Local firm to map Atchafalaya Basin

An approximately $2.4 million contract has been awarded by the New Orleans district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to C.H. Fenstermaker & Associates to map the Atchafalaya Basin.

Fenstermaker is a Lafayette-based civil engineering, land-surveying and environmental consulting firm. Fenstermaker will map approximately 1,000 square miles of the Atchafalaya Floodway System in Iberia, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, St. Landry, St. Martin and St. Mary parishes. The property lies between Krotz Springs and Morgan City to the north and south; and the Atchafalaya Basin Protection levees to the east and west.

The firm will also identify the owners of - and provide legal descriptions for - the more than 2,000 parcels of land in the 595,000 acre basin.

Mapping, title checks and appraisals are necessary before the purchase of land can begin, according to Thad Brown, director of the corps' real estate division for the New Orleans District.

The corps will purchase land and easements in the basin as part of a 10-year, $120 million plan to protect basin land and wildlife.

Purchases of land and easements will provide greater flood control and open up some of the land to the public for hunting, fishing, camping and other recreational uses, according to Brown.

Fenstermaker submitted its proposal when the contract was announced in the Commerce Business Daily in April 1987. After eight months of reviewing data from several firms, the corps awarded the contract to Fenstermaker.

"The choice was based on technical qualifications rather than just a low bid," said Greg Palmer, vice president of special projects at Fenstermaker & Associates.

The corps' decision was based on several determining factors, according to Palmer. These included specialized experience, technical expertise, previous job performance, capacity of personnel, computer capabilities and management's overall objectives.

Fenstermaker has been providing comprehensive surveying, engineering, mapping and environmental services to the oil industry, private corporations, developers and municipalities since 1950 and has offices in Lafayette, New Iberia and New Orleans.

Approximately 16 Fenstermaker employees will work on the project full time. The firm will add three employees to its staff immediately and additional employees as needed.

The maps will be created using sophisticated computer mapping software which Fenstermaker has customized for many applications. The finished maps will then be stored in the corps' computer system.