



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 7, 2019

Contact: Chuck Perrodin

Public Information Director 1

(o) 225-342-7615

CPRA Awards Construction Contract for Northwest Turtle Bay Marsh Creation Project Extending Barataria Landbridge in Jefferson Parish

BATON ROUGE, La. – The [Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority](#) (CPRA) and its federal partner, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), have awarded the construction contract for the Northwest Turtle Bay Marsh Creation project in Jefferson Parish. This \$12.5 million project will create and nourish 791 acres of marsh in the Barataria Basin and will be built by Coastal Dredging Company, Inc. based out of Hammond, La.

The project lies south of the communities of Lafitte, Barataria, and Jean Lafitte which sit upon the Barataria Bay Waterway. CPRA and USFWS are already exploring opportunities to utilize available funds to increase the amount of marsh to be created or nourished in the project vicinity. Construction is expected to begin in April and is estimated to be completed in summer 2020.

The project is being funded through the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) program, with CPRA putting up 15 percent as its cost share. For decades, the state-federal CWPPRA program has been used to restore vital wetlands of coastal Louisiana. Early in its inception, the CWPPRA program identified the Barataria Landbridge as a critical landform protecting the upper Barataria Basin from saltwater intrusion and tidal forces while providing additional risk-reduction from storm surge to communities such as Lafitte and the West Bank of New Orleans.

The Barataria Basin saw peak land loss in 1985, with rates as high as almost 10 square miles per year. Although land loss rates have dramatically declined over time, the northern edge of Turtle Bay has experienced significant erosion while the interior marsh area continues to degrade due to subsidence, a lack of sediment nourishment, and existing canals. The Northwest Turtle Bay project will create 484 acres of marsh in what is now open water and will nourish an existing 307 acres of degraded marsh.

"Over our 30-year partnership with CWPPRA and Jefferson Parish, we have made tremendous investments in the restoration of this area. Once the project is complete, we will be able to celebrate 3,600 acres of created and restored marsh as well as almost 12 miles of shoreline protection on the west side of the Barataria Bay Waterway," said CPRA Board Chair Chip Kline.

Northwest Turtle Bay Marsh Creation builds on existing and planned CWPPRA projects in the area and supports future Master Plan projects including large-scale marsh creation, sediment diversions, and the Lafitte/Barataria nonstructural project.

"This project is an important part of restoring and fortifying the Barataria Landbridge, which is in danger of converting to open water and exposing the fragile marsh ecosystems south of New Orleans to greater negative influences," said CPRA Executive Director Bren Haase. "We look forward to starting this project soon and restoring this additional layer of protection for the northern Barataria Basin ecosystem and its communities."

"Every acre of marsh restored in the Barataria Landbridge is an investment in the storm surge buffer for the West Closure Complex protecting the West Bank as well as the entire West Bank portion of the Greater New Orleans levee system, said Louisiana State Representative Patrick Connick. "This work is evidence that as a state with our federal partners, we work tirelessly to restore and protect our coast and our communities from storm surge in a manner that ensures projects work together to provide the greatest good for our people."

Jefferson Parish President, Mike Yenni commended CPRA and its federal partner, USFWS, for their commitment to the basin and this project. "Over time and into the future, the Barataria Basin is and will be increasingly starved for the sediment directly necessary for a healthy and resilient marsh," said Yenni. "The Northwest Turtle Bay Marsh Project is an important step toward re-establishing the sustainability of the western side of Mid-Barataria Basin."

"We are excited about the Northwest Turtle Bay project and its benefits for the black rail, the saltmarsh topminnow and a lot of other fish and wildlife in the upper Barataria Bay," said Jeff Weller of the USFWS, the program supervisor for ecological services work in Louisiana. "The coastal wetlands program in Louisiana achieves significant conservation results, and that is only possible because of the partnerships it has built over nearly three decades."

"Given the proximity of this project to Lafitte, we expect to see a reduction in high water events which will work in conjunction with levee work CPRA is also funding in our area," said Lafitte Mayor Tim Kerner. "I also imagine that fishermen will be pleased with the harvest that they will see as the result of increased productivity due to more marsh habitat in the area."

"Coastal restoration and protection has been and will continue to be a top priority in the legislature," said Senate President John A. Alario, Jr., whose district encompasses Turtle Bay. "As our rapidly-eroding coastline continues to pose an existential threat to so many of our communities, it is time to make meaningful strides in coastal restoration and protection. This project is a major step in that direction."

About the [Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act](#) (CWPPRA): Federal legislation enacted in 1990 designed to identify, prepare, and fund construction of coastal wetlands restoration projects. The CWPPRA program is governed by a state-federal Task Force comprised of the State of Louisiana (represented by CPRA) and five federal agencies: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Since its inception, 210 coastal restoration or protection projects have been authorized, benefiting approximately 100,000 acres of coastal wetlands in Louisiana.

###

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.