Final Plans Near for Bridging

Project to Take 5 Years, $75 Million--Engineers

Said Most Important La. System Link

By BILL NEIKIRK
BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - The Louisiana Highway Department is putting together final plans for one of its most difficult construction jobs-bridging the snake-infested wild that is the Atchafalaya Swamp. "It's a tremendous job," acting state Highway Director A. B. Ratcliff said. "It's quite a challenge to me." Highway engineers said the project will probably take more than five years. Contractors may find it will be tougher to build than the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway. When completed, the bridge will stretch 18.3 miles across the muck and myriads of bayous. It will be perhaps the most important link in Louisiana's interstate highway system. It will be part of a 52-mile stretch from Lafayette to Port Allen, tying in with a new interstate highway bridge across the Mississippi River at Baton Rouge.

The decision to bridge the swamp was made after years of controversy with the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, which had insisted that an embankment be built.

Because an embankment will be used in the swamp between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, a barge with dredging equipment will be able to dig out all the muck and form a canal. Then sand will be shipped into the canal by use of barge for fill. Once the sand has impacted and settled, the actual construction of the road will begin.

The stretch from Lafayette to Baton Rouge will include eight interchanges. They will be located at U.S. 167 at Lafayette; Louisiana 347 at Breaux Bridge; Louisiana 347 near Cecelia, west branch of the Atchafalaya River including turn-around; Whiskey Bay Crossing of the Atchafalaya; Grosse Tete; and Port Allen, at a spur from Louisiana 76 to the interstate.

AN 18.3-MILE BRIDGE that will stretch across the Atchafalaya Swamp from near Lenora to near Ramah is in the final planning stage, the Louisiana Highway Department announced. The $75 million project, one of the most difficult ever attempted by the department, will take five years to build. This map shows the proposed route.