

113 of 2222 DOCUMENTS

Times-Picayune (New Orleans)

September 2, 2009 Wednesday

Pond to ease Abita flooding sought; Zoning panel OKs site near airport

BYLINE: By Christine Harvey, St. Tammany bureau

SECTION: METRO; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 402 words

St. Tammany Parish officials are hoping to create a regional retention pond on 261 acres near the St. Tammany Regional Airport to help stem flooding in the Abita Springs area.

The parish's Zoning Commission agreed Tuesday night to rezone the land from single-family residential to an industrial district, which would allow the pond to be dug east of the airport and south of Louisiana 36.

The request now must go before the Parish Council, which will make the final decision.

Initially, the site would house a sand-and-clay excavation firm, which would dig the pond for the parish, said Suzanne Parsons-Stymiest, the parish's spokeswoman. After the excavation, the site, an old sod farm owned by Leon Lowe and Sons Inc., would be used primarily as a retention pond, she said.

Though the parish's long-range plan, New Directions 2025, calls for the property to remain residential, Stymiest said officials didn't realize at the time that a retention pond might be needed in the area.

The land, along with the airport and the nearby St. Tammany Parish Animal Services facility, regularly becomes inundated with 1 to 2 feet of water during heavy rains, said Sidney Fontenot, the parish's planning director.

Several similar ponds dot the parish, including the largest -- the Lowe Retention Pond -- south of Pearl River in the St. Joe community. Several more are planned, she said. The Lowe site includes an 80-acre pond for holding storm water, three channels that flow into it, a station with three pumps and an outflow ditch.

The pond helps reduce flooding in hundreds of homes and businesses in the Slidell area, and its pumps slow the downstream flow of storm water.

It can hold as much as 182 million gallons of rainwater, then releases it once the drainage arteries to the south have emptied enough to allow the water from the pond to flow into Lake Pontchartrain.

The pond and drainage station, which is on Highway Department Road west of U.S. 11, is designed to handle a 10-year flood -- 9 inches of rainfall spread over a 24-hour period -- between Slidell and Pearl River and parts of north Slidell.

The area generally covers the upper to middle reaches of the W15 Canal/French Branch, Bayou Vincent and Gum

Pond to ease Abita flooding sought; Zoning panel OKs site near airport Times-Picayune (New Orleans) September 2, 2009 Wednesday

Bayou drainage basins. More than 5,000 people live in the area.

The parish completed the \$3.5 million pond in 2003.

.....

Christine Harvey can be reached at charvey@timespicayune.com or 985.645.2853.

LOAD-DATE: September 2, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Copyright 2009 The Times-Picayune Publishing Company