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JACKSON COUNTY LAUNCHES DREDGING OF SIX BAYOUS



Submitted Photo

A low winter tide reveals a narrow channel on Bayou Chicot as it nears the Mississippi Sound in this photo taken by Earl Martin on Feb. 3.

Dredging to open up silted waterways

By KATHERINE SAYRE
The Mississippi Press

PASCAGOULA — Most of the boat slips at the Singing River Yacht Club sat empty on Friday afternoon, where more than 30 vessels once parked.

Many of the boats here have been stored on dry land since Hurricane Katrina pushed massive amounts of silt into coastal bayous, forming shallow waters and leaving some channels in Jackson County impassable since August 2005.

"During a few months after the hurricane, you could almost walk across Bayou Chicot without getting your knees wet," said Robbie Maxwell, rear commodore for the 360-member club, which sits near the mouth of Bayou Chicot at the Mississippi Sound.

Jackson County officials recently launched efforts to dredge parts of the county's six most-traveled bayous, clearing the way for more boats. The \$2.99 million project will be reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, county officials said.

The county plans to dredge the bayous



Jon Hauge/The Mississippi Press

Boats are docked at the Singing River Yacht Club, but there are open slips because bigger boats cannot get in and out on a regular basis. It takes a high tide, but even then some boats will get stuck.

where Katrina dumped an estimated 100,000 cubic yards of silt: Bayou Chicot, Bayou Graveline, Fort Bayou, Bayou St. Martin, Bayou Morton and Ocean Springs Harbor.

Butch Loper, director of Jackson County's emergency operations and civil

defense, said water depths decreased an average of two to three feet in these channels, limiting boats from navigating in and out.

Loper said it's essential for the county to have these bayous open and navigable again.

"It's a massive recreational fishing and recreational boating area," Loper said.

Commercial fishing boats and fish camps also depend on the bayous for work, officials said.

County officials expect the dredging to be finished in up to five months, depending on weather conditions.

Jackson County Board of Supervisors earlier this year hired Tony Parnell Construction Co. of Vancleave to conduct the dredging, using a barge with a mechanical arm that scoops about three cubic yards of silt at a time.

The dredged spoil from five of the six bayous will be taken to Deer Island for a restoration project there, Loper said.

The initial plan was to start with Bayou Chicot — which county officials iden-

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Abortion bill turns into House leadership struggle

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS
The Associated Press

JACKSON — A lingering spat over an anti-abortion bill could erupt this week into a direct challenge of Speaker Billy McCoy's leadership in the Mississippi House.

Republicans are hoping to splinter McCoy's governing coalition of Black Caucus members and rural white

AP NEWS ANALYSIS



McCoy



Barbour

Democrats by pressuring the speaker to split with one of his own chairmen on an issue pushed by the American Family Association and other conservative groups.

McCoy, a populist Democrat from Rienzi, appoints House committee chairmen. He has voted for several abortion restrictions in the past. But if he sticks with his chairman on this bill, as expected, the Republicans want to pressure rural Democrats to break away from the speaker on the emotional issue.

Under either scenario, McCoy's power in the House could be shaken.

And if the speaker is weakened, Republican Gov. Haley Barbour would further strengthen his own hand in a Capitol where he already exerts considerable influence over the Senate.

At stake is a bill that would put several new restrictions on abortion in a state that already has some of the nation's toughest laws regulating the procedure.

The 2008 legislative session is scheduled to end next Saturday and conservatives are trying to win final approval for a bill that says, among other things, a person could be sued for helping an underage girl get an abortion in Mississippi without parental or guardian consent.

See ABORTION, Page 10-A

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES



Jon Hauge/The Mississippi Press

Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA, held its Walk For Hope Saturday morning. Participants started the walk on the Biloxi side of Biloxi Bay Bridge and finished the walk at the Ocean Springs Yacht Club.

Walk for Hope brings awareness to child abuse

By AMBER CRAIG
The Mississippi Press

OCEAN SPRINGS — Volunteers at the forefront of helping abused and neglected children find safe homes hope that one day their services will no longer be needed.

But until that day, awareness will bring more community involvement and that will bring more help to children who have been hurt, said organizers of the first Walk for Hope sponsored by Jackson County Court Appointed Special Advocates Saturday morning.

CASA is an organization that operates through the Jackson County Services Coalition and assigns trained volunteers to speak in the court system for children who have been neglected or abused.

WANT TO HELP?

For details about how to become a Court Appointed Special Advocates volunteer, contact Frances Allsup at 228-762-7370 or visit www.jccasa.net. To learn how to recognize the signs of child abuse or neglect, visit: www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm.

Volunteers study a child's situation and act as an objective voice in court, with the ultimate goal being to move the child through the court system and into a safe, permanent living environment.

More than 100 people walked from the Biloxi side to the Ocean Springs Yacht

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