



State of Louisiana
Coastal Protection and Restoration
Authority

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**RESTORATION LEADERS, EXPERTS CONVENE ON
2017 LOUISIANA COASTAL MASTER PLAN
*Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority & America's WETLAND Foundation
Announces Focus on Wetland Solutions***

BATON ROUGE, LA – The Louisiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority (CPRA) and America's WETLAND Foundation (AWF) today announced they will host two leadership roundtables this fall and a culminating coastal summit in December to discuss the state's 2017 Coastal Master Plan, bringing together diverse coastal interests to address challenges to and opportunities for moving restoration forward through the plan.

On the table for discussion at the meetings are issues that address how the plan will effect commercial, community and cultural interests, the move toward altering an engineered levee system to allow greater sediment delivery from the Mississippi River, developing insurance programs for communities threatened with retreat from low lying areas, the science used to prioritize projects in the plan, creative financing for restoration to encourage private sector investment, and innovative approaches to cost and time effective solutions.

"We stand at a critical juncture in our fight to save the coast," King Milling, chair of AWF and the Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Protection, Restoration, and Conservation, said. "Many years of diligent planning through several administrations are now resulting in solutions and immediate action. The 2017 Coastal Master Plan builds on two previous iterations and upon its completion, CPRA is poised to move to larger scale of project implementation."

Results from the two leadership roundtables slated for October 24 and 25 in Baton Rouge will inform the agenda for the December Coastal Solutions Summit, timed to coincide with release of the 2017 Master Plan and its consideration by the legislature in the first quarter of 2017.

Since its inception, the master planning process in Louisiana has focused on comprehensive solutions to restoring the coast. Coastal advocates and experts view the plan as an exemplary model for addressing large-scale restoration.

“We inherited the work of many and now bear the responsibility to act,” CPRA Board chairman, Johnny Bradberry said. “We are staring at the beast of coastal land loss coming ever closer and we are ready to turn planning into projects that can make a difference. These discussions will put some important aspects of the plan on the table and allow a serious vetting of the issues.”

In recent polls released by AWF, 74 percent of Louisiana voters said coastal erosion was the issue of their lifetime, with a majority worried that the state may not have the where-with-all to get the job done. “We are gathering key stakeholders and coastal leaders to consider two pressing issues,” AWF senior advisor, Sidney Coffee, said. “Can we stay the course and move past politics and special interests for the common good and, can we finance the work using creative approaches that draw in the private sector as true restoration partners?”

The master planning process has evolved over time, as has coastal land loss. AWF, through its public outreach, often notes the loss represents the equivalent of a football field of land each hour. Mandated by law, the plan must be revised every five years to adapt to a changing landscape and challenges posed by a rising tide.

“CPRA and the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA) recognize the importance of having frank discussions about the implications of the Master Plan. The plan will impact millions across our state and we have to get it right so it will be operational and well funded. These meetings will help us toward that goal,” Chip Kline, GOCA deputy director, said.

Through the roundtables and summit, AWF will employ similar strategies used in its groundbreaking 2012-13 series of “Blue Ribbon Resilient Communities” forums. In 2013, the Foundation also convened the second World Delta Dialogues in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam as a way to elevate the plight of coastal regions soon to feel the effects of sea level rise and subsiding deltas.

“We have learned that, when bringing the wetlands issue forward to millions, every interest must be at a balanced table as we seek solutions to one of the world’s greatest challenges,” Val Marmillion AWF managing director, said. “Voters recognize by overwhelming majorities that it will take cooperative action on the part of both the public and private sectors to save our coast for future generations. We convene these meetings with the state to span any divides that will hamper Louisiana’s implementation of the 2017 Master Plan.”