

Mississippi River Commission 2021 Public Hearings

April 16, 2021

Hello, I am David Stets, here representing Sierra Club Delta Chapter in Louisiana.

Delta Chapter in Louisiana is part of the national Sierra Club organization. But most of our work is done by local area volunteers who enjoy the outdoors and enjoy working for the preservation of the natural environment.

The Atchafalaya Basin and its wetland swamps are a unique feature in Louisiana and in the country. It is home to 250 species of birds and over 100 species of fish and aquatic life. The basin serves as a recreation destination for thousands of boaters, fishermen, hunters, campers, hikers and bird-watchers each year. The Basin supports seasonally migrating birds coming across the Gulf from south and central America. The swamps and forests also support carbon capture and storage, clean air, clean water, and flood water retention.

Sierra Club Delta Chapter is working to protect the ecosystem values of the Atchafalaya and to protect the right of public access to state owned water-bottom. We are working against a historic trend of filling in wetlands for development. The Basin's wetlands and swamps used to be much larger but have been reduced by sediment infill and by residential, commercial and industrial development. We have observed that the public is largely unaware of both the value of the Atchafalaya's natural swamps and the extent to which they have been compromised by numerous destructive, engineered projects to change flow patterns for industrial activity and flood control.

We are happy to be working with the Atchafalaya Basin Coalition of environmental organizations. Our position is that preservation of the remaining natural wetlands and deep-water swamps should be elevated to the highest priority in current and future water management planning for the Atchafalaya Basin.

Thank you

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Chapter Chair

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