



State of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12/13/2017

Contact: Chuck Perrodin

(o) 225-342-7615

Clarity on GOMESA funding and FY19 Annual Plan presented at CPRA board meeting

BATON ROUGE, LA – Dec. 13, 2017 – The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) Board heard clarification today on the significant reduction in projected revenues from the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA). Originally a maximum of \$176 million was projected for Louisiana if federal Gulf energy revenues met a cap of \$500 million. That would have meant \$140 million for CPRA coastal projects and an additional \$36 million for coastal parishes. The state and coastal parishes have been planning with those amounts in mind.

However, in recent months word was received that the federal cap would not be met, and this year's funding totals for CPRA and the coastal parishes would be less than the maximum.

“We went to Washington and met with officials from the Dept. of the Interior to seek clarification on how these amounts are calculated and to seek projections for future years that are more realistic,” reported Chip Kline, Deputy Director of the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities. “The reduction wasn’t anything intentional or a shift in policy. The prior estimates of \$176 million were always based on the assumption that the maximum revenue sharing cap would be met. During the first year of Phase II revenue sharing, the cap was not met which translates into lower payments for all the Gulf States and their political subdivisions. Reduced production on top of lower oil price results in less money for the state. Therefore our share will be less than the amount we had hoped for.”

Kline did say there is reason to be hopeful for the future. “Department of Interior Secretary

Ryan Zinke is about to do the largest offshore oil and gas lease sale in Interior's history: 77 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico. Zinke was here in Louisiana a couple of weeks ago, and he promised to help us move some of our much-needed coastal projects forward. He gets it.”

Draft Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Plan released

CPRA Executive Director Michael Ellis unveiled the first draft of the annual spending plan the CPRA must submit to the Louisiana Legislature to authorize coastal project spending in Fiscal Year 2019 that runs from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019. The document also projects revenues and spending anticipated in the following two fiscal years as CPRA moves forward in implementing projects and programs legislatively approved in the latest update of Louisiana’s 50-year Coastal Master Plan.

“Based on projections of revenues, the Annual Plan is a request for authorization to spend revenues - if received, in the upcoming fiscal year and two additional fiscal cycles,” Ellis stated. Ellis laid out CPRA’s spending plan which Ellis qualified, “happens if and when revenues are received”. “We have multiple funding streams, many fraught with process that often drives or restricts project implementation.”

Ellis presented a \$562 million spending plan for FY19, and detailed expenditures categorically, with 50% going to project construction:

- **Construction (23 projects):** \$282.0 million (50%)
- **Engineering & Design (34 projects):** \$137.0 million (24%)
- **Operations, Maintenance & Monitoring 136 projects):** \$53.7 million (10%)
- **Ongoing Programs & Initiatives:** \$47.2 million (8%)
- **Operating Costs:** \$32.2 million (6%)
- **Planning (2 projects):** \$10.4 million (2%)

Ellis also revealed the next two fiscal years projected revenues and expenditures, \$876 million in FY20 and \$931 million in FY21, to convey the scope and scale of Louisiana’s coastal program. “Louisiana is embarking on one of the largest ecosystem restorations in the world – People are watching what Louisiana is doing.”

Ellis said the public has the opportunity to read and comment on the draft Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Plan. It can be read online or downloaded at www.coastal.la.gov. Public hearings will be held at the Belle Chasse Auditorium on January 8, at the Houma Terrebonne Civic Center on January 9, and at the Lake Charles Civic Center on January 10. Public comments will be taken through February 12 and can be made online at www.coastal.la.gov, in person at the public hearings, or by mailing or emailing CPRA. Details are available on the website.

Once comments are received, a final version will be presented to the CPRA board at the February 21 meeting, and pending final approval, CPRA will submit the Annual Plan 2019 to the legislature in March.

RESTORE Act Parish Matching Program

Ellis also announced the projects selected to receive the first round of matching funds for six coastal parish projects through the new CPRA RESTORE Act Parish Matching Program. This program is designed to help parishes leverage project funding to design and/or construct projects that might otherwise not be initiated or completed and to accelerate the timeline on projects that might otherwise have to wait to be fully funded out of a parish's RESTORE Act funds. Many parishes are delaying projects because their RESTORE dollars are received piecemeal over an extended time period. CPRA is seeking to accelerate their timeline by providing state RESTORE funds as they become available to the state. Over the next 15 years CPRA is expecting to receive—and share with the parishes on a matching basis--\$100 million through the state's RESTORE Act Spill Impact Component fund. \$20 million of RESTORE parish matching funds from CPRA, and \$6.1 million in parish funding will translate into \$26.1 million in parish projects.

“This list is consistent with the Coastal Master Plan and parish priorities,” said Ellis. “We are excited to get these important projects moving forward. This has the ability to nearly double the amount of funds the parishes will receive over the 15-year period in which RESTORE Act Spill Impact funds are distributed.”

The selections are:

- Cameron Parish: Construction of the Rockefeller Shoreline Stabilization Project

- Lafourche Parish: Engineering and design of the Grand Bayou Freshwater Reintroduction Project
- St. Bernard Parish: Construction of the Lake Lery Marsh Creation Project
- Tangipahoa Parish: Construction of the Paradis Canal Gate
- Tangipahoa Parish: Engineering and design of the Manchac Landbridge Shoreline Protection Project
- Vermilion Parish: Engineering, design and construction of the Freshwater Bayou Canal Shoreline Protection Project.

Johnny Bradberry, CPRA Board Chairman, said, “We are always looking for ways to make state and parish funds go farther and this program serves as an excellent model for how to partner at the state and local level to maximize project outcomes.”

In order to meet the Federal requirements for this funding, CPRA will work with the parishes to incorporate these projects into an amendment to the State’s RESTORE Plan, which will be published for public comment early next year. Additional rounds of funding will be announced in the future.

Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill NRDA Update

The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group has released two draft plans to address recreational use loss and ecosystem injuries in Louisiana caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

“Both of these draft plans are consistent with the Trustees’ Programmatic Restoration Plan,” CPRA attorney Alyson Graugnard told the Board. “These drafts are now available on our web site (<http://la-dwh.com>) and we are requesting public comment for each starting on December 20.”

The first of the two draft plans now online is the “Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #2: Provide and Enhance Recreational Opportunities.” This presents the Louisiana TIG’s initial plan to compensate for recreational use services lost as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This draft plan proposes four restoration projects:

- **Elmer’s Island Access** - \$6 million

- **Statewide Artificial Reefs** - \$6 million
- **Lake Charles Science Center and Educational Complex** - \$7 million
- **Pointe aux Chenes Island Road Fishing Piers** - \$3 million

The public comment period for this draft plan will open on December 20, 2017, and end on January 19, 2018.

The second draft restoration plan is the “Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group Draft Strategic Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #3: Restoration of Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats in the Barataria Basin, Louisiana.”

“This draft plan identifies a restoration strategy that will help prioritize future decisions regarding project selection and funding,” Executive Director Ellis said. “Rather than selecting specific projects for construction, the Trustees evaluate a suite of restoration techniques and approaches to determine how to best support restoring ecosystem-level injuries in the Gulf of Mexico through restoration in Barataria Basin.” Ellis said examples include marsh creation and large-scale sediment diversions.

Board Chairman Johnny Bradberry added, “The Trustees are quite clear on this. They think building a sediment diversion into the Barataria Basin is a mandatory component of restoring injuries from the oil spill.”

The Louisiana TIG is proposing two decisions in this draft plan:

1. A preferred alternative that relies on a suite of restoration techniques, including large-scale sediment diversions, marsh creation, and ridge restoration.
2. Advancing specific projects forward for further evaluation and planning. These include the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, and two increments of marsh creation within “Large Scale Marsh Creation: Component E in the northern Barataria Basin.

The Louisiana TIG also confirmed its 2017 decision to move the Spanish Pass Increment of the Barataria Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation project forward for further evaluation and planning. These selected projects will be considered in future Phase II restoration plans.

The public comment period for the Draft SRP/EA will open on Dec. 20, 2017, and end on Feb. 5, 2018.

Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan Projects

Five priority projects included in the Atchafalaya Basin Program's Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Plan were presented to the CPRA Board by April Newman with the Louisiana Dept. of Natural Resources.

"These projects were chosen because of their potential to improve water quality and water management in the basin," Newman reported. "While a lack of sediment is a problem in most areas of coastal Louisiana, our problem is too much sediment. We want to keep the basin open and flowing without totally silting up."

The highlighted projects are:

- **Grand Lake Depth Restoration** – To repair a breach that allowed the Atchafalaya River to pour large amounts of sediment into Grand Lake, threatening aquatic habitat and turning portions of the lake into sand bars that restricted public access.
- **East Grand Lake Upper Region** – Hydrologic restoration through modification of a network of channelized water inputs to positively affect an estimated 72,143 acres of wetlands.
- **Flat Lake Study** – Sedimentation is causing loss of access and aquatic habitat in Flat Lake, exacerbating drainage issues and stagnation of interior swamp habitat.
- **Murphy Lake Depth Restoration** – Dredging sediment accretion at the entrance to Lake Murphy to improve water flow into the lake. Sedimentation has closed off access during low water conditions, causing water circulation and water quality problems.
- **Buffalo Cove Water Management Project** – To improve water circulation and sediment management in order to enhance fish and wildlife resources.

Roseau Cane issue still a puzzle

Scientists continue to investigate the die-back of Roseau Cane, an important plant in our coastal environment. Early assumptions that an invasive species of scale insect was solely responsible are now in question, though in some locations it plays a major role, especially

in the birdsfoot delta.

“There are other areas, like in the Chenier Plain, where cane is dying, but none of the scale insects have been found,” said CPRA Senior Coastal Resources Scientist James Pahl.

“Conversely, there are many areas where scale is present, but we see little or no Roseau die-back. So plant mortality appears to be a combination of factors.”

Pahl said there is some good news in that the initial fears of a quick, system-wide collapse have not come true, and so far the scale insect has shown little or no appetite for agricultural crops or other marsh plants, though LSU AgCenter investigations continue.

The solutions are as elusive as the causes. Pesticides and natural predators have shown less promise in initial AgCenter testing, though Pahl says it is too early to draw definitive conclusions. Managed burning, outside the birdsfoot delta, where water levels and oil & gas infrastructure limit that approach, is a consideration, as is replanting devastated areas with hardier varieties of Roseau Cane if any can be identified. A European variety thought to be possibly resistant is now showing signs of damage. Another alternative would be to replace cane with other marsh plants such as California bulrush or common cattails. Pahl says Roseau Cane is still the best at holding the marsh together and efforts to save it are still the focus.

“Unfortunately we are entering a dormant season for both the cane and the insects, so answers will be harder to come by until everything reawakens in the spring,” said Pahl. “In the meantime, we are not resting in the search for causes and solutions.”

###

Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is the single state entity with authority to develop, articulate, implement, and enforce a comprehensive coastal Master Plan of unified vision, to reduce tropical 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.