You can help the Atchafalaya by learning more about Louisiana’s most important and productive wetland. A unique opportunity exists for your group to learn about this swamp. Highly qualified professional speakers are available to give programs on the Atchafalaya Basin free of charge to civic groups, schools, churches, clubs, etc. These speakers will present slide shows and films.

You may book a program by contacting the Atchafalaya Information Bureau, P.O. Box 30183, Lafayette, Louisiana 70503, or calling 318·233·8335.
Deep in the heart of Louisiana lies the greatest recreational resource in the South, the Atchafalaya Basin. Over 800,000 acres of bottomland, and cypress swamp support a prolific fishery, a vast hunting ground and an endless chain of scenic lakes and bayous attracting more than one million user trips a year. The Atchafalaya is also important as a floodway, and a source of needed mineral resources. Man and nature profit in the Basin, side by side.

Will the Atchafalaya stay wet and wild, or will it be dredged and drained? Now there is a plan to keep the great swamp the way it is, the MULTI-PURPOSE PLAN, developed by state and federal agencies and citizen groups to perpetuate the Basin’s historic functions: flood control, fish and wildlife, minerals, timber, and recreation. But, the plan must have citizen support - your support - if it is to succeed.


The Atchafalaya is many things to many people, all of them good. This great Basin, within an hours drive of two million Louisianians, provides something for everyone.
FISHING—The Atchafalaya produces, acre for acre, pound for pound, more fish, both game and commercial species, than any other natural water system in the United States. Sport fishing is the Basin’s dominant pastime. The commercial fishing catch is valued at over $6,000,000 a year.

WATERFOWL—At the bottom of the Mississippi flyway, which supports half of America’s migratory waterfowl, the Basin’s water bottoms winter millions of mallard, wood duck, and fresh-water migratory species. Waterfowl hunting is a major winter activity, drawing sportsmen from every corner of the state.

CRAWFISH—The Basin is the heart of Louisiana’s natural crawfish harvest, a multimillion dollar industry, supporting a catch of up to 10 million pounds of crawfish per year. The crawfish depend on the annual rise and fall of the Basin’s natural water cycle.
SEAFOOD INDUSTRY—To the south, the Atchafalaya feeds the great marshes of Louisiana’s coastal zone, the most important seafood producer in the United States. Nutrients from the river feed the marsh ecosystem while sediments are forming a rich new delta. Atchafalaya Bay is one of the few areas in the country where new land is being created.

FLOOD CONTROL—Perhaps most important, the Atchafalaya is the only major outlet for the Mississippi’s flood waters to overflow. Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and the entire Lower Mississippi Valley depend on this floodway in times of high water. For this reason alone it is vital that the Atchafalaya remain wild and wet. Drainage, leading to development growth in the Basin (which has already occurred in some areas) seriously threaten the effectiveness of the floodway in times of emergency.

BOATING AND CANOEING—When you come to the Basin you bring your boat. The Atchafalaya is a wet land, and the water keeps it productive, undeveloped, and accessible to all Louisianians. A 1974 state and federal study, placed its total value in wetland and recreation and commercial harvest at over $47,000,000 each year.

NATURE STUDY—Within easy reach of ten Louisiana Colleges and Universities, the Atchafalaya is increasingly relied upon as an outdoor laboratory for the study of America’s last, large river overflow ecosystem.

CULTURE—Important as a human and cultural resource, the Atchafalaya and its bayous are the heartland for Louisiana’s famed Cajun tradition, a way of life for thousands and a heritage for Louisiana and the country.
MINERALS AND TIMBER—The Atchafalaya is producing oil and wood products for the country's needs. The Basin will be a profitable oil and gas producer for many years and its great stand of second growth cypress and other hardwood species will continue to provide a renewable timber resource.

GAME AND FUR BEARERS—Nutria, mink, raccoon, river otter, bobcat, and white-tail Deer . . . the Basin's great mix of land and water produces them all in large numbers. It is also one of the few places in the south where a viable population of black bears exists.

OTHER WILDLIFE—The Atchafalaya plays a key role in the life cycle of American birds. Over 300 separate species, from eagles and egrets to tiny humming birds, use the basin at some time during the year. Some species, such as the american woodcock, depend on the Basin for their primary wintering habitat. Alligators are fairly common. There is evidence that the endangered ivory-billed woodpecker still survives here. These species require an undeveloped habitat like the Atchafalaya if they are to survive on earth.

TO KEEP these abundant resources, the recreation, and the beauty, and to maintain the integrity of the floodway, an effective plan is needed . . . not a single purpose plan to save one of the Basin's assets, but one that is multi-purpose in scope and will save all the Basin's assets.
THE MULTI-PURPOSE PLAN

The Multi-Purpose Plan’s is an answer with something for everyone. It’s been called “a flood control plan with a heart.” Basically it is a plan to:

- perpetuate the Basin’s wetlands for fish, wildlife and recreation
- develop and maintain the Atchafalaya as a floodway
- protect private rights to minerals, timber and other traditional uses.
- control siltation in the backwater swamp.

How does the plan work? In two major ways.

- by creating water control structures to reduce siltation and maintain the historic water cycle in the Basin’s backwater swamps
- by easements which will guarantee existing uses (minerals, timber, commercial fishing, recreation, but will prevent other new development in the floodway).

The Atchafalaya Basin is the greatest wetland and the most important floodway in Louisiana. The Multi-Purpose Plan is one way to keep it that way... a wetland resource and a floodway for years to come.