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## **Press Release** **For Immediate Release: January 7, 2005**

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## **Sierra Club Reaffirms Its Commitment to Washington Parish Residents**

Franklinton—Leslie March, Vice Chair of the Sierra Club- Delta Chapter, reaffirmed the Club's opposition to a reservoir that is planned for Washington Parish. The Sierra Club continues to support all Washington Parish residents and others who question the need for the proposed project.

This followed an announcement on Wednesday, January 5, 2005, of the Washington Parish Reservoir Commission's intention of proceeding with their plans for a parish reservoir despite citizen opposition. The Commission was established under HB 216 in the 2003 Legislative Session.

The Commission's proposed reservoir is locally called "Site 2." The site is located south of La. Highway 10 between Franklinton and Bogalusa, extending north to touch the south side of Sheridan. This project would flood the Bogalusa Creek below La. Highway 10. The 8-square-mile reservoir will also inundate historic homes, farms, cemeteries and timberland.

The reservoir has been touted as a recreational area that will attract retirees and jobs to Washington Parish. However, as March stated, "A feasibility report on the economic benefits has not been made available to the public. The studies presented to the Commission were prepared by the same firms that helped develop the Poverty Point project. The Poverty Point project exceeded its initial cost projections and hasn't created the jobs that were promised."

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“The proponents are now trying to play down the recreation aspect to local residents by promoting the reservoir for future water needs,” March continued. “Yet we haven’t seen any scientific evidence that Washington Parish has a water shortage now, nor is it in danger of having one in the future. In fact, Washington Parish’s own official website lists an abundant water supply as being an advantage to prospective new businesses. Local members of the Sierra Club, as taxpayers and residents of the Northshore, question whether the estimated \$29 million cost of building the reservoir couldn’t be better spent in a parish that needs dollars for its school system.”

In addition March added that the proposed site would flood a portion of the Ben’s Creek Wildlife Management Area, 13,000 acres of land owned by Weyerhaeuser and managed by Louisiana Fish and Wildlife. “The question will be whether the public is being served by flooding an existing outdoor recreation area. The Sierra Club continues to be concerned about any loss of native plants and animals, in particular the endangered gopher turtle found in Bogalusa Creek.”

“We have pledged to work with the community groups to continue to oppose the reservoir. We understand that the Site 2 community group obtained 1400 signatures in 3 days in opposition to language within the house bill that allowed for eminent domain.” March added that the Site 2 group is committed to fighting for their property rights.

The Washington Parish Reservoir is only one of a group of similar reservoirs being proposed throughout Louisiana. The Sierra Club—Delta Chapter is opposed to all of these reservoir projects.

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The Sierra Club represents 4,000 of your friends and neighbors in Louisiana with 700,000 members nationwide. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. The Club is America’s oldest, largest, and most influential grassroots environmental organization.