



**MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
ATCHAFALAYA BASIN PROGRAM (ABP)
AND
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY OF LOUISIANA (TNC)**

I. Purpose.

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding is to build upon a framework of cooperation between ABP and TNC to extend the reach of the respective parties' resources within areas of overlapping concern and interest regarding the conservation, management and restoration of the Atchafalaya Basin.

II. Background,

The Atchafalaya Basin is a natural resource of national significance encompassing 838,000 acres of forests, bayous, swamp and lakes. It extends south from the Old River Control Structure approximately 140 miles to Morgan City. The Atchafalaya Basin represents the largest contiguous bottomland hardwood forest, and overflow alluvial swamp remaining in the United States. The Atchafalaya Basin also plays a significant role in the flood protection efforts of the Mississippi River Valley and has been designated as a floodway by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Many of the actions taken to modify the basin into a floodway by the USACE have adversely impacted the natural hydrology and habitat of the Atchafalaya Basin. The Louisiana Legislature, by Act 3 of the First Extraordinary Session of 1998 created and empowered the ABP to coordinate the efforts of various governmental agencies and private concerns in the implementation of the State Master Plan for the Atchafalaya Basin. The Mission in the State Master Plan is to conserve, restore and enhance (where possible) the natural habitat, and to give all people the opportunity to enjoy the Atchafalaya experience. Act 606 of the 2008 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature established the Atchafalaya Basin annual plan process, created the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to elevate the role of science in developing proposed solutions as well as specific projects, and created a focus on water management and water quality to accelerate restoration of the Atchafalaya Basin. The TAG via the annual plan process is also tasked with improving access to enhance public use of the recreational opportunities in the Atchafalaya Basin.

TNC seeks to collaborate with public and private landowners and other stakeholders to promote conservation of the Atchafalaya Basin with science-driven decision making.

This agreement is to recognize the value of the public service that TNC is voluntarily undertaking in furtherance of its internal mission and goals, and to identify areas that the ABP can provide assistance to TNC as part of its mission, and to illuminate the resulting public benefit by the mutual collaboration of the two entities on matters affecting the Atchafalaya Basin.

III. ABP AGREES TO:

1. Consider environmental sustainability concepts suggested by TNC for incorporation into the conceptualization, planning, construction, execution, and evaluation of projects within the Atchafalaya Basin.
2. Provide any publicly available data to TNC in support of its development of scientific evaluation of the state of the Atchafalaya Basin, and the development of modeling tools related thereto.
3. Collaborate with TNC to provide public information that will promote conservation and enhancement of the resources of the Atchafalaya Basin.

4. Work with TNC to secure funding for ABP projects that have been approved via the Annual Plan process through the TAG, the Research and Promotion Board (RPB), CPRA, and the Louisiana Legislature for the construction of hydrological restoration elements in designated Water Management Units (e.g. East Grand Lake). ABP and TNC will also work to secure additional matching funds for these ABP projects through grants and other funding mechanisms (e.g. North American Wetland Conservation Council).
5. Coordinate with TNC to unify grant funds and ABP restoration funds to maximize impact of number of installed hydrological restoration features on approved ABP projects on TNC lands, and adjacent tracts owned by Louisiana Division of State Lands.

IV. TNC AGREES TO:

1. As appropriate and subject to its internal policy regarding confidential information, contribute pertinent scientific and conservation planning information and documents to ABP for its activities affecting the Atchafalaya Basin for distribution to the public;
2. To assist ABP in gathering of information related to conservation, restoration and enhancement (where possible) of the natural habitat of the Atchafalaya Basin.
3. Assist ABP with dissemination of information to the public by supporting public outreach and collaborating on stakeholder involvement and engagement efforts with regard to its programs in the Atchafalaya Basin.
4. Assist ABP with regard to identification and development of sustainable sources of funding for conservation, preservation, and restoration projects in the Atchafalaya Basin.
5. Assist ABP by providing timely and cogent scientific evaluation of proposed projects in the Atchafalaya.
6. Contribute grant writing expertise and coordination to leverage ABP funding with other programs in order to expand restoration capacity in the Basin.

V. THE PARTIES AGREE TO:

1. Collaborate to the extent practicable, on joint development of scientific knowledge with respect to the ecosystems, hydrology, and wildlife habitat of the Atchafalaya Basin.
2. Promote and advance the cause of policies that under scrutiny of scientific examination demonstrate real or potential improvement to the Atchafalaya Basin.
3. Collaborate to the extent practicable to leverage funding for hydrological restoration and land acquisition in the Atchafalaya Basin.

VI. MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. It is mutually understood and agreed by and between the parties that:

1. **PUBLIC RECORDS.** Any records or information furnished to the ABP under this instrument are subject to the Louisiana Public Records Law, La. R.S. 44:1, et. seq.
2. **MODIFICATION.** Modifications within the scope of the instrument shall be made by mutual consent of the parties, by the issuance of a written modification, signed and dated by all parties, prior to any changes being performed.
3. **PARTICIPATION IN SIMILAR ACTIVITIES.** This instrument in no way restricts the ABP or TNC from participating in similar activities with other public or private agencies, organizations, and individuals.
4. **TERM AND TERMINATION.** This Agreement shall be in effect from the latest date of execution by a party, and shall continue until modified or terminated. Either party may terminate this instrument, in whole or in part, at any time, upon 60 days prior written notice to the appropriate principal contact of the other party.
5. **FUNDING.** Nothing in this agreement shall be interpreted as authorization for the expenditure of funds, or as support for any demand for the reimbursement for any expenses.

6. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS. The principal contacts for this instrument are:

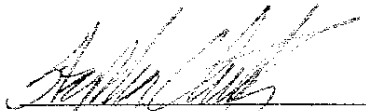
Atchafalaya Basin Program

Don Haydel, Director
Atchafalaya Basin Program
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 94396
Baton Rouge, La. 70804-9396

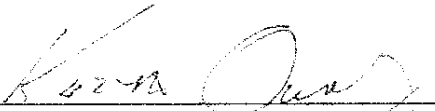
The Nature Conservancy

James Bergan, Director of Freshwater and Wetland Conservation
The Nature Conservancy
P.O. Box 4125
Baton Rouge, La 70821

VII. Effective date. This agreement shall be effective on the latest date signed below.



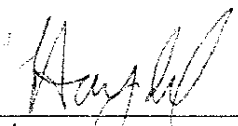
Stephen Chustz
Secretary
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources



Keith Ouchley, Ph.D
State Director
The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana

Date: 12/17/15

Date: 12/17/15



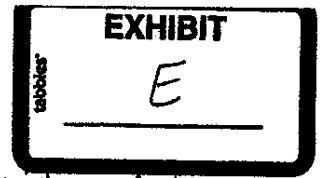
Don Haydel
Director, Atchafalaya Basin Program

Date: 12/17/15

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper
Dean A. Wilson
Cell: (225) 692-4114



Atchafalaya Basinkeeper Asst.
Cara Leverett
Cell: (225) 685-9439



January 13, 2016

Mr. Don Haydel
Atchafalaya Basin Program
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources

Dear Mr. Haydel,

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper submits this letter as an Expression of Interest to be included as an entity in the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Nature Conservancy (TNC) and for continued participation in any projects in the Atchafalaya Basin, including any developments on the East Grand Lake Project.

1- Who we are.

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper (ABK) is a non-profit organization that represents about 1,000 members many of whom fish, hunt, and recreate in the Atchafalaya Basin. ABK recognizes that we are only borrowing our natural resources from our children and works to protect what is left of the Atchafalaya Basin's lakes, bayous, and swamps for future generations. ABK was founded in 2004 and has grown into a conservation leader for the Atchafalaya Basin and Louisiana's coastal cypress forests through grassroots organizing, education, policy development, monitoring, enforcement and litigation. ABK is one of the fastest growing environmental groups in Louisiana. Protecting the Atchafalaya Basin's ecosystems from irresponsible management that threatens the future of the Basin's remaining lakes, bayous, and swamps has been a top priority for ABK from the very beginning.

2- The nature of our interest.

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper is interested in participating in the development of any of the Atchafalaya Basin Program's projects in the Atchafalaya Basin, especially any projects related to the new partnership with Nature Conservancy and large Basin landowners. Many large Basin landowners' interests go against the best interests of most Louisianans to protect what is left of our deep swamps and bayous and to keep access open to all navigable waters of the U.S. They want river water manipulations to bring huge amounts of sediment into the wetlands with the intention of creating uplands, forever destroying one of the most important ecological treasures of Louisiana, the nation and humanity and to control access at any cost. One landowner in particular, working very closely with TNC, has allowed several illegal dams to be built on its land and continues encouraging lessees to block access by building illegal dams and gates.

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Atchafalaya Basinkeeper
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Atchafalaya
BASINKEEPER®

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper Asst.
Cara Leverett
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Bayou Postillion is a good example of how public funds were used to open an oil access canal and block access in the Basin.

We believe that the state of Louisiana and DNR have an obligation to protect what is left of our wetland forests and deep water habitats for future generations and to spend public funds on projects that will not put our children's inheritance in jeopardy.

3- Our level of experience.

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper has been actively engaged in protecting the Atchafalaya Basin for the last 12 years. Atchafalaya Basinkeeper's Executive Director Dean Wilson has done extensive research in the East Grand Lake Area for 29 years, more than any other person on earth. Research included years of interviews with many fishermen (some of whom are dead today) about the effects over time of different projects, from the building of the levees to the Corps' manipulations of the Basin's waterways as well as extensive research on sediment depositions in the area.

ABK has extensive knowledge about all legal issues related to projects on wetlands.

4- Particular interests we have in the Atchafalaya Basin.

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper's main interest should be shared by DNR, protecting for future generations all ecosystems within the Atchafalaya Basin, especially its remaining deep swamps, lakes, sloughs, and bayous. Nearly the entire eastern population of neotropical migratory birds and many species of the western population come through our coastal forests every year. The Basin contains over half a million acres of the only healthy marsh habitat remaining in the Mississippi River Delta as well as the largest contiguous wetland forests in North America, making it the most important area for migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere. The opportunities to create a huge ecotourism industry are here—the annual economic impact of bird watching alone in North America is about \$107 billion (<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/economicImpact/pdf/2011-BirdingReport--FINAL.pdf>).

The Atchafalaya Basin is of incredible cultural value to Louisiana, being the last bastion of the Cajun culture, the source of the highest wild crawfish production in the world, as well as a destination for thousands of sport fishermen to recreate each year.

Over the past 80 years, unrestricted oil development and government-funded projects have destroyed or severely altered most of the swamps, lakes, and bayous in the Basin. ABK is determined to make sure that in the future public funds will cease to be used in ways that negatively impact the long-term survival of what little is left of the majestic wetlands and waterways of the Atchafalaya Basin.

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Cara Leverett
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5- Attributes that make us a good partner for inclusion.

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper has extensive knowledge and expertise regarding the ecological, recreational, commercial, and legal history of the Atchafalaya Basin as a whole and the East Grand Lake area in particular. We have developed very strong partnerships with Cajun fishermen and have gained their trust over the years. We also have many strong partnerships with sport fishermen, bird watchers, canoeists, and other users of the Basin. Because of those partnerships, ABK is in a position to help bring parties together that have the common goal of protecting the Atchafalaya Basin for future generations. Our knowledge of the laws protecting wetlands is another asset that we bring to the table and will balance any pressure on DNR from special interest groups to use public funds for projects that could negatively impact the Atchafalaya Basin.

We look forward to working with the Atchafalaya Basin Program in the future and to seeing your response to our request for inclusion. If you have any questions please contact Dean A. Wilson at (225) 692-4114 or enapav3@aol.com

Sincerely,

Dean A. Wilson
Executive Director, Atchafalaya Basinkeeper



State of Louisiana
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
OFFICE OF COASTAL MANAGEMENT

March 23, 2016

Dean Wilson
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper
P.O. Box 410
Plaquemine LA 70765

Dean –

Thank you for your letter dated January 13, 2016 (hand delivered by you on 3/8/16 at the LCPA-West meeting) requesting to be included as an entity in the MOU that the Atchafalaya Basin Program (ABP) signed with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and for continued participation in any projects in the Atchafalaya Basin, including the East Grand Lake Project.

It is the goal of the MOU and the TNC Atchafalaya River Basin Initiative to engage stakeholders during the design phases (as stated in the TNC press release for the Atchafalaya River Basin Initiative): “We are working with the state, partners, and stakeholders to develop a decision making process that fully engages stakeholders in designing the future Atchafalaya, places landowner vision at the forefront, and promotes science-based decisions.”

Your personal observations for the past 29 years are certainly recognized and we invite you to submit the research you have done in the East Grand Lake area to assist TNC and the ABP in the design phase of the work to be done in that area.

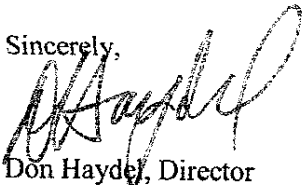
The ABP does disagree with your statement that “Bayou Postillion is a good example of how public funds were used to open up an oil access canal and block access in the Basin.” In 2005, Bayou Postillion had nearly accreted to a point where it would become the property of the adjacent land owner, forever blocking access. The actions taken by the state guaranteed that access from the Intracoastal Waterway through Bayou Postillion would be available in perpetuity. Depth restoration in the Basin frequently benefits many stakeholders – sport fishermen, canoeists/kayakers, birders, hunters, commercial fishermen, and other commercial interests that includes of course, the oil/gas industry.

ATCHAFALAYA BASIN PROGRAM
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March 23, 2016

We will not be able to modify the TNC MOU to add Atchafalaya Basinkeeper as an entity. The MOU is between the ABP as one of the funding sources and TNC as a property owner. TNC is a willing landowner that the ABP will work with together with other stakeholders to protect and restore this vitally important resource. Acknowledging your many years of first-hand observations in the Basin, I will commit to sharing draft plans with you as they are developed for any construction projects for your comments. You will also have an opportunity to comment on any Corps permit application that is submitted. I look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,



Don Hayde, Director
Atchafalaya Basin Program
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources



R. DAVID BROWN, ESQ.

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LAW OFFICE OF R. DAVID BROWN

June 7, 2016

Atchafalaya Basin Program
Attn: Don Haydel
Post Office Box 44487
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4487

RE: Memorandum of Understanding between Atchafalaya Basin Program and the Nature Conservancy

Dear Mr. Haydel,

I read with great interest your letter dated March 23, 2016 responsive to Atchafalaya Basinkeeper's letter that was apparently delivered to you at an LCPA-West meeting on March 8, 2016. In your response, you entirely ignored the bulk of what was addressed in Mr. Wilson's letter sent on behalf of our organization, the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper or ABK. For example, ABK carefully laid out the multitude of values and interests we daily work to protect in the Atchafalaya Basin (Basin) including: ecotourism, commercial fishing, recreational fishing, birding, cultural heritage, etc... Predictably and in concert with how we have seen state and federal government treat the Atchafalaya Basin over the decades, your response focuses almost entirely on commercial interests and those of people who want to continue to exploit or destroy it.

Worse, your response misunderstands or misrepresents the facts and summarily dismisses any deeper involvement from our organization. At this stage in the evolution of the Atchafalaya Basin, we have witnessed first-hand demonstrably more mismanagement than beneficial management of the Basin ecosystem and as a result, have come to take a critical look at all operators or stakeholders and their activities within the Basin. There is no naivety or room for error when making our assessments of new and existing projects within this endangered ecosystem. Objectively speaking and unfortunately, the Atchafalaya Basin Program or ABP has not utilized best management practices or BMPs and has not observed or respected established ecological principles when selecting or endorsing projects within the Basin.

As a result, you are aware that our organization has typically emerged as a critic, more often than not, of any ABP initiatives within the Basin. If, as you are representing here in your letter, your

decision is final and the above-referenced MOU is not modified to include ABK as an entity, we will have no alternative than to pursue all other available remedies. You have mentioned stakeholders many times in your letter. Any objective assessment of the family of stakeholders within the Basin includes the ABK and as such we are again here asserting the need to be included as a first-order party of interest or entity to the MOU. Our organization has no confidence that the ABP, nor the Nature Conservancy (TNC) will proceed in a manner protective of the myriad vital interests that the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is charged with managing. It has not been remotely true of the DNR's actions within the Basin over the years and nothing about this proposed alliance with TNC suggests any different. So yes, we will certainly be monitoring your actions very closely as this develops and at a minimum, we will be commenting on any proposed projects and/or US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permits resulting from this alliance. Alternatively, the state of Louisiana would do better to finally accept that it's far better to meaningfully include all true stakeholders such as ABK at this stage rather than having to suffer through the embarrassment of very negative press during the life of the project or worse, additional litigation over the next missteps within the Basin.

We request that you reconsider including the ABK in this MOU so that we can help you better understand what is meant by earnestly protecting and actually restoring this vitally important resource for future generations. Not just "lip-service" or a glossy campaign, a "bait-and-switch" or "greenwashing," but actual stewardship as currently practiced by many other states managing resources far less valuable than this. The stated goal of developing a decision-making process that "fully engages stakeholders" in the future of the Atchafalaya cannot succeed without the inclusion and *full engagement* of the ABK organization unless, of course, the intended goal is to maintain the status-quo for the benefit of select landowners and the oil industry at the expense of all other interests. We do not have the TNC's budget, but we do have highly committed legal counsel, dedicated members, untarnished science and the truth on our side. We find no other alternative than to call it like we see it and we intend to continue to do just that within America's most productive wetlands and one of the world's most important swampland ecosystems.

Sincerely,



R. David Brown
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper board member

RDB:ms

Cc: Richard Iyeoup, Assistant Secretary and Commissioner of Conservation DNR
Thomas Harris, Secretary DNR
Charlie Melancon, Secretary Wildlife and Fisheries



R. DAVID BROWN, ESQ.

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LAW OFFICE OF R. DAVID BROWN

July 22, 2016

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Using public funds to fill valuable Atchafalaya Basin wetlands.

Dear Governor Edwards,

We are very concerned about projects related to the MOU signed between The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and DNR's Atchafalaya Basin Program (ABP). The MOU was designed to revive the East Grand Lake Projects, which were designed to introduce river water and a large amount of sediment into the Atchafalaya Basin's swamps, lakes, and bayous and to fill huge tracts of wetland—all to the benefit of large Basin landowners (and waterbottom claimers or "squatters"). The wetlands slated for filling are considered to be among the most productive wetlands in the world, irreplaceable treasures for Louisiana and for humanity. At a time when Louisiana is asking for billions of dollars for coastal restoration, Louisiana should not be using public funds to fill valuable wetlands located far away from the coast. We are complaining that we are losing our coastal wetlands, to the detriment of the nation and at the same time paying to destroy wetlands that should be protected for our children at all costs.

We are concerned that the ABP is making decisions based on the preferences of interest groups that are not concerned with protecting the quality of the wetland environment for future generations. Large landowners in the Basin want cheap oil access, to control public access to waterbottoms and other waterways, and to maximize accretion in order to create uplands. Efforts to use public funds to accomplish these goals culminated in 2005 when, in the name of water quality, Bayou Postillion was dredged and, as instructed by the landowner, was designed as a canal for oil and gas access. The project included continuous spoil banks along the bayou and the damming of one canal to block public access and the installation of pylons to restrict access. At the same time, many other oil-access projects were designed and we have fought very hard over the years to eliminate those projects.

In a letter dated June 7, 2016, Atchafalaya Basinkeeper (ABK) contacted the Director of the ABP, Don Haydel. The purpose of that letter was principally to reiterate and reassert our interest in being

included as a stakeholder in a new memorandum of understanding between the ABP and TNC. The original letter from ABK was dated January 13, 2016 and was simply a straightforward "expression of interest" to be included as an entity in the MOU signed between the ABP and TNC and for continued participation in any projects in the Atchafalaya Basin, including any progress regarding the East Grand Lake Project, in particular. Mr. Haydel responded on March 23, 2016 and entirely dismissed the ABK's request. The gist was yet another "papering over" in a long line of lip service from one of our most "captive agencies" serving, first and foremost, the oil industry and large waterbottom claimers in the Basin.

Predictably, and in concert with how we have seen the state and federal governments treat the Atchafalaya Basin throughout the decades prior to your election, Mr. Haydel's response focused almost entirely on the interests of a few powerful people rather than on acknowledging the DNR's responsibility to balance the interests of all Louisianans. As the DNR's mission statement reads, "The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to ensure and promote sustainable and responsible use of the natural resources of our State so that they are available for the enjoyment and benefit of our citizens now and in the future." Given the "whitewashing" agreement that appears to be materializing between the ABP and the wealthiest and most connected corporate "conservation organization" in America, we decided it was necessary to step up and try our level best to interrupt business-as-usual in the Basin. Otherwise, there will surely be nothing left for future generations.

Since 1932, there has been a net accretion of nearly 2.5 billion cubic meters of sediment in the Basin floodway - converting a substantial amount of open water and cypress swamps to bottomland hardwood forests. Since then, we have lost or severely altered over 75% of the Basin's swamps, lakes, and bayous. The Corps' policy of diverting up to 60% of the Mississippi River's sediment load into the Atchafalaya River and the way the Corps realigned all the distributaries of the Atchafalaya River are the major causes of this problem (see attached letter from Dr. Ivor van Heerden). Until structures are built to keep sediments in the main channel of the river, further distribution of river water into Atchafalaya Basin's wetlands will only destroy more swamps, lakes, and bayous, which will benefit a few people to the detriment of future generations and humanity.


Part of the effort to stop these projects will necessarily involve exposing what is happening and bringing as much attention to this emerging agreement as we can. As such, we wanted to make sure that your office is fully aware of what is taking place. Mr. Haydel's response misunderstands or misrepresents the facts and dismisses any deeper involvement from Basin's stakeholders. By all counts, ABK, representing over 1000 members and Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association-West (LCPA-West), representing over 500 members and Sierra Club Delta Chapter representing over 3,000 in Louisiana, are unquestionably "stakeholders" in the Basin. We trust you'll agree that we must be included if Louisiana has any chance of turning around the decades of damage wrought by runaway development, rubber-stamped oil exploration, illegal land clearing/deforestation and hydrological disruption that has happened at the hands of a select few large landowners and quasi-legal squatters.

Our organizations have very strong evidence that neither the ABP nor TNC are proceeding in a manner protective of the myriad vital interests that the Louisiana DNR is charged with managing. It has not been remotely true of the DNR's actions within the Basin throughout previous decades and this proposed alliance with TNC regrettably shows that nothing has changed. The State government would do better to finally accept that it is far better to meaningfully include all true stakeholders such as our groups at this stage rather than having to suffer through the embarrassment of very

negative press during the life of the project, or worse, additional litigation that Louisiana simply cannot afford.

We know you to be an extremely principled public official, so we are coming to you now, fairly early in your tenure, to request that you assign an ombudsman or other independent, trusted advisor to investigate what is happening here and stop the use of public funds for any project that will increase sedimentation in the Atchafalaya Basin. We have a vanishingly small, but nevertheless very real chance of reversing the damage in the Basin and finally doing what is right for this unparalleled natural resource. The ABK, the LCPA-West and Sierra Club, Delta Chapter, which are populated with commercial and recreational fishermen, naturalists, attorneys and scientists can help the DNR to better understand what is meant by earnestly protecting and actually restoring this vitally important resource for future generations. Instead of the typical "lip-service," glossy campaigns, "bait-and-switch," and "greenwashing" that have been the shameful hallmarks of past administrations, we want to see actual stewardship as currently practiced by many other states managing resources far less valuable than this. As of right now, we see no alternative to going very public and stoking further citizen interest and we intend to continue to do just that within the Basin. We appreciate that all of this can be an embarrassment to the State of Louisiana and exposing this sort of corruption will seriously undermine the State's ability to secure federal funding for coastal restoration. Will you join us in helping to turn over a new leaf and assist in preserving this vital natural treasure?

Sincerely,



R. David Brown
ABK board member and staff attorney
Representing ABK, LCPA-West and Sierra Club, Delta Chapter

RDB:ms

included as a stakeholder in a new memorandum of understanding between the ABP and TNC. The original letter from ABK was dated, January 13, 2016 and was simply a straightforward "expression of interest" to be included as an entity in the MOU signed between the ABP and TNC and for continued participation in any projects in the Atchafalaya Basin, including any progress regarding the East Grand Lake Project, in particular. Mr. Haydel responded on March 23, 2016 and entirely dismissed the ABK's request. The gist was yet another "papering over" in a long line of lip service from one of our most "captive agencies" serving, first and foremost, the oil industry and large waterbottom claimers in the Basin.

Predictably, and in concert with how we have seen the state and federal governments treat the Atchafalaya Basin throughout the decades prior to your election, Mr. Haydel's response focused almost entirely on the interests of a few powerful people rather than on acknowledging the DNR's responsibility to balance the interests of all Louisianans. As the DNR's mission statement reads, "The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to ensure and promote sustainable and responsible use of the natural resources of our State so that they are available for the enjoyment and benefit of our citizens now and in the future." Given the "whitewashing" agreement that appears to be materializing between the ABP and the wealthiest and most connected corporate "conservation organization" in America, we decided it was necessary to step up and try our level best to interrupt business-as-usual in the Basin. Otherwise, there will surely be nothing left for future generations.

Since 1932, there has been a net accretion of nearly 2.5 billion cubic meters of sediment in the Basin floodway - converting a substantial amount of open water and cypress swamps to bottomland hardwood forests. Since then, we have lost or severely altered over 75% of the Basin's swamps, lakes, and bayous. The Corps' policy of diverting up to 60% of the Mississippi River's sediment load into the Atchafalaya River and the way the Corps realigned all the distributaries of the Atchafalaya River are the major causes of this problem (see attached letter from Dr. Ivor van Heerden). Until structures are built to keep sediments in the main channel of the river, further distribution of river water into Atchafalaya Basin's wetlands will only destroy more swamps, lakes, and bayous, which will benefit a few people to the detriment of future generations and humanity.

Part of the effort to stop these projects will necessarily involve exposing what is happening and bringing as much attention to this emerging agreement as we can. As such, we wanted to make sure that your office is fully aware of what is taking place. Mr. Haydel's response misunderstands or misrepresents the facts and dismisses any deeper involvement from Basin's stakeholders. By all counts, ABK, representing over 1000 members and Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association-West (LCPA-West), representing over 500 members and Sierra Club Delta Chapter representing over 3,000 in Louisiana, are unquestionably "stakeholders" in the Basin. We trust you'll agree that we must be included if Louisiana has any chance of turning around the decades of damage wrought by runaway development, rubber-stamped oil exploration, illegal land clearing deforestation and hydrological disruption that has happened at the hands of a select few large landowners and quasi-legal squatters.

Our organizations have very strong evidence that neither the ABP nor TNC are proceeding in a manner protective of the myriad vital interests that the Louisiana DNR is charged with managing. It has not been remotely true of the DNR's actions within the Basin throughout previous decades and this proposed alliance with TNC regrettably shows that nothing has changed. The State government would do better to finally accept that it is far better to meaningfully include all true stakeholders such as our groups at this stage rather than having to suffer through the embarrassment of very