



November 04, 2019

Governor John Bel Edwards
125 East Pine Street,
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

Dear Governor Edwards:

Congratulations on making the run-off in the gubernatorial election. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on how you will address our state's land loss crisis during this runoff period.

As governor, your actions to protect coastal funds will be critical. In that context, we are asking that you provide your positions and plans on specific fiscal issues related to the state's coastal restoration and protection efforts. Louisiana's ongoing land loss crisis threatens 2 million people who live in coastal areas, globally-significant infrastructure and industries, as well as critical fish and wildlife habitat that makes our state a "Sportsman's Paradise."

The first issue is regarding money owed to the federal government by the state of Louisiana for construction of the New Orleans and surrounding areas Hurricane Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) by the Corps of Engineers after Hurricane Katrina. The first payment of the 30-year payback schedule, structured by the Jindal administration, will finally come due during calendar year 2020 for the approximately \$3.2 billion debt. The FY2020 Coastal Annual Plan estimated the annual cost of this bill to be \$103 million per year beginning in calendar year 2020.

These payments represent a significant, new recurring cost to the state. If our presently identified coastal funds are used for payment, it could cripple the state's coastal program, putting all coastal areas in severe risk into the future. We would appreciate your sharing how you would manage this obligation without diverting existing coastal funds, such as the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) revenues or the Coastal Protection and Restoration Trust Fund. Do you feel that the Capital Outlay budget is the appropriate funding stream to fulfill this debt? How would your administration seek to resolve the debt?

Secondly, as you are likely aware, the state's only annual recurring commitment to its coastal program comes from state mineral revenues. Since the creation of the Coastal Trust Fund in 1989, the average annual value of this revenue stream was between \$25 and \$35 million. This important contribution ranged from approximately \$35 million to less than \$28 million for fiscal years 2014-2016, but dropped to \$15 million in fiscal year 2017, where it has remained to this day.

Given the tremendous backlog of projects in the Coastal Master Plan and the \$50 billion cost to fund these projects, do you believe the state should invest more in coastal funding and are you willing to advocate for additional state dollars to the Coastal Trust Fund during your term? As Governor, from where would you secure this funding?

These funding questions come at a pivotal time for our state and its coastal program. On an annual basis for the next 12 years, Louisiana will receive payments from its portion of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlement. These payments will be applied to allowable projects and programs from the Coastal Master Plan to address damages from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. When these \$8 Billion in funds have been spent, Louisiana will lose a significant, recurring stream of revenue to fund its coastal program and the projects needed to protect 2 million coastal citizens, industries and wildlife from the worst effects of ongoing land loss and flooding.

As coastal advocates, we wish to know how you would deal with these challenges if elected governor on November 16. In order for that response to be timely, we respectfully request a response from your office by November 11. We commit to sharing your response with our audiences and those in the coastal community with whom we regularly engage.

Sincerely,



Natalie Snider
Science Policy Director
Environmental Defense Fund



John Lopez, Ph.D.
Director, Coast and Community Program
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation



Kim Davis Reyher
Executive Director
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana



Brian Moore
Vice President, Policy
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David Muth
Director, Gulf Restoration Program
National Wildlife Federation



Steve Cochran
Campaign Director
Restore the MS River Delta



Scott Kirkpatrick
President
Coast Builders Coalition