**Concerns of the Atchafalaya Basin Coalition**

Since the first iterations of this project, ABK and partners have voiced opposition because of the scientifically supported concern that the cuts will channelize river water inputs and channel sediments into the swamps until the cuts themselves are filled in with sediment. Wetland scientist Dr. Ivor van Heerden confirmed that these inputs will elevate the swamp bottoms and hypoxia induced by Mississippi River nutrients will reduce water quality and the long-term impacts would severely impair the swamps – elevating the swamp bottoms, impairing fisheries and bird habitat, and ultimately filling in these swamps until they are no longer navigable waters but bottomland hardwood forests and/or uplands.

**These concerns for the impacts of sediment-laden river water inputs filling the wetlands**

**are supported by reports and evaluations of wetlands expert Dr. Ivor van Heerden.** Dr. van

Heerden evaluated the available data and studies, finding that the proposed project will introduce

large quantities of sediment-laden river water – even if not year-round – and the channelized

inputs will deposit sediment at the opening of the channel and eventually fill in these areas,

elevating the water bottoms and impairing the area. Dr. Van Heerden calculated that a four-month flood based on 2011 data (Welch et al., 2014) would cover 1188 acres with at least 4

inches of sediment, and this is a very conservative estimate. Spoil banks along a pipeline just

south of the project area do not allow water to move through the wetlands. Most sand in the

water column is only present during high water events so not introducing water during low water

is irrelevant. River sand is very fine and moves throughout the water column. According to their

own data, analyzed by Dr. Van Heerden, accretion between 2 and 4 feet since 2016 is

documented in the area. Gaps along the Florida Gas and old openings along the banks of Bayou

Sorrel and the GIWW show huge deltas and massive filling of wetlands that can be seen on

LIDAR.

ABK and partners likewise raised concerns that the “wetland nourishment” of depositing spoil

on top of hardwoods will kill existing trees in the area, essentially choking them with

fill/sediment. Moreover, marsh creation is not compatible with the type of aquatic resources and

wetlands in this area (namely, cypress-tupelo swamps, not marshes). Additionally, filling in

canals with dredged material will create a levee, not a wetland. Planting container-grown cypress

trees will not transform levees into wetlands and opens the door to other developers to avoid mitigation by claiming depositing dredged material creates, enhances, and/or nourishes wetlands. This is not enhancement or restoration but wetland conversion from swamps to bottomland hardwoods, to the detriment of the fishermen and wildlife who use the area. We also raise issue with claims that subsidence and sea level rise are threats to this area, where sedimentation has and continues to be a primary concern in this and many other areas just to the south of I-10 in the Basin. We’ve seen how the areas north of I-10 have transformed into primarily bottomland hardwood forests, and that trend now threatens the remaining cypress forest wetlands to the south of I-10. Subsidence occurs on both sides of the levees and cannot only be addressed in the Basin (water can’t flow uphill!). ABK and partners point to the failed Beau Bayou and Buffalo Cove water quality “improvement” projects that similarly made cuts in elevated spoil/banks, introducing river water in the name of “water quality improvement” but at the same time introduced more sediments into these areas, filling deep water habitat and destroying or degrading these areas. We continue to oppose the project to prevent this from happening in Upper East Grand Lake. Hypoxia is not solved with sedimentation and accretion.