

GUEST COLUMN

For the Thursday, January 5, 2017 Edition

From: Mayor James E. "Jamie" Mayo

2017 Focus Area: Flood Recovery & Resiliency

In keeping with our annual tradition of a New Year's Focus, I am proud to announce the City of Monroe's 2017 initiative will focus on *Flood Recovery and Resiliency*.

Flooding across this state has caused billions of dollars in damage.

Climate change projections suggest that it is no longer a matter of "if" we have another flood...it's a matter of "when" we have the next major flood. In light of this, many communities across the state (and country) are working hard to improve disaster recovery and long-term flood resilience planning.

Resiliency is a word that you will hear mentioned quite often in the next several months and years. As it relates to our overall Flood Recovery efforts, "resiliency" or "mitigation" means *"measures taken to reduce a community's vulnerability to flooding and support long-term recovery after a flood."*

For us that means millions of dollars in mitigation, drainage, pump station, levee, roads, water, and sewer projects for our city, parish and region. Our initial wish list of projects for Monroe, West Monroe and Ouachita Parish total at least \$85 million dollars. However, the process of completing these projects will take months and years due to the time it takes to secure and receive federal (and other) funding and pairing it with local matching funds.

The City of Monroe has identified three priority projects as it related to flood resiliency/mitigation.

1. River Styx Pump Station repairs – Although the River Styx Pump Station is owned by the Ouachita Parish Police Jury, we strongly endorse this project because it protects thousands of acres and hundreds of homes inside the City of Monroe boundary, including the area in and around CenturyLink, Century Village and the IBM Building. Its drainage basin includes the River Oaks and Cypress Point subdivisions, as well as the ULM campus and adjacent residential areas. Estimated cost = \$2M to \$4.5M
2. Georgia St Pump Station project: This project will construct a new pump station in a low lying area which does not have adequate outfall. It will relieve the frequent flooding of hundreds of homes. We already have this project in the Louisiana Statewide Flood Program and hope to secure additional funding sources. Preliminary Engineering and Right of Way Acquisition is in progress, possible early target to advertise for bids in winter 2017, complete construction in 2019. Estimated cost = \$4.95M

3. Oregon Trail protection levee – This project will design and construct a protective levee parallel and in the right of way of Nutland Road to protect the hundreds of homes in East Parkview Subdivision from backwater flooding when Young’s Bayou is full. Preliminary engineering is in progress to scope this as a Hazard Mitigation Project. Estimated cost = \$1.5M

These are just a few of many Flood Recovery and Resiliency projects that we are striving to help protect our local citizens. Together, we are making a difference. Monroe is one city, with one future!