

Louisiana Wetland News

Spring 2001

LSU AgCenter Hosts Louisiana Water Summit

More than 300 people met in Baton Rouge on Feb. 12-13 for the first ever Louisiana Water Summit, hosted by the LSU AgCenter. The meeting focused on sharing ideas about how to save existing water supplies, and it saw the state's top official and others say such issues must be addressed.

Gov. Mike Foster told those present "the time has come" to address the water problems the state is experiencing. "The thing that comes to mind is this is a subject we should've started addressing earlier," Foster said. "Now that we are looking at it, we want to be sure we create policies based on science and not politics."

LSU AgCenter Chancellor Bill Richardson agreed, saying he expects such issues to become even larger parts of the research and educational programs of the AgCenter. "Our ultimate goal is to do what is best for the entire state," Richardson said. "We fully expect water to be one of the issues that gets a lot of attention during the next legislative session. We need to come up with policies that everyone will benefit from."

The summit coincided with the completion of a preliminary report produced by a special Water Policy Advisory Task Force convened by Governor Foster last Fall to advise him on key issues to be considered in development of comprehensive water policy legislation. The task force was charged with developing a framework for statewide policy and identifying economic issues of planning and management pertinent to the use of both groundwater and surface water.

Among the task force's short-term, preliminary recommendations include the registration all water wells, the permitting for future wells, and a clarification of the status of groundwater.

Furthermore, the Task Force recommends that policy development include formal and informal input from the general public as well as representatives of current and potential users of Louisiana's water resources.

As major water users, agricultural interests will be heavily engaged as a comprehensive water policy is developed. In conjunction with these stakeholders, the AgCenter is addressing specific issues related to use hierarchies, transition periods, property rights, and increased support for research, education, and outreach on conservation practices in agriculture, industry, and municipal consumption.

The LSU AgCenter has developed a comprehensive website containing abstracts and presentations from the Louisiana Water Summit as well as press releases and newly proposed water policy legislation. The site is available at: <http://www.agctr.lsu.edu/lawater/>



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Wildlife Cost-Share Opportunity for Landowners

On January 4, 2001 the Secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture made \$20 million available for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) nationwide. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers WHIP. It is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and/or improve wildlife habitat primarily on private lands. It provides both technical assistance and cost-share payments (up to 75%) to help establish or improve wildlife habitat.

Unlike the other conservation programs administered by the NRCS, WHIP practices can be eligible on many lands, not just those lands that have been impacted by agriculture and forestry activities. It is *not* a food plot program; rather, the program is generally geared towards implementation of habitat management techniques that provide more long-term impacts.

Plans which involve management or restoration of upland habitat such as longleaf pine reforestation and riparian habitat establishment, receive priority in the Louisiana WHIP plan, but wetland projects also receive funding. Some practices which are available for cost-sharing include: hardwood tree planting, longleaf pine planting, native grass and for establishment, shallow water area development, and plant succession manipulations such as prescribed burning for certain pine forests and marshes.

About \$650,000 has been obligated to Louisiana citizens for payment of management practices under WHIP on some 12,500 acres since 1998 with the number of upland acres and wetland acres affected about the same. This year Louisiana's financial assistance allocation is \$375,000. These funds must be obligated into agreements with participants by September 2001 or this money will be no longer available to benefit Louisiana wildlife habitat. However, interested parties should not wait until the last minute.

Plans are ranked 2 times each year with monies allocated after each ranking and the planning process may take at least 2 weeks. To be eligible for the 1st ranking period, applications should be submitted prior to May 1st. To find out more about WHIP, visit your local USDA-NRCS office. They are listed in the phone book under United States Government, Agriculture Department of – Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Source: Mike Olinde, LDWF



Wetlands Workshop at St. Bernard

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana will host a one-day wetlands workshop at St. Bernard, Saturday, May 12, 2001. This day-long workshop, open to all interested adults, will show first hand how river water enhances and restores marshes. Highlights will include a field trip to the Caernarvon freshwater diversion project, a tour of a local oyster processing plant, and a visit to see revived cypress forests.

Participants will visit the Caernarvon freshwater diversion at the Mississippi River levee and travel two hours by boat to "Big Mar" and surrounding marshes – areas that receive fresh water and nutrients when Caernarvon is running. They will go to research stations and learn how plant growth, water quality and fisheries are monitored. From small boats participants will see first hand how wetlands provide storm protection for St. Bernard and the metro area as they look past wetlands toward the New Orleans skyline. They will observe how cypress tree growth is enhanced with the use of pumped-in storm water at Violet. Participants also will visit the century-old fishing village of Yscloskey, tour a local oyster processing plant and observe the workings of this historic industry. The workshop will be based at the Islenos Center and Museum, which tells the story of how Canary Island descendants and other local residents make their living fishing, hunting and trapping.



The Islenos Center and Museum will be the headquarters for a 1-day wetlands workshop to be sponsored by the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana on May 12, 2001. A photo from the museum depicts a St. Bernard trapper, circa 1940.

Participants must register. Space is limited, so early registration is recommended. The workshop fee of \$50 includes a two-hour boat tour, land tour, speaker presentations, discussion, coffee, lunch and afternoon refreshments. Field trips depend on weather and boat availability. Substitutions will be made in case of inclement weather. For more information or to register, call the Coalition at 1-888-LA COAST (1-888-522-6278) or visit the Coalition website: www.crcl.org.



New Maps Depict La Wetlands

Two new maps are available which depict valuable information on Louisiana wetlands. The first map has been a common adornment of Louisiana's academic and governmental institutions for over 70 years. Large format wall maps have been a traditional reference source for Louisiana since the 1930's. However, the most recent versions, published in the early 1990's, only included roadway updates.

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) recently updated the "Official Map of Louisiana" using newly available digital cartography and GIS imagery available through the Louisiana Geological Survey National Mapping Division.

The new color map measures approximately 50" tall and 60" wide and features updated information on a variety of sources, including: corporate cities and towns, highways, and state parks and historic sites, to name a few. The most striking difference of these new maps is the updated coastal landscape which is markedly diminished from earlier maps. The Official Map of Louisiana is available for \$15 plus shipping at the: LaDOTD, Room 100, P.O. Box 94245, Baton Rouge, La 70804-9245.

The second map is a newly released full-color map with satellite imagery of the Atchafalaya Basin. This new map is a product of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources' Atchafalaya Basin Program (ABP) and is published by and available through the Louisiana Geological Survey.

The ABP, Louisiana Wildlife Federation, and the Sierra Club paid for the design, printing and folding of the full-color, two-sided map printed on water resistant paper. On one side there is a full color satellite map, suitable for framing. The other side of the map features a road map showing points of interest such as boat landings, levees, and rivers and streams.

The Basin map is available in the usual folded version or rolled in a tube ready for framing. Atchafalaya Basin maps can be purchased from the Louisiana Geological Survey www.lgs.lsu.edu located on the LSU campus. Call 225-578-8590 or write to: Box G, Baton Rouge, LA 70893. The folded map is \$9 and the tube version is \$12. For more information, contact the ABP, Sandra Thompson Decoteau at 225-342-0560.



CARA Update: \$28 Million Available in CIAP Funding

As Congress convened in early October 2000, coastal restoration proponents nationwide were hopeful that the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) would pass the senate. An earlier version of CARA had passed the House by a large majority in May (315 to 103) and was later voted out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and sent to the Senate floor. The legislation called for a nationwide reinvestment of federal monies derived from the extraction of mineral reserves and oil and gas resources. Billions were earmarked under CARA funding for a variety of programs from marine fisheries restoration to rural community development and assistance. However, it was the \$450 million authorized under CARA for the Land and Water Conservation Fund that had many western senators concerned over the bill's potential to expand the federal acquisition of private lands.

Though CARA never reached a senate floor vote in 2000, it is expected to be re-introduced this year, and the Louisiana congressional delegation will continue to work to bring Louisiana and other states a fair share of federal offshore oil and gas revenues. Meanwhile, a funding allocation has been made under the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP). Congress authorized the CIAP under Commerce, State, Justice FY2001 Appropriations Act to assist states in mitigating the impacts of outer continental shelf production of oil and gas. The one-year allocation to Louisiana is expected to be about \$28 million. The funds will be distributed by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LaDNR) through a CIAP plan currently under development. At the State Wetlands Authority meeting on March 15th, it was reported that the allocation would be approximately \$9.8 million directly to 19 coastal parishes and \$18 million for state agency expenditures to parishes. The deadline for proposals from state agencies and coastal parishes is April 16, 2001. A full version of the CIAP guidelines and application for funds is available at the LDNR website: <http://www.savelawetlands.org/site/CIAPApp.pdf>



Community-Based Restoration Funds Available

The NOAA Restoration Center recently announced the availability of 2001 funding for projects under the Community-Based Restoration Program (CRP). The CRP began in 1996 to inspire local efforts to conduct meaningful, on-the-ground restoration of marine, estuarine and riparian habitat. The Program is a systematic effort to catalyze partnerships at the national and local level to contribute funding, technical assistance, land, volunteer support or other in-kind services to help citizens carry out sound restoration projects that promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for living marine resources.

The program links money and expertise to citizen-driven projects, and emphasizes collaborative strategies built around improving NOAA trust resources and the quality of the communities they sustain. Community-based habitat restoration helps repair habitats required by marine and anadromous fish, endangered species and marine mammals. CRP funded projects in Louisiana include marsh restoration in Jefferson Parish and reef restoration in Lake Ponchartrain.

A copy of the Notice and all the necessary standard NOAA grant application forms are available on the NOAA Restoration Center web page at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>. Applications must be postmarked by May 1, 2001. Additional information can be obtained by contacting Robin Bruckner, Chris Doley, or Alison Ward a call at (301) 713-0174.



USGS 2001 Training Workshop Schedule

The U.S. Geological Survey of the Department of the Interior is presenting a series of topical workshops through the National Wetland Research Center. The classes pertain to mapping, vegetation, photo-interpretation, remote sensing and Geographical Information Systems. The workshops are part of an effort to exchange information and provide access to spatial technologies developed at the center for natural resource survey. The workshops are available to the general public, educators, and state and federal agencies. Participation by the international community is also greatly encouraged. Most of the workshops are 3 days long, creating compact presentation of materials. No previous experience in any of the topical workshop is assumed, except for advanced workshops. Appropriate handouts, photos, maps, and other forms of distributed materials are provided to the workshop participants.

Some workshops will have scheduled field exercises. Hands-on exercises are utilized to involve workshop participation. Specialized workshop topics and transient workshops can be arranged based upon consultation and number of workshop participants. Scheduled workshops are subject to change. For more information please call Pat O'Neil (pat_o'neil@usgs.gov) or Holly Nelson (holly_nelson@usgs.gov).

April 24-26	Hydric Soils for Wetland Delineation
May 12	Wetland Education Through Maps and Aerial Photography
May 15-16	Introduction to the Identification of Wetland Forest Trees
June 13	Introduction to Geospatial Control Information for Natural Resources
June 19-20	Introduction to Desktop GIS (ArcView) for Natural Resources
July 17-18	Metadata for Geospatial Data
Aug 14-16	Introduction to Desktop GIS (ArcView) for Natural Resources
Sept 18-20	Introduction to GPS for Natural Resources
Oct 24-26	Introduction to Wetland Remote Sensing and Mapping
Oct 29-31	Advanced Wetland Photo-Interpretation
Dec 4-6	Introduction to Desktop GIS (ArcView) for Natural Resources



Hydric soil characterization is one of the more challenging aspects of wetland delineation. Special training on this topic is available as one of several workshops offered in 2001 by the USGS National Wetland Research Center in Lafayette.



WRP Approaches Acreage Cap

Over the past 10 years, the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) has become one of the most successful voluntary incentive-based wetlands restoration programs in U.S. history. Louisiana currently leads the nation with over 130,000 acres in WRP enrollment. Nationally, the WRP has a program acreage cap of 1,075,000 acres, and is scheduled to expire in 2001 as total program acreage will be fully met this fiscal year. Unless the acreage cap is raised in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 appropriations process, this program will no longer be available to landowners. Efforts are currently underway at the national level to extend the program cap for more effective nationwide delivery. Presently there are more than 500,000 acres of un-funded applications from approximately 2,700 private landowners. To find out more about the status of the WRP program, contact your local NRCS office or go to: <http://wl.fb-net.org/progstat.htm>



Enrolling marginal acres in the Wetland Reserve Program has provided a safety net for some farmers over the past decade by allowing them to retain their land while restoring vital wetland habitat. However, the future of the WRP is in jeopardy, as the total program acreage cap will be met in 2001.



Floodplain Easements Now Available

Effective immediately, landowners that own flood prone areas of Louisiana are eligible to apply to sell floodplain easements to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS will purchase easements under the Emergency Watershed Protection program as funding is made available. If a landowner qualifies for the program, the easement purchase price will be based on the appraised

value of the land. The landowner retains the title to the land, quiet enjoyment of the area, control of access, recreational usage, and subsurface resource, or mineral rights. The landowner must waive the right to future flood disaster assistance applicable to the easement area, and the landowner must agree to waive the right to build or maintain buildings and structures within the easement. Floodplain easements are permanent easements.

Potentially eligible lands include croplands, pasturelands, and hay lands subject to repeated flood damage. Agricultural lands that will be purchased are lands that are, or will in the future, be considered as high risk because they are subject to repeated flooding or lands that are of importance to fish and wildlife.

For more information about floodplain easements in Louisiana, contact Mr. Edmund J. Giering, NRCS State Engineer, 3737 Government Street, Alexandria, La 71302, (318) 473-7795.



Dear Louisiana Wetland News Subscriber,

The LSU AgCenter periodically conducts assessments of its various extension programs in order to enhance its overall outreach efforts. We are soliciting your cooperation in a brief, 6-question survey to help us to provide more in-depth and responsive educational materials and programs in the area of wetlands and coastal resources.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey attached to this newsletter and return your responses to us via mail or fax. For added convenience we have also provided an **on-line** version of this questionnaire at:

<http://www.agecon-extension.lsu.edu/CaffeyWeb/Program%20Assessment.htm>

We appreciate your assistance and look forward to hearing from you. Thanks again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rex Caffey".

Rex H. Caffey
Room 179, Agriculture Administration Building
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-5604
(225) 578-2266 (phone)
(225) 578-2716 (fax)

READER SURVEY

Your cooperation in this brief survey is needed to help us to provide more in-depth and responsive educational materials and programs. An **on-line** version of this questionnaire is available at:

<http://www.agecon-extension.lsu.edu/CaffeyWeb/Program%20Assessment.htm>

If you wish to mail this survey, a return address has been provided on back, or you can fax your responses to:

Louisiana Wetland News, c/o Rex H. Caffey
Fax: (225) 578-2716

Respondent identity is confidential. Thank you in advance for helping us to improve this program.

1) In what parish of Louisiana do you reside? _____

2) How do you classify yourself (choose the 1 answer that best describes you)

_____ Private citizen _____ Scientist/Researcher _____ Resource manager/Government employee

_____ Business Owner/Employee (if business, what type of business? _____)

_____ Other (please describe _____)

3) During the past year or so, to what extent would you say you have utilized extension education programs or products pertaining to wetlands and Coastal Resources? (meetings, publications, newsletters, etc.)

___ a great deal ___ pretty much ___ somewhat ___ not much.

4) In your opinion, the amount of time and effort the Cooperative Extension Service spends on wetlands and coastal resources is: ___ not enough ___ about right ___ too much.

5) In your opinion, what does the Extension service need to do to improve it's educational program in wetlands and coastal resources?

6) Please list any other specific comments regarding the Extension Service and its wetlands & coastal resources educational program:



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Please fold and staple

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