



ADVOCATE FILE PHOTO BY BRIANNA PACIORKA

Local and state officials plan to address one of the major contributing factors to the 20-year decline of False River by trying to reduce the amount of sediment draining into the lake from adjoining tributaries.

# Rehabilitation of False River ongoing

## Weirs, baffles intended to slow sediment flow

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**NEW ROADS** — Local and state officials this fall plan to address one of the major contributing factors to the 20-year decline of False River by trying to reduce the amount of sediment draining into the oxbow lake from adjoining tributaries.

State Rep. Major Thibaut, D-New Roads, announced Tuesday that engineers are ready to install in the M-1 and M-2 canals a series of rock weirs and baffles designed to retard the flow of sediments into the lake.

"Those two are our biggest drainage spots into the river," Thibaut said during a meeting Tuesday hosted by the False River Watershed Council. "I'm excited about this work because we think it will really slow down the water flow and hopefully reduce erosion."

Experts have attributed False River's decline over the past two decades mostly to the

heavy silt buildup at the bottom of the lake, which they say has impeded vegetation growth and curtailed fish-spawning habitats.

The decline in the lake's water quality over the years has damaged its reputation as a premier spot to catch trophy bass.

Thibaut said work to install seven baffles and four rock weirs in strategic spots along the M-1 canal should begin in February with work along the M-2 canal set to follow in December.

Both projects will be funded by a \$1 million donation NRG Energy allocated toward the restoration efforts of False River, efforts that began in earnest two years ago.

Bliss Bernard, a representative of the C.H. Fenstermaker & Associates engineering firm, said the rocks and baffles will act as filters trapping the unwanted sediment and debris, allowing for cleaner water to flow into False River from the two tributaries.

"Our studies have shown us that most of the sediment flowing into False River is coming

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Officials are set to reduce the False River's water level, which is normally around 16½ feet, by at least 5½ feet from Sept. 6 to Jan. 15, 2017.

## RIVER

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from the M-1 canal," Bernard said. "A lot of that is due to all the farming and agriculture in the area."

Work in the M-1 canal will coincide with the annual drawdown of the lake's water level. This year, officials are set to reduce the lake's water level,

which is normally around 16½ feet, by at least 5½ feet from Sept. 6 to Jan. 15, 2017.

The drawdown will allow more sunlight into the lake's murky waters to help accelerate the decomposition of the heavy buildup of material on the lake bed.

In the near future, the parish also will begin a dredging project on the north end of the lake as well — similar to the work they did last year in the South

Flats.

"It's going to take years and years to get False River back to what it was," Thibaut said. "But we're already starting to see improvements. The water is a lot clearer. And we're seeing new plant life and the return of baby shrimp. Fish feed on that, and we haven't seen either one since I was a kid."

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