A boatload of dignitaries arrive at the future Eagle Point Park site.

BASIN BEAUTY

SUMMARY OF PLANS

- **LAKE FAUSSE** Pointe State Park ($3.4 million): Pave the access road from the Butte La Rose Pontoon Road to Louisiana 3083; pave access road between Louisiana 3083 to Lake Fausse State Park.
- **EAGLE POINT** Park (cost not yet determined): 30 acres of developed area; 50 acres for nature trails.
- **MYETTE POINT** Boat Landing ($425,000): Three 30-foot boat ramps; dredging; parking lot expansion.
- **BUFFALO COVE** (cost not yet determined): Restoration of north-south water flow; flush stagnant water and organic material; opening dead-end canals.
- **ATTAKAPAS ISLAND** Wildlife Management Area (cost not yet determined): Enhance nature trails, campsites.

Up-close look at improvement projects draws glowing review

More than 150 people, including officials from Iberia, St. Martin and St. Mary parishes, attended the Department of Natural Resources annual press tour debuting five improvement projects to the Atchafalaya Basin.

"Everybody under this building this morning can claim the successes we are here to witness today," state Sen. Craig Romero, D-New Iberia, said under the pavilion at Lake Fausse Pointe State Park. "One person just can't claim it. It's a moving thing to see so many people here."

Last year the state Legislature approved the Basin Master Plan, which authorized the expenditure of $85 million over a 15-year period to match federal funding of $250 million through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to improve the basin's accessibility to tourists.

“This a celebration of the kickoff of five more projects in the basin,” said DNR Secretary Jack Caldwell. “Can you believe just last summer the Legislature appropriated the first funds for the Atchafalaya Basin Program and we’ve already kicked off 15 projects?”

St. Martin Parish Council President Scott Angelle welcomed the group at Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, the starting point for the day’s tour. “We are glad to be here today from St. Martin Parish and to be a partner with you,” said Angelle.

The five projects presented on the tour were the paving of the road between Butte La Rose and Lake Fausse Pointe, the proposed Eagle Point Park project in Jeanerette and improvement projects at the Myette Point Boat Landing, Attakapas Island Wildlife Management Area and Buffalo Cove Water Management Unit.
to the Lake Fausse Pointe State Park is a challenging drive, either dusty or muddy, and always rough, said Sandra Thompson-Decoteau, director of the Atchafalaya Basin Program, DNR.

"One only has to drive on the levee roads to the park to know why they need improving," said Thompson-Decoteau.

More than $400,000 has been approved for improvements to Myette Point Boat Landing in St. Mary Parish. The heavily used landing will be expanded from one boat launch to three and from limited parking to more than 100 spaces, said Bo LaGrange, St. Mary Parish chief administrative officer.

Improvements by the Corps of Engineers at the Buffalo Cove Water Management Unit include a series of openings in dead-end canals to open the area to improved water flow, according to Ben Skerret of Lafayette, a member of the Atchafalaya Basin Advisory Committee.

The group toured Buffalo Cove by boat, getting a firsthand look at land built up by siltation that was covered by water only a few years ago.

The highlight of the day was at Dr. Barrow Bourgeois' camp, where the Eagle Point Park Committee hosted a luncheon that included, gumbo, jambalaya and other Cajun foods.

"This is our final stop on a wonderful day to explore the Atchafalaya Basin and all its wonders," said Thompson-Decoteau.

"What more beautiful spot to end up here at Eagle Point Park that is going to be such a beautiful facility?"

On hand was Iberia Parish Councilman Jerome Fitch to say the council was in full support of the park.

"The parish council is committed to work with the Department of Natural Resources and Sandra Thompson, the Corps of Engineers, the Eagle Point Park Committee, the city of Jeanerette and other elected officials to make this park a reality," he said.

The proposed park will have cabins on stilts over the water of Lake Fausse Pointe, in addition to recreational vehicle sites, a cultural center, boat landing and an island, said Simone Champagne, chairman of the park committee.

Officials from St. Mary Parish who attended were parish councilmen Frank Soprano and Paul Naquin Jr. and Alton LeBlanc Jr., tribal chief of the Chitimacha Indians, and his staff members.

St. Martin Parish officials who took the tour included St. Martinville Mayor Eric Martin, St. Martin Parish Councilman Lloyd "Red" Higginbotham and St. Martinville director of tourism Audrey Brignac.

Iberia Parish officials included Jim Anderson, 911 director; Iberia Parish Administrative Assistant Ted Migues; Roy Pontiff, executive director of the Port of Iberia; Jeanerette Mayor Arthur Lee Verett and Jeanerette Councilmen Charles Williams, Ted Kahn and Willie Wilson Jr.