



From the OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 29, 2018

Contact: govpress@la.gov

Gov. Edwards Unveils State-of-the-Art Center for River Studies Dedicated to Coastal Protection & Research

Baton Rouge - Today, Gov. John Bel Edwards joined officials from Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University (LSU), the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF) to unveil the LSU Center for River Studies that will be dedicated to coastal restoration and river management.

“This is a magnificent world-class facility that symbolizes the partnership between the city and state, higher education and philanthropy, science and humanities,” said Gov. Edwards. “We celebrate the ability to answer important questions about the Mississippi River and the restoration tools that will take advantage of its resources.”

The large-scale physical model of the lower Mississippi River is the centerpiece of the facility, which showcases Louisiana’s working delta, coastal program, and research dedicated to coastal restoration and river management.

“The primary focus of the Center is to utilize the Lower Mississippi River Physical Model - one of the largest of its kind in the world - to identify and hone solutions to protect and restore our coast,” said Michael Ellis, CPRA Executive Director.

Additionally, the center will be used for outreach, engagement and advocacy. Its state-of-the-art 10,000 square foot exhibit area offers several distinct themes with illustrations and interactive features to help visualize and communicate the importance of the Mississippi River Delta, the ongoing coastal land-loss crisis, and CPRA’s comprehensive Coastal Master Plan restoration and risk reduction program.

“This Center is an amazing tool to showcase the work we are doing to protect and restore Louisiana’s coast,” said CPRA Chairman Johnny Bradberry. “As people visit here and learn about what the state is doing, and experience it, we hope they will become advocates, sharing what they’ve learned with others,” said Bradberry.

The Lower Mississippi River Physical model is an educational tool like no other in America.

“LSU is among the prestigious 1 percent of universities able to claim the triple-designation of land-, sea-, and space-grant status. This river model fits within our current expertise and elevates our internationally renowned faculty’s already impressive coastal research, allowing more students to train alongside them. LSU remains committed to training future generations of scientists and engineers by giving them access to these world-class resources,” said LSU President F. King Alexander.

“Adding this incredible facility to the growing Water Campus helps solidify Baton Rouge as a hub for innovation and collaboration,” said Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Weston Broome. “It is here in our capital city that we will develop solutions for the challenges facing our state, our nation and the entire world. On river issues, coastal issues, and indeed other water issues, the world will be turning to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and The Water Campus we see developing around us.”

“The LSU Center for River Studies is among the most important pieces of the Water Campus. Researchers will test their ideas here, and the staff of the Center will build support for research: they will tell stories about threatened wetlands, and the science that will let us adapt to shifting coasts in the decades to come,” said BRAF President John Davies.

The operations and maintenance of the model, as well as future visualization work, will be funded through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). “The Mississippi River formed this ecologically diverse coast over tens of thousands of years, but with this model we will be able to turn decades into days,” said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO, NFWF.

The Lower Mississippi River Physical Model will flow water and sediment across the model’s 14,000 square mile section of Southeast Louisiana including Terrebonne, Barataria, Breton Sound, and Pontchartrain Basins, depicted on the map as an area from Donaldsonville to the Gulf of Mexico. Using exact parameters of the river’s physical and dynamic properties, the model will produce a degree of accuracy never before achieved in lower-river physical modeling at this scale. The primary river-model goals are to produce qualitative land building results associated with sediment diversions in the Lower River, and serve as a complementary planning tool to computer models currently utilized. Much of the land loss in coastal Southeast Louisiana is attributed to the marsh habitat being disconnected from the river by levees sealing off the Mississippi in the early 1930s. This new movable bed model is an expanded and improved version of a model used on the LSU campus 2002-2009.

The LSU Center for River Studies is the latest facility to open on the new Water Campus, a 27.6-acre development being funded through a partnership between the State of Louisiana, the City of Baton Rouge and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. The initial phase of development includes the Center for River Studies, the CPRA headquarters building, The Center for Coastal and Deltaic Solutions on the old Baton Rouge Municipal dock that now houses The Water Institute of the Gulf, and a multi-tenant office building currently in construction.

###
