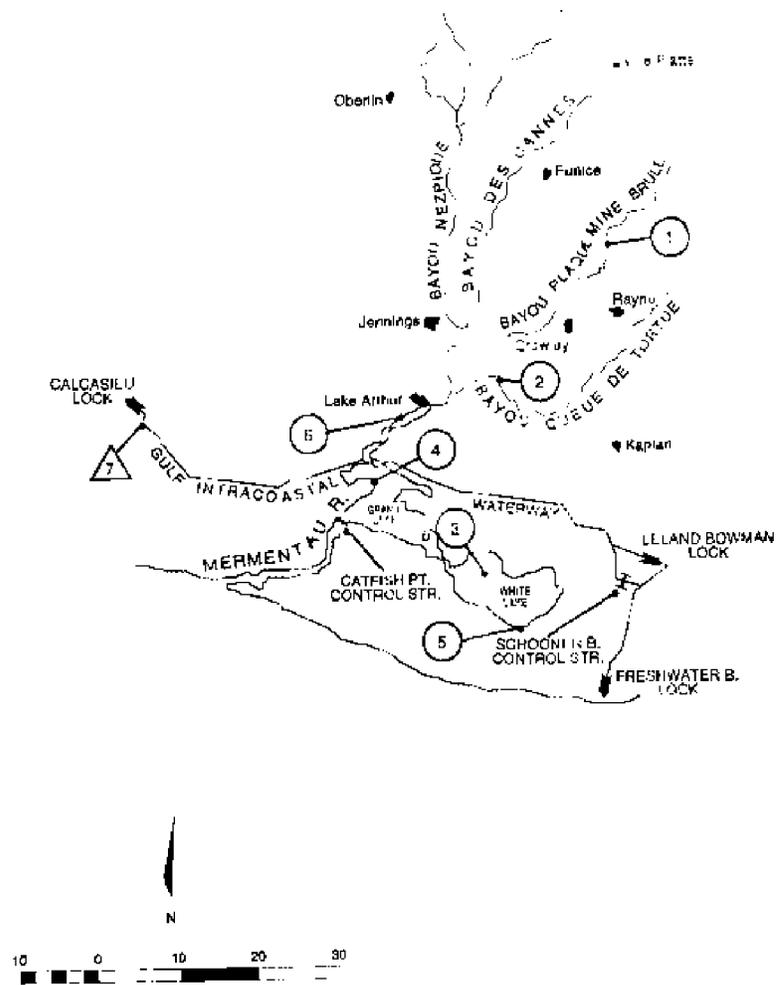
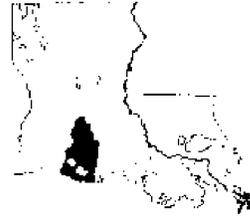


Mermentau River Basin



Projects



Navigation

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Mermentau River Basin

Introduction

This basin located between the Teche-Vermilion and Calcasieu basins comprises a controlled system for the drainage of Mermentau River and its tributaries. Catfish Point and Schooner Bayou Control Structures

and Calcasieu and Leland Bowman Locks control the impoundment of winter runoff for irrigation use in the summertime. The upper portion of the basin consists of hills and prairies, and the lower portion consists primarily of wetlands. Corps of Engineers projects in the basin are primarily navigation improvements.



Schooner Bayou Control Structure



Shrimping boats navigating the Mermentau River

Projects

Bayou Plaquemine Brule

The project provides for a channel 6 feet deep and 60 feet wide from the mouth to a point near Crowley, a distance of about 19 miles. It was completed in 1915. In recent years the state of Louisiana has cleared the bayou of snags and overhanging trees and straightened the channel for flood control. Average annual traffic for the period 1984-1995 was 9,330 tons. Principal cargo on the waterway is crude petroleum.

Bayou Queue de Tortue

No channel dimensions are specified in this 14-mile channel project, which provides for the dredging of 10 cutoffs and the removal of obstructions from the mouth of Bayou Queue de Tortue to the Southern Pacific Lines bridge at Riceville. The project was completed in 1923. Maintenance, clearing, and snagging were begun in 1969. The controlling depth will be 5 feet mean low Gulf level for the full project length. The average annual traffic over the waterway, 1952-1955, was 2,900 tons. No commerce has been reported since 1955.

Inland Waterway from Franklin to Mermentau River

Completed in 1924, this waterway provides a

5-foot-deep by 40-foot-wide channel from Bayou Teche near Franklin through Hanson Canal, Bayou Portage, the Intracoastal Canal, Schooner Bayou Cutoff, Schooner Bayou, and a new land cut to White Lake. The channel then goes through White, Turtle, Alligator, and Collicon lakes and connecting channels, and finally through Grand Lake to the Mermentau River at the northern entrance to the lake. Total cost of construction was \$249,100.

This project has been largely superseded by the "Intracoastal Waterway" project. The part of the project west of Vermilion River was incorporated into the "Mermentau River" project by the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1946. Under authority of PL 85-837, the Hanson Canal and Lock were transferred to the Police Jury of St. Mary Parish in 1959.

Average annual traffic on the waterway, 1959-1963, was 591,000 tons. Traffic since 1964 is included in the Mermentau River total.

Mermentau River

Work authorized under this project includes:

- ▶ Channel improvement of the Mermentau River below Grand Lake and existing channels between Grand and White lakes and White Lake and

Vermilion Bay to provide channels with areas of 3,000 square feet below mean low Gulf level for floodflows.

- ▶ The construction of control structures in the enlarged channels near Grand Lake (at Catfish Point) and Schooner Bayou to prevent saltwater intrusion into the Mermentau Basin.
- ▶ The enlargement of Schooner Bayou Cutoff and North Prong and Schooner Bayou to provide 6-foot-deep by 60-foot-wide channels for navigation.
- ▶ The incorporation of the completed project, "Waterway from White Lake to Pecan Island," and that part of the completed project "Inland Waterway from Franklin to the Mermentau River," west of the Vermilion River.

This project was completed in 1952 at a cost of \$4,631,910.

The Catfish Point Control Structure has three sets of gates, each set having a width of 56 feet. The sill elevation of two sets are at 15 feet below mean low Gulf level; the other set is 10 feet below mean low Gulf level. Schooner Bayou Control Structure has two sets of sector gates, each set having a width of 75 feet, and sill elevations of -12 feet below mean low Gulf level. The Calcasieu and Leland Bowman locks on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway are operated in conjunction with the Schooner Bayou and Catfish Point Control Structures for regulation of the water levels in Grand and White lakes. The gates of Schooner Bayou Lock were permanently closed, and traffic was routed through the control structure in 1951.

The cumulative benefits through 1996 for flood damages prevented were \$2,776,000. The average annual traffic on the Mermentau River from 1986-1995 was 976,000 tons.

Mermentau River and Bayous Nezpique and Des Cannes

This project consists of removal of obstructions to navigation in the natural

channel of the Mermentau River from its head (at the junction of Bayous Nezpique and Des Cannes) to the Gulf (a distance of about 71.5 miles), in Bayou Nezpique for the lower 25 miles, and in Bayou Des Cannes from its mouth to the Evangeline Bridge (a distance of about 8.5 miles). The project also calls for improvement of the channel in lower Mud Lake by dredging and construction of a brush dam to concentrate the action of the current, removal of a portion of the wrecked dam at mile 7, and maintenance of a channel 9 feet deep at mean low Gulf level and 100 feet wide from the Intracoastal Waterway to the junction of Bayous Nezpique and Des Cannes.

The project was completed in 1935. Average annual traffic along this project, 1986-1995, was 1,263,000 tons.

Boating and skiing are popular activities along these waterways. Facilities are maintained by the boat clubs of Jennings, Crowley, Eunice, and Lake Arthur. Preliminary plans for additional access and recreation facilities, such as boat ramps and picnicking areas, have been completed and approved. Local cooperation is required for the implementation of these plans.

The part of the project in the lower Mermentau River below Grand Lake has been superseded by the project, "Mermentau River," described previously. A modification of the project, authorized under the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1965, provides for:

- ▶ The enlargement and realignment of Bayous Nezpique and Des Cannes to obtain a 12-foot-deep by 125-foot-wide channel from Interstate Highway 10 to Mermentau River.
- ▶ The realignment of the Mermentau River upstream of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway by the construction of several cutoffs, each 12 feet deep by 125 feet wide.
- ▶ The enlargement of the channel through Lake Arthur to 12 feet deep by 200 feet wide.
- ▶ The replacement of the highway bridge

at the town of Lake Arthur with a new structure having a vertical clearance of 50 feet and a horizontal clearance of about 200 feet.

The first contract was awarded in 1974 at a cost of \$279,000 for the construction of

four cutoffs. During construction, archeological sites were discovered at two of the four cutoff locations. Because of the value of these archeological sites, the Corps of Engineers altered the sequence of construction of the cutoffs and established a salvage program for the two cutoffs. Work on the first contract was completed in 1974. Work on the next three cutoffs (mile 61.55 to mile 64.55) was started in 1976 and completed in 1977 at a cost of \$456,000. This completes all work on the Mermentau River from Louisiana Highway 14 to U.S. Highway 90. No construction has been initiated on the remaining portions of the project, which have been reclassified into the inactive category based on a 1981 economic reanalysis. Estimated cost of the project modification (1976) was \$7,156,000 Federal including \$51,000 for navigation aids and \$1,125,000 non-Federal.

A reimbursable contract for replacement of the highway bridge at Lake Arthur was signed by the Louisiana Department of Highways and the Corps of Engineers in 1971. Bids for construction of the bridge were received by the Highway Department in 1972. The cost of the bridge was \$4,719,000, of which \$3,912,000 is Federal cost. Work has been completed, and the bridge was opened to traffic in 1975.

Waterway from White Lake to Pecan Island

Authorized in 1937 and partially completed in 1939, this 1.8-mile project provides for a 5-foot-deep by 40-foot-wide channel from deep water in White Lake to Pecan Island. The project was incorporated into the "Mermentau River" project by the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1946.

Average annual traffic, 1959-1963, was 28,600 tons. Traffic is now included in the Mermentau River total.

Mermentau River, Gulf of Mexico Navigation Channel

The Mermentau River, Gulf of Mexico Navigation Channel was constructed in 1971 by the East Cameron Port, Harbor, and Terminal District of Cameron Parish. This 4.6-mile channel begins at the point of entry of Mermentau River into Lower Mud Lake and extends in a southerly direction to the Gulf of Mexico. Federal assumption of maintenance of this channel was authorized by Congress in 1976, under the Water Resources Development Act of 1976. Wetlands are created in Lower Mud Lake with dredged material.



Mermentau navigation channel jetties below Mud Lake

Programs and Surveys

Flood Plain Information Reports

Church Point. A flood plain information report on the Church Point area was completed and published in 1972.

Crowley. A flood plain information report on the Crowley area was completed in 1974.

Flood Insurance Studies

An insurance study has been completed in the Mermentau River Basin in Lake Arthur.



Catfish Point Control Structure at Grand Lake

Surveys Authorized or Under Way

Grand and White Lakes, Louisiana. This study was a multipurpose study in which improvements in water management to benefit agriculture, navigation, flood control, and commercial fisheries are being examined. The study concluded that only one plan was economically justified. That plan provided for a change in the operation of the Catfish Point Control Structure -- a minimum of one-foot-width aperture in the gates during conditions when the structure would be closed under normal operating procedures to provide for ingress and egress of aquatic organisms. The implementation of this operation procedure was under the authority of the New Orleans District Engineer, and the study was terminated in July 1993.

Mermentau River, Gulf Intracoastal Waterway to the Gulf of Mexico. The purpose of the study was to investigate the feasibility of providing a navigation channel from the Mermentau River and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) to the Gulf of Mexico by the way of the Catfish Point Control Structure. No economically justified plan was found and the study was terminated in 1990.

Black Bayou Diversion, Louisiana, Reconnaissance Study. The purpose of this study is to determine the preliminary feasibility of implementing measures within the lower Mermentau Basin in the interest of environmental restoration and flood control. Excessively high water levels in the basin cause flooding of rural areas, stress wetland vegetation, and prevent the seasonal drying of the marsh, resulting in land loss and decreased wetlands productivity. These high water levels are attributed to a number of causes: subsidence, sea level rise, upstream drainage improvements, and clearing of adjacent lands. This study was placed in an inactive status in July 1997.

Bayou Blanc at Crowley, Louisiana. This study was initiated in 1997 to determine if a plan could be developed to prevent further bank erosion problems along Bayou Blanc in the corporate limits of Crowley in Acadia Parish in south-central Louisiana. The study was terminated because a plan that is economically justified under Federal criteria could not be developed.



Red snapper fishing offshore of the Mermentau River is some of the best in Louisiana