Cypress swamp threatened by School Board's action

by Henri Bienvenu

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SCHOOL BOARD PROPERTY

Dean Wilson

Breaux Bridge – School board members were urged this month to rescind a contract they awarded in December for the harvesting of timber from a 16th section (640 acres) of land in the Atchafalaya Basin owned by the school system.

Basinkeeper Dean Wilson and Henderson Mayor Sherbin Collette made the request during the board's monthly meeting last week. They were supported by a number of members of the audience.

At its Dec. 7 meeting the board awarded a contract to Good Home Timber to harvest trees from the property, located southeast of the Butte La Rose landing. The company will pay the school system $98,500 for the timber rights.

The motion to accept the Good Home bid was made by Richard Potier and Steve Fuselier. In the 6-3 vote to approve the contract, board members Floyd Knott, Mark Hebert and Aaron Flegeance opposed the action.

But Wilson reminded board members last week that the Atchafalaya Basin is one of the largest remaining cypress swamps in the nation. "It is home to a huge population of birds and a most diverse ecosystem," he said.

Wilson also suggested that the Basin, including the area owned by the board, could become a "gold mine" for bird watchers, but pointed out that trees are vital in supporting the diverse wildlife.

Wilson said that when cypress and tupelo trees are harvested from land in the Basin, the area is taken over by tallow trees that choke out any chance for the cypress trees to regenerate.

The section includes a lake that covers about 240 acres and Wilson showed scenes of verdant swampland with numerous birds flitting about.

Mayor Collette argued that state law prohibits the harvest of cypress trees on state-owned water bottoms.

But board attorney Mark Boyer said the 16th section land was given to school systems many

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years ago by federal law and he'd have to research the issue of state-owned water bottoms.

Wilson requested specifically that the board reconsider its contract with Good Home, hinting that his group would pursue legal action if the contract is not rescinded.

"It's not just the school board selling timber," Potier said. "Neighboring landowners, including St. Martin Land Co., have sold theirs."

Although Boyer will look into the legalities of the issue, board president Jimmy Blanchard closed the discussion by saying that "As of now, it's a done deal."

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GOD SAVE OUR LAND BECAUSE OUR LEADERS WONT!

OR WHAT WE SADLY CALL LEADERS....

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Carla. | May 08, 2012

Why did the federal government give the land to the school board in the first place?

Reply

ETEE | March 21, 2012

If "T-Boy the Basinkeeper" has a problem with that, perhaps he can quit sitting on his own wallet and plant some Cypress seedlings. That's always the problem with the Leftist-Socialist Liberal Enviro-Weenies. They want to maintain THEIR lifestyle and THEIR PAYCHECK on YOUR public land with YOUR Taxpayer dollars!!!

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madamchryzl | May 11, 2012

THIS IS DISGUSTING! THIS OLD FARTS DONT GIVE A CARE ABOUT THEIR HERITAGE! THESE TREES ARE IMPORTANT! DEAN HAS PLANTED PLENTY OF TREES AND HE SEEMS TO DO MORE FOR OUR ENTIRE STATE THAN THESE CROOKED-WEENIES!

AND WHO EVER IS PRO-TREE CUTTING, ESP FOR FRIGGEN MULCH, NEEDS TO RETHINK THINGS! MAYBE IT IS DECISION MAKING LIKE THE BOARDS THAT IS LEADING ST MARTIN PARISH DOWN THE DRAIN!! AND WHAT RANKNIG IS THE TESTING SCORES FOR ST MARTIN PARISH?? BAD LEADERS MAKING BAD DECISIONS DEFINATELY DOES NOT EQUAL GOOD RESULTS FOR OUR YOUTHS FUTURE! YOU REALLY MUST HATE YOUR CULTURE ALONG WITH THESE OLD TIMERS, THERE IS SO MUCH HATE IN YALL HEARTS, YALL CAN NOT EVEN APPRECIATE SOMETHING SIMPLE LIKE THE LAND GOD GAVE US!

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