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Louisiana Wetlands News

\$1 Billion Proposed for Coastal Wetlands Restoration

JULY 1993

The Coastal Wetlands, Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Interagency Task Force has endorsed a Comprehensive Coastal Restoration Plan calling for Congress to spend more than \$1 billion restoring and protecting Louisiana's coastline over the next 20 years. The Task Force consists of the governor of Louisiana (or his designee), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (lead agency), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Soil Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The plan was mandated by the Breaux-Johnston Bill (which established CWPPRA) and is expected to help restore and protect Louisiana's unique coastal wetland ecosystem, culture and \$100 billion infrastructure.

by using dredge material and sediment trapping techniques. Wetlands suffering from saltwater intrusion will be improved by freshwater introduction projects. Additionally, the plan recommends projects aimed at rebuilding and strengthening barrier islands, shorelines and distributary ridges.

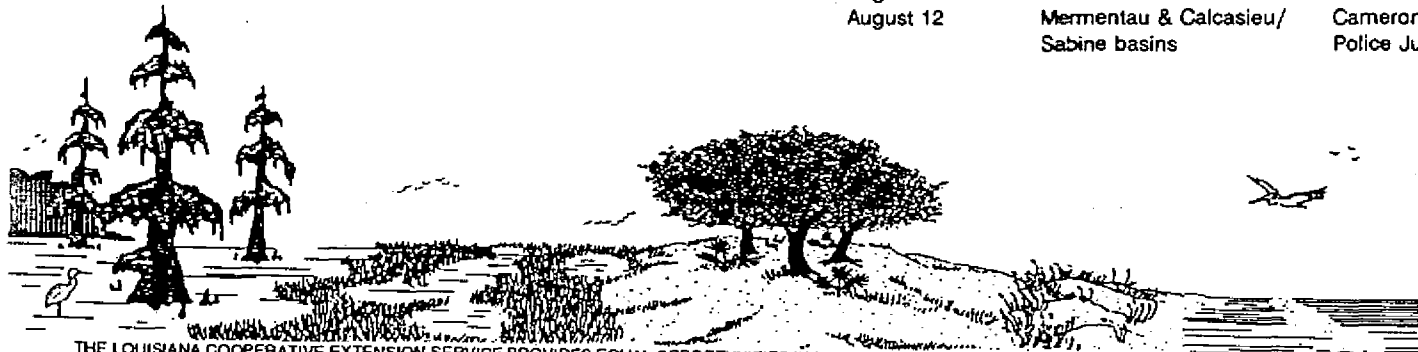
Restoration approaches will vary according to the needs of each coastal region or basin. The plan breaks down wetland restoration recommendations according to the following basins: 1) Breton Sound, 2) Mississippi River Delta, 3) Barataria Basin, 4) Pontchartrain Basin, 5) Terrebonne Basin, 6) Atchafalaya River, 7) Teche/Vermilion basins, 8) Mermentau basin and 9) Calcasieu/Sabine basins.

The Corps will conduct seven meetings at various locations along the coast to receive public comments. The meetings will begin at 7 p.m. on the following dates:

<u>Meeting date</u>	<u>Basin</u>	<u>Meeting location</u>
July 27, 1993	Barataria & Terrebonne basins	Larose, LA
July 28	Breton Sound Miss. River Delta Barataria basins	Belle Chase Auditorium
July 29 August 9	Pontchartrain Basin Terrebonne Basin	N.O. Corps Office Houma Municipal Auditorium
August 10	Atchafalaya River & Teche/Vermilion basins	Morgan City Court Bldg.
August 11	All basins	N.O. Corps Office
August 12	Mermentau & Calcasieu/Sabine basins	Cameron Parish Police Jury

The CWPPRA has been responsible for providing approximately \$30 million annually for the past two years for wetland conservation projects, but, this is not considered enough to do the job. With an annual rate of loss exceeding 25 square miles, much more funding is needed to address coastal wetland loss significantly. The Corps estimates that full implementation of the plan will reduce anticipated wetland losses in Louisiana by nearly 70%.

The plan calls for building new wetlands on a large scale by using sediment resources from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers and, on a small scale,



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Copies of the draft CWPPRA plan can be obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Office in New Orleans. Executive summaries are available from the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service office in your parish.

For more information about the CWPPRA or the public meetings listed above, call your Extension office.

Marsh Maneuvers Senior 4-H Camps

In the month of July, four senior 4-H wetland education camping sessions are being conducted through a joint effort of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES), the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and the LSU Sea Grant Program. These 4-day/3-night educational camps, officially called Marsh Maneuvers, are held in coastal locations adjacent to the wetland resource base so unique to Louisiana. At each camp 16 students from throughout the state participate in various activities aimed at increasing their knowledge of coastal ecology and the values of wetland habitats. Activities include seining, trawl sampling, fish identification, marsh grass planting, water quality monitoring, fishing, crabbing, seafood processing techniques and various field trips.

Additionally, a mock parish policy jury meeting is held at each camp whereby the youth "jurors" decide how to manage a large tract of publicly owned wetlands. Public testimony is taken, and the "jurors" vote on an appropriate wetland management plan. This activity is an extremely valuable public policy educational tool that offers "hands-on" experience in decision making. This summer youth from the following parishes participated: Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, St. John, St. Charles, Tensas, Madison, Grant and Natchitoches.

The LCES is committed to educational activities that ultimately lead to youth leadership development. Through Marsh Maneuvers, Louisiana 4-H'ers learn about our unique coastal resources and future important decision-making challenges. We hope to offer this unique program for at least the next 5 years, with different parishes participating each year. For more information about Marsh Maneuvers, contact the Extension Service office in your parish.

Coastal Zone Act Nonpoint Source Plan for Louisiana

As mentioned in my last newsletter, the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments (CZARA) of 1990 requires that states with federally approved Coastal Zone Management Programs develop a coastal nonpoint control plan specific for each state. CZARA implementation is jointly administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Coastal nonpoint sources that must be addressed in the plan include agriculture, forestry, urban and suburban runoff, construction and development, septic systems, roads and marinas, and hydromodification projects.

To continue receiving federal grant funds under certain NOAA and EPA authorities, states must submit a nonpoint pollution plan to the federal government by July 1995. Management measures outlined in the plan must then be fully implemented by January 1999. In Louisiana, the coastal nonpoint source program will be jointly developed and implemented by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Natural Resources-Coastal Management Division (DNR).

EPA and NOAA will sponsor a regional workshop in early August 1993 in New Orleans to assist state water quality and coastal zone management agencies in the development of a Coastal Nonpoint Source Plan. Additional meetings and workshops will be held at which affected user groups and industries will be allowed to interact with federal and state agencies developing coastal nonpoint source plans in each state. Only state agencies are invited to the August EPA/NOAA workshop in New Orleans.

To keep all interested user groups informed, state agencies in Louisiana will sponsor a meeting on Thursday, September 2 to evaluate the developments associated with the New Orleans workshop and review the CZARA development process. The meeting will be held in Nelson Memorial at LSU at 10 a.m. The Department of Natural Resources has agreed to invite EPA and NOAA to this meeting to give presentations and receive comments from interested industry representatives in Louisiana. Industry representatives interested in CZARA developments should try to attend.

Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineator Certification Program

The Corps of Engineers (COE) has recently announced the availability of training materials developed in conjunction with the Wetland Delineator Certification Program (WDCP). The WDCP is being developed in accordance with the Water Resources Development Act of 1990. Section 307 of this Act authorizes the Secretary of the Army to establish a program to train and certify individuals as wetland delineators, and to carry out WDCP demonstration projects in various districts of the COE. WDCP demonstration projects are conducted in Washington, Maryland and Florida. Nationwide implementation of the final WDCP is anticipated to begin in March 1994, at which time the demonstration projects will end. The COE intends to issue a proposed rule on the WDCP before nationwide implementation.

Training materials packages have been developed for those interested in obtaining WDCP certification or individuals interested in providing WDCP training. COE certification of wetland delineators indicates that an individual has successfully demonstrated the capability to perform wetland delineations consistent with the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual. Although certification does not guarantee that future delineations submitted to the COE by certified delineators will be approved, delineations performed by certified delineators will take less time for Corps verification. The COE districts will exercise final decision-making authority regarding acceptance of wetland delineations performed by certified delineators.

Training in using the 1987 Manual will be a prerequisite for all WDCP applicants once the nationwide program begins in 1994. The prerequisite training, as well as the requirement that all training be conducted with a certified delineator present, is waived during the demonstration phase of the WDCP. Provisional certification can be obtained if individuals demonstrate that they meet the minimum standards during the demonstration phase of the program.

To meet the prerequisite for training required when the program expands nationwide, individuals may prepare during the demonstration program by meeting one of these requirements:

1. acquisition of a provisional certification from Baltimore, Seattle or Jacksonville districts; or
2. Obtaining training in the 1987 Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual based on the COE training materials listed above. Certification of successful completion of WDCP training will be issued by the training source and required by the COE.

If you feel that you have had appropriate training, you may want to take advantage of the waiver during the demonstration program and successfully complete WDCP provisional certification. Once the WDCP is implemented nationwide in 1994, no exceptions to the training prerequisites will be accepted.

To receive a copy of the draft training materials or to be placed on the list of individuals interested in receiving WDCP training, contact the Wetlands Research and Technology Center of the COE Waterways Experiment Station, 3939 Halls Ferry Road, Vicksburg, MS 39180-6199, telephone (601) 634-4217 or telefax (601) 634-3664.

For more information, contact Karen Kochenbach, Office of the Chief of Engineers, ATTN: CECW-OR, 20 Massachusetts Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20314-1000, telephone, (202) 272-0199.

Administration Seeks More Funding for Wetlands Reserve Program

The President's 1994 budget proposal contains spending elements that call for the enrollment of 450,000 acres in the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) at an estimated cost of \$370 million. This comes after farmers expressed tremendous interest in the WRP in FY 1992 when 9 states participated in a pilot program that enabled 50,000 acres to be enrolled nationwide. Louisiana farmers alone offered almost 120,000 acres that year; however, only about 14,000 acres were accepted because of the limited funding available for the pilot program (\$42 million nationwide). In FY 1993 no WRP funding was provided by Congress, but if the President is successful in obtaining the funding outlined above in the 1994 budget, participation in the program is expected to increase drastically.

When prior converted cropland is enrolled in the WRP, landowners sell permanent easements to the

government at what is basically fair market value. Landowners then agree to take the land out of agricultural production and restore the wetland hydrology and vegetation to a condition as close to the original habitat as possible. Wetland restoration costs are cost-shared by the government on a 75% government, 25% landowner ratio. Maintenance of the restoration area, however, is the physical and financial responsibility of the landowner. The landowner maintains title of the land and can continue to hunt and fish on the property and control access. The government must be provided a right-of-way to allow for inspection of restoration practices and assure program compliance.

For more information about the WRP, contact the parish Extension Service office.

EPA Expects to Ban Lead Fishing Weights

The Environmental Protection Agency is now taking steps to ban lead fishing weights in the United States. EPA will propose a rule in January to ban the manufacturing and sale of at least some lead sinkers considered a danger to swans, loons, cranes and other waterfowl. EPA has made a preliminary determination that lead weights are hazardous to waterfowl; however, the rule may exempt some sinkers considered too large to be swallowed by affected birds. EPA is considering the above ruling in light of several studies that have shown that waterfowl died of lead poisoning after swallowing lead weights.

I will keep you informed on developments regarding this issue.

Zebra Mussel Update

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is monitoring the movement of the zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) in the Mississippi River system. Previously I reported that this exotic mussel was sighted along the Mississippi in northeast Louisiana. In January 1993, adult zebra mussels were found at the Sidney A. Murray, Jr., Hydroelectric Station at the Old River Complex on the Mississippi River between Natchez and Baton Rouge, indicating continued movement southward. Discharges from the Old River structure are believed in all probability to have introduced the mussel into the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway. The FWS has recently confirmed this possibility, reporting that zebra

mussels have been collected at the Berwick-Bayou Vista water plant in St. Mary Parish.

Dr. Greg Lutz, aquaculture specialist with the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, believes that if zebra mussels become established in the Atchafalaya River channel in substantial numbers, they may potentially interact with native aquatic species in several ways: 1) as a food source, 2) as a competitor for planktonic food items and 3) as an exterior biofouler of invertebrates, particularly crawfish (possibly attaching to the outer shells of crawfish).

At this time, Dr. Lutz does not believe there is adequate data to clearly determine whether the latter two concerns will have considerable, minimal or negligible impacts on native species within the Basin. The establishment of small zebra mussel colonies may lead to expanded colonies which will compete with or displace organisms formerly occupying the habitat in question. With so much uncertainty, monitoring of zebra mussel movements and impacts must continue in Louisiana. Future reports will be continued in this newsletter as more information becomes available.

Lake Pontchartrain Basin Comprehensive Management Plan Update

The draft Lake Pontchartrain Basin Comprehensive Management Plan has been released for public review. A summary of the plan titled, "Report to the People of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin," is available free from the Lake Pontchartrain Foundation office, Lakeway 1, Suite 779, P.O. Box 6965, Metairie, Louisiana 70009-6965, phone (504) 836-7283.

The four primary goals of the plan include:

1. Improving the Basin's water quality through a comprehensive program of point and nonpoint pollutant source reduction that targets urban stormwater runoff, sewage, industrial pollution, agricultural runoff and saltwater intrusion;
2. protecting and restoring land-based and aquatic essential habitats;
3. educating the public on a broad array of issues involving pollution in the Basin in order to encourage active public/private participation in

the cleanup and to deter further environmental degradation; and

4. developing an organizational structure for the Basin-wide cleanup effort which will promote coordination among public and private entities whose actions affect the use, restoration and/or preservation of the Basin.

For more information about the Comprehensive Management Plan, contact the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation at the address above.

Louisiana Boaters' and Fishermen's Pledge Program

The Louisiana Boaters' and Fishermen's Pledge Program is a campaign to encourage commercial and recreational waterway users to bring trash and debris back home or to the dock for proper disposal. Participants sign a pledge form and voluntarily agree to properly dispose of the debris generated as a result of outings on the many waterbodies located throughout Louisiana. This program is supported by numerous conservation organizations and many local, state and federal agencies. It is coordinated by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Solid Waste Division-Litter Reduction Unit.

Those signing the pledge will receive a certificate suitable for framing, a ruler decal that can be placed on an ice chest for measuring fish on the water, a boaters' pledge boat decal and a free subscription to the "Louisiana Outbacker" newsletter aimed at reinforcing commitment for clean recreational areas and waterways.

The Boaters'/Fishermen's Pledge Program is part of the Gulf of Mexico Program, but in Louisiana the program has been promoted and implemented statewide. Anyone interested in participating can contact a parish Extension Service office.

Louisiana's Litter Law - Act 362

In 1992, the Louisiana Legislature passed a new litter law through Act 362. Through this act, penalties for littering include the following provisions:

- Upon first conviction, offenders will be fined not less than fifty dollars (\$50) nor more than two hundred dollars (\$200).

- Upon second conviction, offenders will be fined not less than three hundred dollars (\$300) nor more than one thousand two hundred dollars (\$1,200) or sentenced to serve eight hours of community service in a work detail as approved by the court, and have his motor vehicle driver's license suspended for sixty days.
- Upon third conviction, offenders will be fined not less than five hundred dollars (\$500) nor more than three thousand dollars (\$3,000), have his motor vehicle driver's license suspended for one year, be imprisoned for not more than six months, or sentenced to serve twenty-four hours of community service in a work detail as approved by the court, or all or any combination of the aforementioned penalties.

For more information about Louisiana litter laws, contact your parish Extension Service office.

Wild Louisiana Stamp Program Initiated in Louisiana

Beginning July 1, 1993, Act 193 of the 1992 Legislative Session became effective. This act initiated the Wild Louisiana Stamp Program which will require all persons between the ages of 15 and 60 years of age possess a valid Wild Louisiana Stamp, or a valid Louisiana hunting or fishing license, when visiting Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) administered property. The Wild Louisiana Stamp will be \$5.50, the same price as the basic fishing license, and will be sold at LDWF district offices, sheriffs' offices, sporting goods stores and everywhere other LDWF sporting licenses are sold.

In the past most traditional government game and fish management programs were funded by hunters and fishermen through license sales and excise taxes on outdoor recreation equipment. In the past 10 years, however, state game and fish agencies have redefined their goals to include the needs of nonconsumptive wildlife users who do not necessarily hunt or fish. To accommodate the needs of this group of resource users, the LDWF has implemented this new funding source, allowing nonconsumptive naturalists to make a financial contribution comparable to traditional sportsmen.

The art for the stamp will be selected from artists 18 years of age and older and native to or domiciled in Louisiana. The LDWF will be paid a 15% royalty by the artist on the sale of posters produced from the stamp image. In 1993 the first wild stamp will feature the black bear.

1993 Alligator Harvest Season

The Louisiana wild alligator harvest season has been set for September 11 through October 10, 1993. The later dates were recommended by LDWF biologists based on late alligator egg-laying activities caused by cool weather this past spring.

In 1992, almost 1,700 hunters harvested 24,000 animals valued at \$7 million on approximately 4.5 million acres of alligator habitat. Louisiana continues to support the largest wild harvest of the seven states that now harvest alligators.

Gulf of Mexico Facts

- The Gulf of Mexico produces approximately 40% of the U.S. commercial fish landings.
- The Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery is the most valuable fishery in the U.S.
- The northern Gulf of Mexico provides critical habitat for 75% of the migratory waterfowl in the U.S.
- Wetlands along the Gulf make up about half of the national total.
- Oil and gas production from the Gulf coast region accounts for 90% of the U.S. offshore production.
- Gulf ports handle 45% of the U.S. import-export shipping tonnage.
- Two-thirds of the contiguous U.S. and major areas of Cuba and Mexico drain into the Gulf of Mexico.
- About 33% of the marine recreational fishing activities in the continental U.S. are in the Gulf of Mexico.

Source: Gulf of Mexico Program

Facts About Used Oil

- Used oil is the largest single source of water pollution in the nation.
- Crankcase oil drainings account for 40% of all oil pollution in harbors and waterways.
- Oil from a single oil change can contaminate a million gallons of fresh water, a year's supply for 50 people.
- Today, 85 million Americans change their own oil. They account for 50% of all oil changes and 25% of all used oil (364 million gallons).
- The same amount of lubricating oil is acquired from refining 42 gallons of crude oil as is acquired from recycling one gallon of used oil.
- Recycling used oil could save 1.3 million barrels of oil a day.
Source: "Gulfwatch," March-April 1993.

Louisiana Coastal Map #2 Available

The second Louisiana Marine Fishing Map has been recently made available by the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program. This full-color map of the Louisiana coast from Fourchon west to Point au Fer is the second in a series designed to cover the entire Louisiana coastline and provide regional information for recreational fishermen. Map #1 highlighted the Louisiana coast around Venice and extending west to Fourchon.

These two-sided maps provide information on the locations of oil and gas platforms and artificial reefs, fish identification guides, angling tips and boating safety rules. Additionally, fishing marinas and boat launches are illustrated.

In addition to the two maps now available, four additional maps are planned to provide a set of six maps which will span the entire Louisiana coast. This map series is produced under a joint program with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service.

Both full-color, 25" by 35" maps are available for \$11, plus \$3 for handling by writing the Rigs to Rigs Maps, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000 or calling (504) 765-2387. Maps may also be purchased at the LDWF library in Baton Rouge.

New Publications Available

- Invasion of the Zebra Mussels - An LSU Sea Grant factsheet describing the movement of the zebra mussel in the U.S. and the implications of its expansion.
- Wetland Functions and Values in Louisiana - A color illustrated publication jointly sponsored by the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service and the LSU Sea Grant Program describing the many functions and values of our wetlands.
- Private Lands Technical Assistance Handbook - Louisiana - A joint publication of the LSU Agricultural Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service summarizing technical and financial assistance programs available to private landowners interested in implementing wetland conservation and restoration practices on their land.

To obtain a free copy of any of the above publications, contact your parish Extension Service office or call my office in Baton Rouge.

If you have any questions, or if you want additional wetland or coastal resource related information, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Paul Coreil, Area Agent
(Wetland and Coastal Resources)

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, H. Rouse Caffey,
Chancellor
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Bruce Flint, Vice
Chancellor and Director
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opportunities in programs and employment.

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