



Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Working to establish a safe and sustainable coast that will protect our communities, the nation's critical energy infrastructure and our bountiful natural resources for generations to come

NEWS RELEASE

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CPRA Board updated on POTUS response to Declaration of Coastal Emergency *Report of new invasive species killing off coastal vegetation*

BATON ROUGE, LA. – May 17, 2017 – At its monthly meeting today in Baton Rouge, Deputy Director Chip Kline, Governor's Office for Coastal Activities, provided an update to the CPRA Board on Governor Edwards' Coastal Emergency Declaration, submitted in April to President Trump's administration. Kline reported that the White House received the governor's request and has asked the state to provide specifics on bureaucratic hurdles and obstacles that are delaying progress in restoring and protecting Louisiana's coast, including a listing of what specifically the state would like to see changed at the federal level. Kline said a white paper is already being drafted in response to the White House request, and for presentation to the Trump administration. CPRA Board Chairman Johnny Bradberry was pleased at the response from Washington, saying, "This is a very encouraging sign."

Next on the agenda, Louisiana State University entomologist Rodrigo Diaz, Ph.D. introduced the Board to a new invasive species, stating it was a "real threat to Louisiana's endangered coastal ecosystem, already killing off coastal vegetation", and suggesting potential further, widespread impacts to the coast and possibly to agricultural crops further inland.

An invasive species of sap-sucking insects known as scale or mealy bug is killing vast areas of coastal marsh vegetation primarily in lower Plaquemines Parish. According to the La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Pass a Loutre Wildlife Management area in the bird foot delta of the Mississippi River has approximately 88,000 acres of Roseau Cane that are dead or dying off and turning into open water, as a result of this new invasive species.

Dr. Diaz explained the importance of Roseau Cane as a valuable coastal plant, which contributes to the survival of barrier islands and healthy vegetated marshes. "Roseau cane is a very tolerant plant and very beneficial to our coast", Diaz explained. He further elaborated that the cane is able to withstand certain amounts of salt water, quickly, even in deep water, helps absorb the impact of storm surge, and its root system grabs and holds onto sediment making it more difficult for its base soil to erode away.

One non-native natural enemy of the scale is a tiny wasp that has been found in Louisiana, and studies are being conducted to see if the wasp can serve as a means of combating the scale. LSU is also investigating other solutions, but plans to explore potential outcomes before taking action. At this time, Dr. Diaz suggests that boaters wash off their boat hulls to reduce the likelihood of transporting the invasive species to other areas along the coast.

Other items on today's agenda included:

Status Report on Coastal Bills in the Legislature. Chip Kline, deputy director of the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, reported that the CPRA Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Plan and 2017 Master Plan have been approved by the CPRA Board, April 19, 2017; Senate Transportation committee, April 27, 2017, and the Senate Natural Resources Committee, May 4, 2017. Both plans are awaiting a Senate floor vote, scheduled later this afternoon.

HB 596 by Rep. Walt Leger has been approved in the House and will be heard in Senate Natural Resources. This bill authorizes and creates a framework for CPRA to utilize Outcome-based Performance Contracts for Integrated

Coastal Protection in accordance with La. R.S. 49:214.1, et seq., and subject to CPRA Board approval; establishes competitive selection process for awarding an Outcome-based Performance Contracts; sets forth minimum requirements for Outcome-based Performance Contracts, including maximum contract duration and funding limits; and, authorizes CPRA to promulgate rules, regulations and guidelines as may be necessary.

HB 618 by Rep. Ray Garofalo has been approved by the House and will be heard in Senate Revenue and Fiscal Affairs. This legislation authorizes the Coastal Protection and Restoration Financing Corporation to issue bonds with revenues from the Resources Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities and Revived Economics of the Gulf Coast State Act (RESTORE) and the Deepwater Horizon natural damages (NRDA). Currently, the CPRA financing corp. is authorized to carry out financing, purchasing, owning and managing Offshore Royalty Revenues and Offshore Revenue Assets received under GOMESA. This bill would allow for the same for assets and revenues received under NRDA consent decree and the RESTORE Act.

Other bills successfully working their way through the legislature include HB 144 by Rep. Jerome Zeringue which would allow the state to enter into agreements with private property owners for servitude and easement rights, with fixed terms, for accomplishment of coastal projects. In many instances the Corps of Engineers now requires the state gain full ownership of these properties in perpetuity; and HB 259 and HB 438, both by Rep. Zeringue, to allow new levee districts to have the same taxing authority as existing levee districts, and to permit individual levee districts within the flood protection authorities in the Greater New Orleans area to spend money across jurisdictional boundaries when using millages to manage their shared hurricane protection systems.

Improving U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Permitting and Processes. Col. Michael Clancy, commander of the New Orleans District, reported on the Corps' intentions to issue revised guidance by this October for streamlining the review and decision process for "routine" 408 levee-use permits, but indicated more complex projects such as the CPRA proposed Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and the Bayou Chene Floodgate will require more time for greater scrutiny. The Colonel offered no updated timeline for those permits, but did give a website where people can follow projects which appear on the Federal Permitting Dashboard: <https://www.permits.performance.gov>

2017 Hurricane Season Prediction. With hurricane season beginning on June 1, Mike Koziara with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said early predictors such as the Colorado State University forecast are indicating a slightly-below-average hurricane season. But Koziara warned we must remain prepared and vigilant, saying "It only takes one storm to make a "bad" season", and pointing out that Louisiana was devastated by hurricanes Betsy in 1965 and Andrew in 1992, both considered relatively "inactive" hurricane seasons. NOAA's own prediction is due out later this month. Office hours noted: 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and phone numbers provided: 504/522-7330 ext#4; and 958/649-0429 ext#4.

NRD Banking Program. Attorney Megan Terrell with the Governor's Office reported that progress is being made on finalizing rules for the National Resource Damage Restoration (NRD) Banking Program and the corresponding oil spill compensation schedule. Under the proposed program, private entities could finance and carry out restoration projects that are in the state Coastal Master Plan or are consistent with it. The private entity could then sell restoration credits to potentially responsible parties to mitigate for environmental damages resulting from certain oil spills. The proposed compensation schedule rule was published on April 20. This schedule may be utilized by the State trustees as an additional expedited procedure to assess natural resource injuries associated with certain oil spills in the Louisiana coastal area. Both rules could be ready in approximately 60 days.

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Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is the single state entity with authority to develop, articulate, implement, and enforce a comprehensive coastal restoration and protection *Master Plan* of unified vision to reduce hurricane storm surge flood impact, to restore our bountiful natural resources, to build land to protect our nation's critical energy infrastructure, and to secure Louisiana's coast now and for future generations.