



United States Department of the Interior

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Draft Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Management Plan Public Comment Analysis Report

SUMMARY

This document provides a summary of the public comments received during the public comment period for the Draft Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Management Plan. A letter was mailed to approximately 1600 stakeholders, including private individuals, federal, state, and non-governmental agencies and organizations, in June 2011. The letter directed stakeholders to the draft document online on the Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website.

The official public comment period for the Draft Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Management Plan opened on June 16, 2011 and closed on August 1, 2011. Comments were received via 1) directly input into the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system online by the respondent, 2) were received via email, or 3) were received as a letter. No public meetings were held during this timeframe.

During the official comment period, a total of seven correspondences were received. These correspondences came from three different states (LA, AL, NY). State, federal, and non-governmental organizations or firms that shared their comments include the Ruffed Grouse Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Friends of the Atchafalaya, one commissioner of the Atchafalaya Trace Commission, and a letter from Attorney Leigh Haynie on behalf of the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper and Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association-West.

Most of the comments were implementation level ideas and suggestions. The Atchafalaya NHA commission will be responsible for reviewing and implementing these ideas and suggestions as they see fit once the plan has been approved and its components ready for implementation. Some of the suggestions include developing and providing various tools such as area guides and maps for visitors in order to properly locate access points, points of interest, as well as to be able to have an auto tour. Various stories and historical information were provided that could be shared in interpretive and educational and outreach programs, some of these included the interpretation of the continued delta building in the Atchafalaya Bay, the importance of loess deposits, Civil

War history, oyster reef history in Morgan City, the history and subsequent issues from the tradeoffs between maintaining a natural environment and providing protection for human development, the preservation of the Vida Bridge, and the natural history and conservation of American woodcock and other species of conservation concern in Louisiana coupled with the role of active forest management. Commenters also provided suggestions for partnerships in areas where partnerships could be utilized such as in research, educational and interpretive program development, and foreign language programs. They also called out specific potential partners such as area universities, affiliated tribes, and conservation groups and organizations.

There were no comments that would be considered substantive, or in other words, there were no comments that would modify the alternatives. Some changes in the plan that could occur based on public comments would simply be in order to more clearly describe some of the resource issues, historical aspects, and identify shared projects with other state and federal agencies. The actions and impacts would remain unchanged.