

Date Submitted

Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Planning Protection and Restoration Act Program

Brad Inman

Department of the Army

New Orleans, District, Corps of Engineers

RE: Letter of Support for Project Recommendations for the CWPPRA Priority Project List 28

To Whom It May Concern:

As organizations with long-standing interest in the Louisiana CWPPRA coastal projects and funding designations, we are writing to express our support for a number of projects currently being proposed for Priority Project List 28 (PPL 28). We believe that these projects have the potential to provide multiple benefits to Louisiana and the Mississippi River Delta ecosystem as a whole. We hope that you take these projects into consideration for further evaluation as the CWPPRA process advances throughout the year.

Miller Bayou Marsh Creation (R1-PO-01)

Restoration of the 2017 Coastal Master Plan's New Orleans East Landbridge (001.MC.05) is a vital series of projects that work synergistically to protect the city of New Orleans from storm surges and erosion. The Army Corps of Engineers sees this piece of land as a critical line of defense for the region and its inhabitants and provides a separation between Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne. The proposed CWPPRA PPL 28 project of Miller Bayou Marsh Creation lies within the project boundaries of the NOLA East Landbridge project. It is adjacent to Lake Catherine which has experienced impacts from hurricanes and other storm events. The Miller Bayou Marsh Creation (R1-PO-01) can support projects already in engineering and design in the Master Plan project and will increase the benefits in the form of protection of the landbridge region to adjacent communities.

Bayou Bay Jaune Marsh Creation (R1-PO-02)

Similar to Miller Bayou Marsh Creation, the proposed CWPPRA PPL 28 project of Bayou Bay Jaune Marsh Creation lies within the 2017 Coastal Master Plan's New Orleans East Landbridge (001.MC.05) project boundary. The region of the proposed project is experiencing similar

impacts as the other project including degraded wetlands converting to open water, subsidence and impacts from storm events. According to the 2017 Coastal Master Plan, Orleans Parish, where the previous project and Bayou Bay Jaune (R1-P-02) are located, could lose up to 32% of its land area in the coming 50 years from current risks and impacts. The NOLA East Landbridge is a critical landscape for threatened and endangered species such as manatees as well as migratory birds. The Bayou Bay Jaune Marsh Creation project, if implemented, will support already existing projects in the region and work synergistically with them to protect the Landbridge and the habitat it provides.

Bayou Terre aux Boeuf Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation (R2-BS-07)

The historical ridge of Bayou Terre aux Boeufs which stretches from Delacroix to Black Bay has provided much needed protection from storm surges to the surrounding regions of St. Bernard and Plaquemines parish. This region is also known to play host to critical migratory bird habitat. Erosion of the region has led to a much narrower ridge than was historically present and the contribution of subsidence and saltwater intrusion has killed off most of the trees. The Bayou Terre aux Boeufs Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation project (R2-BS-07) will include vegetative plantings to support the habitat once there which will provide substantial habitat for birds and other wildlife that utilize the region. This project will also work synergistically with other Breton Ridge Restoration projects such as Bayou La Loutre Ridge Restoration (001.RC.01) to provide storm protection to Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and the greater New Orleans area. This proposed CWPPRA project is one of the best hopes of getting a part of the 2017 Coastal Master Plan project Bayou Terre aux Boeufs Ridge Restoration (001.RC.100) implemented. It is also likely to get landowners on board which provides much needed support for project funding and implementation.


Central Wetlands Hydrologic Restoration (R1-PO-04)

The proposed Central Wetlands Hydrologic Restoration (R1-PO-04) project would either be part of or directly complement the 2017 Coastal Master Plan's Central Wetlands Diversion (001.DI.18) which hasn't seen movement for quite some time. The proposed CWPPRA project is cost effective and could have a lot of wide ranging benefits for an area where the Master Plan project isn't moving forward. I think also showcasing hydrologic restoration projects would be good. There are a lot of places on the coast like this where canal bank/spoil bank cutting could do a lot of good. Based off of a Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF) recommendation in partnership with the St. Bernard parish and the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the project proposes to restore 11,000+ acres. The Violet Siphon, if operated, could build off of this project and lay the groundwork for better outcomes if a diversion comes online. It is that this proposed

CWPPRA project is likely the best opportunity to see restoration in the Central Wetlands Unit in the foreseeable future. Landowner support is already in place for this project and can be activated.

Other Projects for Consideration

We would like the following projects to also be considered for advancement by the Technical Committee during the Spring meeting to select PPL 28 candidate projects:

- North Bayou Decade Ridge and Marsh Restoration
- West Louisiana Highway 1 Mars Creation
- Southeast Pecan Island Marsh Creation and Freshwater Enhancement
- Breton Landbridge Marsh Creation (West), River aux Chenes to Grand Lake 

We believe that these projects, in addition to the list above, should be priorities for the CWPPRA program and Technical Committee to advance to the next phase for PPL 28. These projects will work synergistically with already established projects and provide immense benefits to the coastal environment. We see all projects as important in their own right for coastal Louisiana, but we find that these projects create benefits needed now and help sustain those already in place. Projects must work with one another to effectively restore the coast and reduce future impacts predicted to occur, such as sea level rise and increased storm intensity. It is important that we, along with the government and concerned stakeholders, do everything we can to implement projects that will protect the habitat, wildlife, and people that call this region home.

We are pleased to see CWPPRA continuing their efforts to provide funding for much needed projects. This process has already provided immense support for coastal restoration and continues to push forward projects consistent with the Coastal Master Plan.

In summary, thank you for your consideration of these comments, offered in the light of our mutual goal to continually seek improvements to the great work underway. Again, we hope these comments underscore both the urgency of project implementation and continuing fiscal responsibility as we work together toward a sustainable coast.

 Sincerely,

Steve Cochran,
Director, Restore the Mississippi River Delta

Environmental Defense Fund

Kim Reyher,
Executive Director,
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Cynthia Duet,
Deputy Director,
Audubon Louisiana

John Lopez, Ph.D.,
Director, Coastal Sustainability Program,
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

David Muth,
Director, Mississippi River Delta Restoration Program,
National Wildlife Federation

cc: Michael Ellis, Executive Director, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Jason Lanclos, Deputy Director, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Chip Kline, Legislative Director, Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Bren Haase, Chief of Planning, Coastal protection and Restoration Authority
Charles Sutcliffe, Legal and Policy Advisor, Governor's Office of Coastal Activities