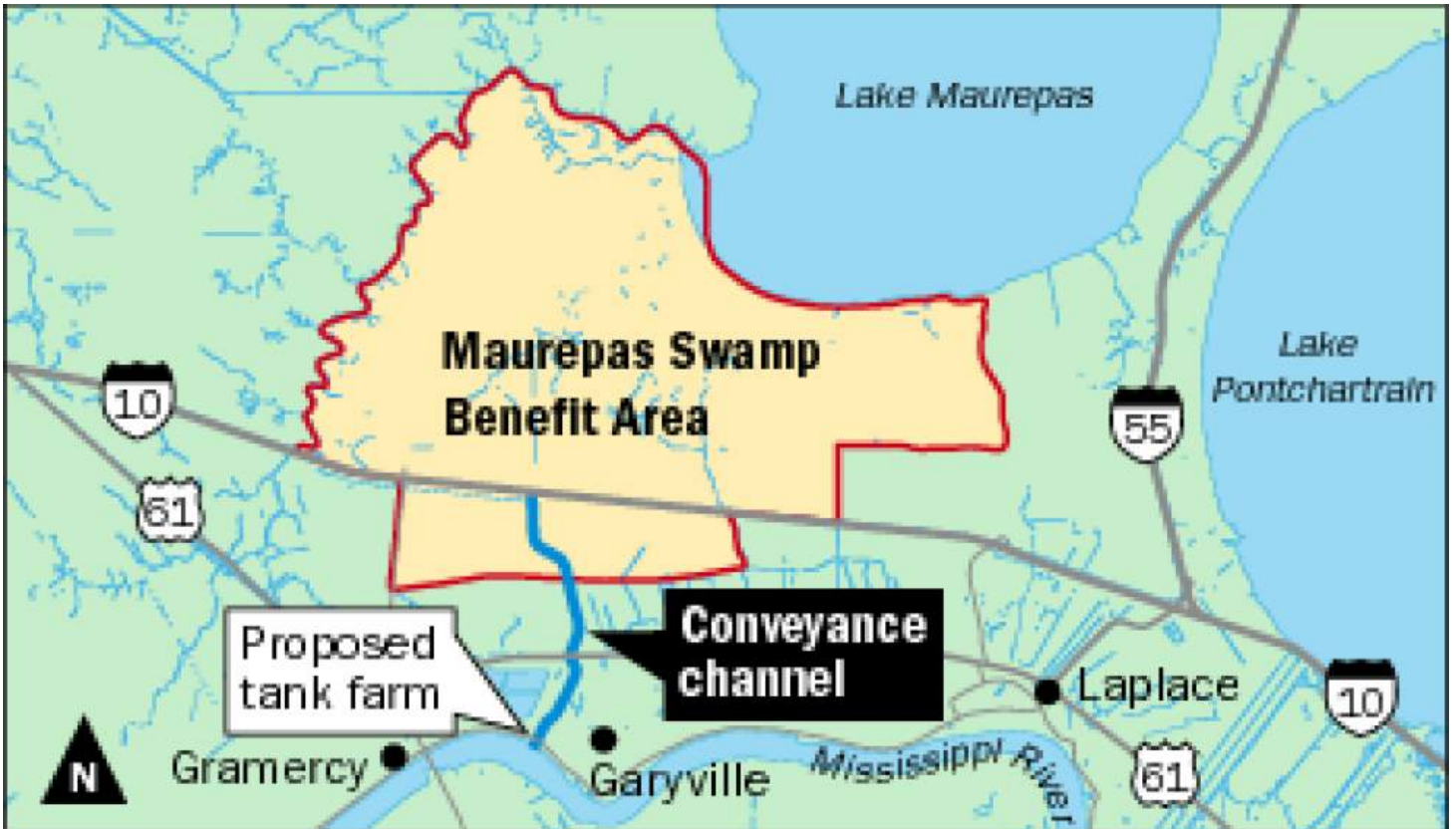


Concerns raised about locating tank farm and diversion canal close together near Garyville



Source: Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority

Advocate map by JOHN GIPSON

AMY WOLD | AWOLD@THEADVOCATE.COM



State officials are confident that a planned freshwater diversion **project** and a proposed oil and chemical tank farm can happily coexist, side by side, in Garyville. Members of coastal groups aren't so sure.

At issue is a long-desired diversion that would move some water and sediment from the Mississippi River into the swamps around Lake Maurepas. The goal is to help push back saltwater intrusion that has encroached upon freshwater marsh in the area.

The diversion project is moving forward, and in November, the state Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority board approved it as one of five proposals for consideration of a portion of the **RESTORE Act** funding. The request asked for \$14 million for engineering and design, permitting and start management planning. The total project cost is estimated at \$187 million.

Months before that recommendation, the state entered into an agreement with Pin Oak **Holdings** LLC, which wants to build a liquid and chemicals storage facility near the planned diversion, which is expected to move 2,000 cubic feet of water per second.

Last year, Scott Eustis, coastal wetland specialist with the Gulf Restoration Network, wrote a letter objecting to the permits issued for the facility, including a coastal use permit through the state Department of Natural Resources. The group is concerned about pollution that could come from having a diversion close to a tank farm. The state has been confronted with having industry located close to a diversion before. In Plaquemines Parish, the RAM Terminal proposed a coal facility with docking areas in front of the proposed diversion opening. The construction of that terminal has suffered several setbacks including a Parish Council denial of a construction permit and a court ruling that sent the facility's coastal use permit back to DNR.

But there are significant differences between the two proposed projects. The proposed Maurepas diversion is focused on pulling fresh water only from the Mississippi River, which shouldn't be disturbed by docking facilities. Concerns remain in Plaquemines Parish as to whether the docking facilities would limit the amount of sediment that would flow through the **diversion**.

"CPRA and Pin Oak Holdings have been in constant communication and established a Memorandum of Agreement to guide how the Pin Oak project and the diversion project can coexist," according to information from Chip Kline, director of the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities and chairman of the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

Kline said CPRA and Pin Oak paid for a study to model impacts any spill could have on the diversion and found it likely would protect Lake Maurepas more than the current situation.

He said the location of the future diversion channel is currently just a series of ditches and drainage canals, so any spill from a tank farm would just go into these canals and then into the Maurepas Swamp. However, if a diversion project is built, levees would keep any spill out of the canal.

"The swamp is actually more protected from a theoretical land-based spill with the diversion in place than without it," he said.

For a water-based spill, Kline wrote that, “preliminary results indicated that any potential spill from the proposed dock terminal would not enter the diversion intake structure.”

Eustis said he trusts The Water Institute of the Gulf’s report on the spill risk but he still has concerns about the process in which permits were approved before potential risks were studied.

Kline said coastal restoration projects and industry will coexist.

“Louisiana is a ‘working coast’ and many of our projects are in direct proximity of industry,” Kline wrote. “Every effort is made to protect the interests of industry and the coastal program. If coastal projects were only built where there is no industry, we would not have a coastal restoration program.”

Follow Amy Wold on Twitter, @awold10.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

- Candidates for governor, treasurer oppose move to divert coastal restoration funds to cover La. 1 construction costs
- Louisiana gubernatorial candidate Jay Dardenne says he will block the use of coastal restoration dollars for road work if elected
- Our Views: Coastal funding shouldn’t suffer because of failure to properly budget highway projects
- Guest commentary: Our coastal protection, restoration efforts are making a difference
- State coastal board proposes sending money left over from coastal projects to La. 1 elevation work

 **GET THE ADVOCATE IN YOUR INBOX**

SUBSCRIBE

YOU MAY LIKE

Sponsored Links by Taboola

The 7 Credit Cards You Shouldn’t Ignore If You Have Excellent Credit

NextAdvisor

Homeowners Are in for a Big Surprise in 2015

AmeriValue Rate Quotes