

October 22, 2024

Hurricane season is here. For many of us, this is a stressful time as we wonder when the next storm will strike. Louisiana's coastal land loss and a pattern of stronger storms makes our communities even more vulnerable.

As coastal scientists in Louisiana, we have a unique perspective on our state's coastal issues. We walk through marshes with sampling equipment, take research vessels across our now wide-open coastal bays, analyze maps and satellite images and run complex computer models.

**We do this work because we love this coast.**

Not only is Louisiana's landscape endlessly fascinating and naturally beautiful, but it is the place we have chosen to live and raise our families, to work in our communities and celebrate with our friends or at the next festival or football game. We know that Louisiana's coast is critical for everyone in our state. Not only is it a vital component of our cultural identity, it is also an economic driver that puts food on the table for many Louisiana families, thanks to jobs in fishing, tourism, shipping, energy and more.

While there is much to be concerned about along our coast, there is also a significant bright spot: our state's Coastal Master Plan. In the years since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Louisiana adopted a planning process that is second to none. The Coastal Master Plan uses high-end computer models to find the projects across our state that build and maintain the most land, and the projects that provide the greatest reduction in flood risk. They do this in a way that incorporates the things that makes Louisiana's coast so unique and complex – the sinking of our land, floods and droughts of the Mississippi River, the rise in ocean waters that is taking place across our planet, and the relationships of plants, animals, and of course people.

Louisianans take pride in our Coastal Master Plan – as we should. No state in the country has a plan as sophisticated as Louisiana's – not New York, not California, not Virginia. And of the places that do have coastal plans, few places are taking as much action as Louisiana. Our coastal program is so well respected that it allows us to bring in large quantities of funding. We are now efficiently and strategically spending \$1 billion every year to protect and restore of our coast.

We know that there are new suggestions for Louisiana's coastal zone. As scientists, we welcome new ideas and embrace innovation, but our message here is simple.

**We want to see our state's Coastal Master Plan remain the wonder that it is: the most comprehensive coastal plan in the country, guided by the best-available science.**

New ideas should follow Louisiana's gold standard. Using science and engineering, what are the restoration projects that grow and maintain the most coastal lands? What are the protection projects that reduce the flood risk the most? What projects can be implemented at the scale needed? And if there are concerns about adverse impacts, let's use science and engineering to

determine what those impacts are, be transparent about our findings, and make our best effort to reduce them. The Master Plan does all of this, and for these technical reasons, we support it.

We know that our coast is a complex place to work. We know the stakes are high. But we also know that by linking science, planning and engineering, with the strength and know-how of Louisiana's coastal builders, we can make our coast a healthier and safer place. Let's rebuild our coast together.

Signed,

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