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Relocating the Road Can Be A Cost Effective Mitigation Measure

CATAHOULA PARISH, LA – Catahoula Parish has had a tumultuous relationship with the Ouachita and Black Rivers as these rivers are prone to high-velocity flooding. Soil erosion occurs naturally, but certain factors such as water and wind can accelerate, and worsen, its effects. In the parish, floodwaters from the rivers damaged nearby roadways, prompting parish officials to seek mitigation measures to break the cycle of destruction and repair.

“We had fixed sections of Moody Road and Means Lake Road twice. The third time, we decided to really take major action,” said Catahoula Parish Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness Director Ellis Boothe. “It wasn’t economically feasible to rebuild the roads in their original location. Yet I wanted the best fix within the allowable realm.”

In 2009, heavy rainfall resulted in high-velocity flooding that undercut and washed away Moody Road’s embankment right-of-way at four places near the Black River. The same flood event did similar damage to a large section of embankment on Means Lake Road beside the Ouachita River.

A cost-benefit analysis showed relocating the roads would be significantly more cost effective than repairing the roads. The parish received funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Public Assistance 406 Mitigation Program to help fund the two roadway relocation projects.

The hazard mitigation work for Moody Road included relocating and reconstructing a portion about 500 feet farther south of the Black River. Mitigation of Means Lake Road required the purchase of 3.1 acres of privately owned land. The section of the road was realigned about 160 feet farther east of the Ouachita River.

The cost to repair Moody Road in its existing location would have totaled \$142,995; the mitigation



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debris and repair the roads and bridges people use every day.

Under the PA program, FEMA reimburses applicants for 75 percent of their eligible costs. The grantee, usually the State, determines how the remaining non-federal share is distributed to local jurisdictions and organizations that incurred costs.

Boothe said, "Using Federal funds to improve the roads had its challenges, but ultimately proved worthwhile."