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Report Highlights

Administration of Water Management Projects

Atchafalaya Basin Program - Department of Natural Resources

Audit Control # 40160012

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Why We Conducted This Audit

We conducted this performance audit of the Atchafalaya Basin Program's (ABP) water management projects to determine if ABP administered them in compliance with relevant requirements.

What We Found

Overall, ABP needs to strengthen its administration of water management projects in the following areas:

ABP did not properly administer certain aspects of its first two water management projects, which resulted in issues regarding transparency, landowner concessions regarding project design, potential conflicts of interest, and insufficient monitoring. We found that the lack of a formalized process during this time resulted in ABP not always properly administering certain aspects of their earlier projects, Bayou Postillion and Schwing Chute.

Since 2008, ABP has improved its administration of water management projects. However, it should strengthen its process by having each project formally approved before construction begins and by consistently conducting project monitoring. ABP's current process addressed many of the issues identified in ABP's administration of its first two projects. However, ABP should further strengthen the process by having its Technical Advisory Group formally review and approve each project after the engineering specifications have been developed to ensure projects will achieve their intended goals and increase transparency. Additionally, ABP should consistently conduct project monitoring so that it can determine the impact and success of its water management projects and include these results in its annual plans.

The State Master Plan for the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System expired in 2013 and no longer adequately guides ABP's operations. The Master Plan was created in 1998 and was intended to be a 15-year plan; however, the Plan is now 19 years old. The Master Plan was created in part to establish the State's role of providing 25% of the operational and maintenance costs of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (ACOE) water management units once they were completed. However, to date, ACOE has not completed any of its water management units, and subsequently the state has not had to provide operation and maintenance support. Additionally, Act 606 of the 2008 Regular Session changed the focus of ABP's efforts to constructing water management projects. Because of ABP's new role in constructing water management projects, the current State Master Plan is no longer adequate to guide the operations of the program.

View the full report, including management's response, at www.la.gov.