Funds Sought For Causeway

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The Atchafalaya Basin Causeway Commission, a group that includes three area legislators, plans to ask the federal government for $100,000 to finance a study of the feasibility of building a causeway across the Atchafalaya Basin in St. Mary Parish.

Morris Raphael of New Iberia, vice-chairman of the commission which was formed by the legislature six or seven years ago, told the Advertiser the funds for the study will be sought from the Economic Development Administration (EDA).

"It will probably be March or April before we will know how we are going to come out on the request," he said.

Meeting In B.R.

Raphael was one of a group of interested and involved persons who attended a meeting in Baton Rouge several days ago to discuss the causeway idea.

He said the 22-mile two-lane causeway would be built between Charenton and Bayou Sale in St. Mary Parish and would tie into existing roads to span the basin. An engineer and the man who first thought of the idea of a causeway, Raphael estimates the road would cost $50,000,000.

He said the road would serve many purposes. It would serve as a hurricane evacuation route between Charenton and Plaquemine. It would serve as an evacuation route out of the Plaquemine area in the event of an industrial disaster in that area. And it would open large areas of the basin to recreation and tourism development.

Must Be Justified

Marvin Hagemier, economic development representative for the State of Louisiana, said at the meeting in Baton Rouge that all projects must be highly justified before they can qualify for any monies from EDA.

"We are very optimistic about getting funds for the study," Raphael said. "because this causeway would serve so many people." He said the roadway would create many jobs for Louisiana residents not only in the actual construction, but in development of the area after the road is built.

"I can see zoos in the basin; tourism, recreation, trading posts, hunting, fishing and agriculture," he said.

Raphael said in a telephone interview, careful steps will be taken in construction of the causeway to preserve the ecology of the basin.

Bauer Comments

State Rep. Carl Bauer of Franklin, who serves on the causeway commission, stressed the necessity of the roadway. He said at the meeting that although the road was first seen as a hurricane evacuation route, it can be linked with the many development projects currently being planned in the basin.


"We have received no state, federal or local funds," Raphael said.

George Williamson, vice-president of DeLaureal Engineers of New Orleans, said this week he would submit an application for EDA funds soon, an application he says "will reflect the needs and benefits that can be derived from the proposed causeway with emphasis on the economic impact derived from such a project."

DeLaureal is preparing the application "at its own expense," Raphael said.