish. They establish strategic direction for planning and decision-making, providing a framework to guide project evaluation.
- **Metrics** - measurable parameters used to evaluate how well a project supports the objectives of the Plan. By providing a consistent way to measure project performance, metrics allow planners to compare projects and better understand the benefits each may provide.
- **Targets** - define the desired outcomes for each metric and establish the level of performance the Plan aims to achieve. They help guide project evaluation by providing a benchmark against which project performance can be measured.
- **Integrated Projects** - combine multiple restoration or management features into a coordinated design that works together to address complex challenges. By considering how different project components interact, the planning process can identify solutions that better achieve ecological, hydrologic, and community benefits across the Atchafalaya River System.
- **Hydrologic and Hydraulic (H&H) Modeling** - simulates how water moves through the System under existing and future conditions. By predicting changes in water levels, flow patterns, sediment transport, and other physical processes, these models provide the scientific foundation for evaluating project performance and understanding how projects may influence the System over time.
- **Vegetation Transition Modeling** - projects how plant communities may change over time in response to environmental conditions such as water levels and salinity. These projections help planners understand how projects may influence future habitat conditions and support healthy, resilient ecosystems.
- **Habitat Modeling** - evaluates the quality and ecological value of habitat for selected fish and wildlife species, as well as communities, under existing and future conditions. Habitat models estimate how suitable an area is for different species, or the overall ecological benefits of fish and wildlife communities. Together, these tools help planners evaluate project outcomes and identify projects that provide the ecological benefits that best meet the Plan's objectives.
- **Without Project Conditions** - The environmental, hydrologic, and ecological status of the System without implementing a new project. These serve as the reference point against which project impacts are measured.

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- **Water Year** - A 12-month period used for hydrological tracking that runs from October 1 through September 30, named for the calendar year in which it ends. Selecting specific historical dry, moderate, and wet water years allows planners to model how projects perform under varying environmental conditions.
- **Hydrograph** - A graph showing the rate of water flow over time at a specific point in a flowing waterway, such as a river or bayou. It visualizes seasonal changes, high-water crests, and low-flow periods used in modeling.
- **Sea Level Rise Scenarios** - Projected increases in ocean surface levels used to test how candidate projects will perform against future coastal inundation, potential salinity intrusion, and changing water levels 25-years into the future.
- **Channel Floodplain Exchange** - Project features or techniques (such as breaching or gapping elevated ridges along canals) designed to allow water to move freely between channels, canals, and surrounding wetlands to restore natural circulation and improve water quality.

If there are additional terms you would like to see explained, feel free to email AtchafalayaBasin@la.gov