

**Re: Draft Phase 2 Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment
#8.1: East Orleans Landbridge Restoration Project and Raccoon Island
Restoration Project (RP/EA #8.1)**

Dear Trustees,

We, the **107** 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 #8.1. We are pleased to see the East Orleans Landbridge recommended to receive \$101.2 million for full implementation, given the ecological importance of the project and the broad public support demonstrated for the project during your drafting and design process. Alternative 4 would create approximately 1,320 acres of marsh habitat and construct approximately 14,867 linear feet of shoreline protection, providing large-scale restoration focused on the most vulnerable areas of the project landscape. This draft plan and environmental assessment represents a major step forward in habitat restoration and coastal protection for communities from 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. This is a critically important area for both ecosystem health and community protection. Large-scale restoration is urgently needed to stabilize this area 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 and enhances 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.

Restoration of the East Orleans Landbridge has garnered support from tens of thousands of people since Hurricane Katrina. Restoration of the East Orleans Landbridge is recommended by the 2012 Army Corps MRGO Ecosystem Feasibility Report and the 2023 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.

As concerned stakeholders, we strongly support this Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #8.1 and would like to see the work move forward with urgency. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Dier
2020 Teacher of the Year

Chad Nolan
ABC Supply Co

Tommy Akin
Akin Promotions

Ama Rogan
A Studio in the Woods

Anthony Williams
A-Team Mortgage Lending Partners

Dr. Donata Henry
Audubon Abita Bird Club

Don Dubuc
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Bill Buckley Outdoor Photography

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Mike McNett
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Worthwhile Social Club

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