To: Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group

Re: Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #8: Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats

Dear Trustees-

We, the 161 signers representing business and community leaders, elected officials, sportsmen, scientists, landowners, and nonprofits, write to express enthusiastic support for Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #8. We are particularly pleased to see the East Orleans Landbridge recommended for Engineering and Design funding, given the ecological importance of the project and the broad public support demonstrated for the project during your drafting process. We are also pleased to see Bayou la Loutre Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation recommended for construction, which complements the East Orleans Landbridge in that it is also part of the Multiple Lines of Defense strategy for storm surge protection in the Pontchartrain Basin. We also support Bayou la Loutre Ridge project coordination with Lake Borgne Marsh Creation to save on time and cost for the adjacent projects. This draft plan represents a major step forward in habitat restoration and coastal protection for communities from St. Bernard to New Orleans, to the Northshore, to the River Parishes.

The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill impacted nearshore coastal marsh habitat throughout Louisiana, including the East Orleans Landbridge and the Biloxi Marsh, in which Bayou la Loutre flows. These are critically important areas for both ecosystem health and community protection. Large-scale restoration is urgently needed to stabilize these areas and restore eroding and degraded marsh, thereby improving habitat and increasing protection from storm-induced flooding.

The East Orleans Landbridge serves several important functions:
- Reduces storm surge in Lake Pontchartrain enhancing storm protection for over 1.5 million people who live around Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Maurepas, including the cities of New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Metairie, LaPlace, Mandeville and Slidell;
- Provides vital wetland and estuarine functions, including control of tidal flow between the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Pontchartrain, benefitting the ecosystem and the people who rely on a healthy estuary for their livelihoods;
- Serves as important habitat for hundreds of species of fish and wildlife, including sturgeon and migratory birds;
- Aids the effectiveness of the Hurricane & Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) surrounding the Greater New Orleans and hosts the Highway 90 hurricane evacuation route.
- Helps maintain or enhance important commercial fisheries, such as shrimp and blue crab.
- Helps maintain or enhance recreational fishery, such as speckled trout and redfish.

The Bayou la Loutre Ridge also serves critical ecosystem functions:
- Provides a component of storm protection for the immediate surrounding communities in St. Bernard and for nearby levees that make up the HSDRRS system;
- Maintains integrity of portions of Biloxi Marsh;

April 18, 2022
• Creates important diversity in plants and wildlife, supporting a Live Oak-Hackberry maritime forest habitat that is critical for a variety of wildlife, including hundreds of thousands of migratory birds crossing the Gulf of Mexico.

Restoration of the East Orleans Landbridge and Bayou la Loutre Ridge have garnered support from tens of thousands of people since Hurricane Katrina. Restoration of the East Orleans Landbridge and Bayou la Loutre Ridge are recommended by the 2012 Army Corps MRGO Ecosystem Feasibility Report and the 2017 Louisiana Coastal Master Plan. The East Orleans Landbridge is also a priority area identified in the City of New Orleans Resilience Strategy and the Orleans Parish Hazard Mitigation Plan. Restoration of Bayou la Loutre Ridge is a Tier 1 priority in the St. Bernard Parish Coastal Strategy Document.

As concerned stakeholders, we strongly support this Draft Restoration Plan #8 and would like to see the work move forward with urgency. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Dier
2020 Louisiana Teacher of the Year and National Teacher of the Year Finalist

Fred Zink
Avian-X Decoys

Andy Kowalczyk
350 New Orleans

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Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

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A Community Voice

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Baton Rouge Area Chamber

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Adventure Design, LLC

James Peter Kelly
Baton Rouge Resident

Tommy Akin
Akin Promotions

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All Saints Episcopal Church

Mike Boyd
Beaver Dam Hunting Services

Charmaine Kathman
All Saints River Ridge

Rev. Dr. Cory Sparks
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Bill Lewis Fishing (Rat-L-Trap)
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Ascension Parish Resident

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Blackley VanCleave Fishing

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Avery Outdoors

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Buck Gardner Calls

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Fertel Foundation

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Shawn Moses Anglim
First Grace United Methodist Church

Canaan Heard
Lake Charles Resident

Jacqueline Richard
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Lakefront Management Authority

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Garry Mason
Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame

Bill Bridge
Global Green USA

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Levees.org

Warren Coco
Go-Devil Manufacturers

Liz Shephard
LifeCity

Butch Davis
Godfather Manufacturing

Patrick A. Barnes, P.G.
Limitless Vistas, Inc.
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Carlton Viers  
Mid-South Hunting & Fishing News

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Stuart Swanson  
Red River Cold Storage

Barbara Johnson  
The Great Delta Tours

Doug Karpicke  
Riverview Appraisal

Jason Goodenough  
The New Culinarian
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