



CPRA May Board Meeting in Review

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA – May 16, 2018 – Yesterday, officials with the LSU AgCenter told the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board that much-needed additional research money is materializing for studying causes and solutions for the large die-off of Roseau Cane, an important marsh plant helping hold together large portions of the state’s fragile coastline.

An invasive scale insect from China was the obvious first suspect when the problem was discovered in September 2016, but LSU’s Dr. Rodrigo Diaz says we can’t jump to conclusions.

“The die-off may be the result of different stressors,” Diaz said. He emphasized that while the recent focus of monitoring and experimentation has been on the Asian scale insect, there could also be roles for plant pathogens, soil chemistry, variations in surface water and soil salinity, and persistent high water conditions over the past few years. Or it could be a combination of those and other factors.

Diaz said more research is need because, “We don’t want to give you the wrong recommendations” on response actions.

CPRA Chairman Johnny Bradberry asked why the data collection and research is taking so long when the situation demands urgent action.

Diaz said it is all about having enough funds, but help is on the way. He listed \$300,000 already appropriated by CPRA, Ag and Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries, and CWPPRA, with the AgCenter already committing an additional \$400,000. In addition Diaz said researchers anticipate another \$1.4 million to \$1.6 million over the next months from federal and local sources, including possible donations from private entities.

In the meantime, a cautious approach must be taken in attacking the problem in the marsh. Wholesale spraying of insecticides could do more harm than good, and managed burns, as are done in China, could be dangerous around the oil and gas

infrastructure that crisscrosses our coast.

Diaz added that other species of marsh plants are being studied to see if they could be a suitable replacement should the current die-off prove irreversible.

Legislative Update

With the current regular session of the Louisiana Legislature winding down, an update on bills affecting CPRA and coastal issues was reported by Chip Kline, Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities.

"The best news is that once again our annual spending plan for coastal projects and programs was adopted unanimously by both houses of the legislature," said Kline.

Other bills working through the legislature include transferring management of the Atchafalaya Basin Program to CPRA, updating the Coastal Master Plan every six years instead of five, adding the state Lieutenant Governor to the CPRA Board, directing CPRA and the Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) to scientifically study an update of the officially-designated coastal zone, and having CPRA and DNR work with local entities on requirements for obtaining Coastal Use Permits, and working with coastal entities and state agencies on issues related to fisheries, mitigation, and performance-based contracts.

"We have also received official word on the shared federal funding we'll be receiving this year through GOMESA, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act," said Kline.

"CPRA will receive \$65.6 million and another \$16.4 million will be shared among coastal parishes." This is the first year Louisiana is receiving substantial GOMESA funds—shared oil and gas revenues from offshore federal leases.

"We're going to travel to Washington, D.C., to further pursue an understanding of the formula used to determine our shared amounts," said Kline, "and to, of course, seek an increase in these and other funds that are vital to our coastal efforts."

Project Implementation Update

CPRA Executive Director Michael Ellis gave an update on the 74 CPRA projects currently active, including 22 projects in construction, 47 in engineering and design, and five in the planning stage.

“Implementation of these projects will benefit almost 131,000 acres of coastal habitat and improve more than 187 miles of levees,” Ellis reported. “Of the 22 projects in construction, 13 are for hurricane protection, five are marsh creation projects, one is another in our series of barrier island/headland restorations, and two others deal with shoreline protection and mitigation for the HSDRRS—the Hurricane Storm Damage Risk Reduction System—on the West Bank of New Orleans.”

Ellis said projects totaling \$29 million are heading to construction, the \$4 million Violet Canal North Levee Alignment and the \$25 million Cole’s Bayou Marsh Restoration, and two more projects are going to bid in the next six months: Northwest Turtle Bay Marsh Creation in Jefferson Parish and South Grand Chenier Marsh Creation in Cameron Parish.

The 47 projects now in engineering and design include 29 for marsh creation, four to restore barrier island/headlands, four hurricane protection projects, three hydrologic restoration projects, three sediment diversions, and other projects for shoreline protection, oyster barrier reefs and a facility to propagate beneficial weevils for control of salvinia, a problem weed in Louisiana waterways.

Ellis also announced that the \$18 million Spanish Pass Ridge and Marsh Restoration project has been completed just north of Venice in Plaquemines Parish. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers beneficially used river sediment to create 78 acres of ridge and marsh. And in Cameron Parish the \$35 million Rockefeller Refuge Gulf Shoreline Stabilization project is now in construction, building a breakwater along the gulf shoreline to limit erosion and benefit 198 acres of marsh.

“We’re also pleased to announce that the state has received an additional \$9.3 million RESTORE Council grant to study the holistic management of the lowermost Mississippi River,” Ellis told the Board. “This will increase our knowledge of the lower Mississippi River and how large-scale Coastal Master Plan projects will affect the ecosystem, navigation and economic activity. It will also advance the science that will bring us closer to a management regime for the lower river that is holistic and considers its many vital functions. Our goal is, of course, to enhance ecosystem sustainability in the Mississippi River Deltaic Plain without negatively impacting navigation and flood risk management on the Mississippi River.”

State of the Coast Conference

More than 800 people from 31 states and from as far away as Canada and Italy have already registered for the biennial three-day State of the Coast Conference in New Orleans May 30 thru July 1 at the Morial Convention Center.

“This is the fifth time for this conference,” said Kimberly Rehyer, Executive Director of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, a partner with CPRA and the Water Institute of the Gulf in hosting the conference. “This is our greatest gathering of everyone who works on protecting and restoring Louisiana’s coast as well as people who are concerned and interested in what’s being done here. The science, research, planning and project implementation being done here can be a great lesson for other areas of the nation and the world that could be facing the problems Louisiana has been addressing.”

Attendees will have access to 192 sessions covering diverse coastal topics ranging from subsidence to hydrology, proposed sediment diversions, adaptive management, barrier island dynamics, and perspectives on floodplain management and coastal resiliency. There will also be an open exhibition area and 111 poster presentations.

Rehyer also provided an overview to Restoration on the Half Shell, an interactive “mini-conference” experience, ideal for anyone looking to enhance their knowledge of our land loss crisis but who doesn’t want the more technical presentations found at the full State of the Coast conference. For \$25, people can attend the 9-12:30 event with breakfast starting at 8:00 a.m. in the conference exhibit hall.

Registration for this event [HERE](#)

For more information visit www.stateofthecoast.org.

Statewide Watershed-Based Floodplain Management Program

Pat Forbes, Executive Director of the La. Office of Community Development (OCD) addressed the need for Louisiana to develop a comprehensive floodplain management program that better and more efficiently serves the state’s varied watersheds.

“Currently, flood activities are overseen by diverse local jurisdictions independent of each other,” said Forbes. “Without mechanisms to consider the effects on other jurisdictions or the watershed as a whole, projects sometimes overlap or conflict within

the same watershed.”

Danica Adams, Watershed Planner for State of Louisiana, Office of Community Development - Disaster Recovery Unit said the state is looking to foster an approach promoting best practices and consistent management of floodplains across the state.

“We’re not going to mandate wholesale changes in existing entities,” said Adams, “but we are hoping to put forward a program that will allow the state and its political subdivisions to coordinate activities on a watershed basis and thus better serve the entirety of the area within each watershed’s boundaries.”

Five state agencies—CPRA, OCD, the Dept. of Transportation and Development, Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, and the Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries—are coordinating input for plan development and leveraging existing programs to support the program.

The working group will continue soliciting stakeholder input and advice for technical advisory groups as the process moves forward.

Oyster Moratorium Lifting Update

Louisiana is still engaged in the process seeking to lift the long-standing moratorium on new oyster leases, Cole Garrett, legislative liaison for The La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries told the CPRA Board. Over the years the moratorium has been eased to allow for certain lease renewals, but when it comes to new leases, the state is working with the industry on the sixth version of language that would allow a total lifting of the ban. Garrett admitted resolving issues of dual-claimed leases bottoms makes a solution especially difficult, but said the state will continue in its efforts to make progress.

LA SAFE Overview/Project Awards

The state Office of Community Development (OCD) reviewed the first project initiatives selected for funding through its LA SAFE program (Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments). The \$40 million program is using grant money from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development to fund 10 projects in six Southeast Louisiana Parishes.

“LA SAFE is designed to help coastal residents and communities prepare for and mitigate future flood risks,” said OCD Executive Director Pat Forbes. “We partnered with the Foundation for Louisiana and spent a year getting input from parish residents and officials, community-based partners, planners and policymakers.”

The input was used to envision future outcomes based on 50-year modeling developed through the state’s Coastal Master Plan and to select relevant projects for implementation that will supplement the Master Plan.

The projects selected are:

- Jefferson Parish (2) – Gretna Resilience District Kickstart and the Louisiana Wetland Education Center
- Lafourche Parish – Emerging industry business incubator and resilient housing prototype
- Plaquemines Parish – Harbor of Refuge and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Assistance
- St. Tammany Parish – Safe Haven Blue-Green Campus and Trails
- St. John the Baptist Parish- Airline and Main Complete Streets
- Terrebonne Parish (2) – Buyouts outside of Morganza-to-the Gulf Levee System and Lake Boudreaux Living Mitigation

More information about these selected projects is available at www.LASAFE.la.gov.

Click [HERE](#) to view PowerPoint presentations from the board meeting.

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Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is the single state entity with authority to develop, articulate, implement, and enforce a comprehensive coastal protection and restoration 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.