

ABK & LCPA Response – Protests in the Basin
July 16, 2018

Public Statement:

Over the past two weeks, activists opposing the Bayou Bridge pipeline project have staged actions on construction sites near Bayou Pigeon, on the east side of the Atchafalaya Basin. **It is our intent with this statement to have it be known that neither Atchafalaya Basinkeeper nor Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association-West were notified in advance of these actions, nor were we complicit in the execution of these actions. We neither engage in these types of actions nor do we support such without full support from the local community.**

Since this project was publicly noticed for permit in 2016, Atchafalaya Basinkeeper and LCPA-West have expressed our concerns to our state and federal regulatory agencies and the public due to the perpetual trend of lack of enforcement by regulators and failure of permitted industry to comply with permits in the Basin. Basinkeeper and LCPA-West work to protect and restore the Atchafalaya Basin for future generations. We are not inherently opposed to industry. Rather, we work with all players (agencies, industry, communities and partner advocacy organizations) to restore degraded areas and ensure proposed projects do not adversely impact our wetlands through enforcement and compliance. We work with and in support of the communities in the Basin, including the crawfishing community, recreational users, families and supporters. We work with a variety of partners to educate, monitor and advocate on behalf of the health and sustainability of the Basin for all to enjoy.

Pipeline projects have devastated the Atchafalaya Basin. However, we are quick to acknowledge that fault is not attributable to the pipeline companies and/or agencies alone. Many parties have contributed to the state of degradation that has resulted from failed compliance with permits and failed enforcement in the Atchafalaya Basin. Coupled with mismanagement of sediment-laden river water entering the Basin and a lack of understanding or accurate information regarding all factors contributing to this destruction, this development has led to a continuing trend of destruction of wildlife habitat supporting commercial crawfishing and the unique ecosystems that comprise the Atchafalaya Basin.

As the years go by, these projects and the spoil piles left behind have continued to negatively impact navigation, commercial fishing and water quality in the Basin. Today, these communities that have lived in and relied upon the Basin for generations, the minority Cajun crawfishers, face the reality that if something is not done to fix or reverse this trend now, they will no longer have access to productive fishing grounds or a means to make a living, support their families and continue this traditional way of life. This is what Basinkeeper and LCPA-West work to protect. This is what we fight for. We oppose this and other similar projects for the health and protection of these ecosystems and communities that rely on the Basin in the face of regulatory failure. We are fighting to ensure that the Basin can sustain for future generations to know and enjoy.

For years, Basinkeeper and LCPA-West have been working with the locals, the communities that live and work in and around the Atchafalaya Basin. We listen to the needs and concerns of these communities and advocate on their behalf for the protection of the Basin. We also work with

other advocacy groups, finding common ground on issues of concern, looking for opportunities to come together. However, while we work closely with partners who respect our mission and our goals as an organization in the Basin community, we will not concede to tactics and advocacy that is not supported by the local community or in the best interests of the Basin, which includes the long-term advocacy from a strong community base, good relationships with law enforcement and mutual respect to all interests, supporters, members and partners.

In our opposition to the Bayou Bridge pipeline, we have been very clear. We take great issue with the state of enforcement and compliance in the Basin. We have sought assurances through legal actions for permit compliance, environmental enforcement and proper application of the law to protect the Basin from further harm. We have attempted to negotiate with our regulators in advance, turning only to filing suit against the permitting agency as a last resort. And now, we continue to monitor, document and report potential permit violations from pipeline construction impeding access and impairing water quality in the Basin.

Amidst all of our advocacy and time devoted to protecting the Basin, the many fishing jobs it supports and the state revenues received from hunting and fishing licenses and other recreational interests in the Basin, we have requested to others, whether opposing or supporting this project, to respect our community, our organizations and the locals. Despite our request that the types of direct action tactics that occurred in Iberville Parish last week not occur in or around the Atchafalaya Basin, or in the very least to give us advance notice of an action, these requests have not been honored, to the detriment of our organizations and ultimately the Basin. While we understand the frustration inherent in seeking justice and protection through legal means, through the allotted processes and the delays and defeats therein, the long-term health of the Basin is in the hands of the locals who have and will continue to live, work and breathe the Basin. We believe that any sustainable solution must consider the perspective of the local community.

We heavily rely on the support of our community to monitor and work in the Atchafalaya Basin, without which we would be unable to do our work effectively. Actions like those which occurred in the Basin over the past couple of weeks conflict with our mission to protect the Basin with community support. In a community with limited persons and resources, we rely on one another to look out for this incredible ecosystem. We do not advance tactics or positions that will harm the future collaborative efforts of folks within the community or our partner groups therein.

We have one simple request, that our mission, our community and in turn, our Basin, be respected. Whether it is the construction of a pipeline that damages wetlands, productive fisheries or impedes navigation, or direct actions executed by other advocacy groups, we cannot support conduct pursued without local support or to the detriment of our local communities, our Basin, and our ability to continue effectively protecting it.

Thank you for your time,

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper & the Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association-West