EBR taxpayers would pay most of flood tax

By MIKE DUNNE
Advocate staff writer

East Baton Rouge Parish taxpayers would provide about 88 percent of any money generated by a property tax for the Amite River Basin Commission.

A preliminary report says one mill of property taxes levied basinwide will generate slightly less than $1 million for the commission each year.

The commission, which was formed several years ago to deal with flood control problems along the Amite and Comite river system, has the authority to levy up to 3 mills in ad valorem taxes on the property in the six-parish area.

The lion's share would come from East Baton Rouge Parish. The eastern part of Baton Rouge and the Denham Springs areas have been hardest hit in the most recent flooding in 1980 and 1983.

The report says that each mill levied by the district could generate $972,215. East Baton Rouge Parish would provide $859,000 of that total. St. James Parish would provide $12.

Commission secretary John Cooper Fore sent out the report this week. He noted that the figures have been confirmed by all six assessors, except in St. Helena Parish.

"We think they are correct too, but we didn't get anything back in the mail yet on them," he said.

The commission, faced with the chore of deciding whether to build the proposed Darlington Reservoir and other flood control projects, had no idea how much one mill of tax would generate.

Commissioners this summer asked assessors to attend a meeting and discuss how much of their parishes were in the basin district and what a tax would produce.

Not all of the property in the six parishes are in the flood basin, only property drained by the Amite system, and therefore not all property will be taxable.

Fore said Friday he expects a commission meeting to be held either later this month or in December.

The report and a discussion of it will be on the agenda, he said.

The report shows the following breakdowns of property in the district for each parish:

- Ascension has $35,318 million in total assessed property. Homestead exemption covers $8,123 million. There is $27,194 million in taxable property which would yield $27,194 per year per mill.
- East Baton Rouge has $1,245 billion total assessed property. Homestead exemption covers $386 million. There is $859 million in taxable property that would yield $859,000 per year per mill.
- East Feliciana has $40,648 million in total assessed property. The report shows no homestead exemptions. The $40,648 million in taxable property would produce $40,648 per year per mill.
- Livingston Parish has $83,440 million in total assessed property. There is $40,129 million covered by homestead exemption. There is $43,311 million in taxable property that would produce $43,311 per year per mill.
- St. Helena has $2,050 million in total assessed property. The report lists no homestead exemption so the amount of taxable property would produce $2,050 per year per mill.
- St. James has $12,500 in total assessed property value with no homestead exempt property. The tax property would produce $12 per year per mill.