State Submits Plan For Basin

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Gov. Dave Treen has offered a compromise proposal for future use of the Atchafalaya Basin, calling for 255,000 acres — 43 percent — to be opened for public use but leaving mineral rights to the landowners.

The five-page state land management plan, released Thursday, will be presented to the Army Corps of Engineers at a meeting today in Washington, D.C.

The corps is putting together a plan for future development of the 593,000-acre basin.

Landowners in the basin, sportsmen and preservationists and the federal government have long been on odds about the direction of the future development of the basin — one of the few great semi-wilderness areas in the country.

“I believe that the preservation of the unique natural, scenic, and historic qualities of the entire basin is an obligation which must be embraced for the enjoyment of present and future generations,” said Treen, who ordered the plan’s drafting.

“On the other hand, the state land use proposal is very sensitive to the fundamental rights of property owners,” he said.

Steve Perry, assistant secretary of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, said the state’s proposals are an “aggressive attempt to have real input” to the corps’ final plan.

“I doubt if we satisfied everybody on all sides because that’s impossible,” said Perry. “But we balanced and tried to do the best we could.”

The state said its basic premise was recognition that the basin is “first and foremost a floodway.”

In order to protect the lives of hundreds of thousands of persons and billions of dollars of property in the lower Mississippi valley, the plan said, the basin “must be capable of carrying one-half of an extreme or ‘project flood’ in the lower Mississippi system.”

The basin is used as a spillway when major flooding occurs along the Mississippi. Some experts say eventually the Mississippi will re-route itself and flow through the basin to the Gulf of Mexico.

The state’s plans call for:

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