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CPRA Reports Eleven Projects totaling \$869 Million in 2018

Presents Draft Annual Plan FY20, \$783 Million expenditure projections

BATON ROUGE, La. - [Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority](#) Executive Director Michael Ellison updated the CPRA Board at its January meeting on accomplishments in calendar year 2018, including an additional \$1.4 billion for projects, 22 million cubic yards of sediment dredged to help create 4,753 acres of new coastal wetlands, and 18 miles of levee improvements.

“We completed 11 projects in 2018 that totaled almost \$869 million,” said Ellison. “Historically, our totals since 2007 are up to \$21.4 billion secured for projects in 20 parishes. CPRA has now dredged and pumped 152 million cubic yards of material to benefit 46,058 acres of wetlands and 60 miles of barrier islands and berms, and constructed or improved 315 miles of levees.”

In addition, Ellison outlined 76 projects in progress at year’s end, including 16 in construction, 53 in engineering and design, and seven in planning.

“Implementation of these 76 projects will benefit more than 128,000 acres of coastal habitat—that’s about 200 square miles—and improve more than 190 miles of levees,” said Ellison. “And in the next six months we have almost \$99 million in projects headed to construction or to bid.”

Draft Annual Plan FY 2020 presented to Board

CPRA’s Deputy Executive Director Bren Haase presented the Draft Annual Plan Fiscal Year 2020, a three-year outlook of projected revenues and expenditures, project activity and implementation schedules.

The plan outlines \$783 million in projected expenditures for fiscal year 2020. Eighty-nine percent of that is for project-associated costs with six projects in planning, \$10.8 million, 32 projects in engineering and design, \$141 million, and 38 projects in construction, \$505 million. The plan also includes \$38.5 million for 154 projects in operation, maintenance and monitoring.

“From Cameron Parish to St. Bernard, this plan represents an incredible investment in restoring Louisiana’s unique and cherished coast, our people and our heritage,” stated Haase.

Once constructed, projects in engineering and design will benefit approximately 117,000 acres of marsh and improve more than 18 miles of levee. Projects funded for construction in FY2020 will benefit more than 8,600 acres of marsh and more than 162 miles of levee.

Public comments are being taken on the Draft Annual Plan through March 9. CPRA will also hold three public hearings on Jan. 29 in Lake Charles, Jan. 30 in New Orleans and Jan. 31 in Houma.

CPRA will also present and invite public comment on the Draft Annual Plan for the Atchafalaya Basin Program, hosting one meeting on each side of the basin – in Bayou Sorrel on Feb. 5th and Henderson on Feb. 6th.

Following the public comment period, CPRA will present the FY2020 Plan’s final draft to the Board for consideration on March 20, 2019 and then submit it to the legislature in its next regular session that begins in April 2019.

To view the Draft Annual Plan Fiscal Year 2020, click [here](#).

Mid-Basin Sediment Diversion Program Update

CPRA Mid-Basin Sediment Diversion Program Manager Brad Barth announced that the permit for the Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion will be submitted this week to the La. Dept. of Natural Resources and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for evaluation as part of the standard environmental permitting process required for restoration projects.

“New data show that if we increase capacity of the Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion, we can better take advantage of river dynamics and more efficiently deliver sediment with no substantial impact to cost or timeline,” Barth told the board.

“Analyses of recently collected field data led to the decision to expand the study from 35,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to up to 75,000 cfs in order to optimize sediment capture efficiency and maximize the volume of sediment delivery to the basin,” stated Michael Ellison, CPRA Executive Director.

The decision is the result of engineering analyses and evaluations CPRA requested to ensure the project is designed to maximize its ability to build and sustain land.

Once the permit application is submitted, as part of the federal environmental permitting process, the USACE will conduct an environmental review of all potential impacts that could be realized as a result of the project and its proposed capacity. Significant negative impacts identified during the environmental review and permitting process would be, to the extent practicable, avoided, minimized, or mitigated before a project permit is issued.

As part of the permitting and environmental review process, CPRA has been working closely with parish government officials and other stakeholders to receive input and share key updates.

“It’s critical that our decisions continue to be guided by the best available science as we begin the permitting process for sediment diversions,” said Interim CPRA Chairman Chip Kline. “At the same time, we recognize how important it is for this agency to fully communicate with the public and multiple stakeholder groups across the coast as to why these decisions were made. We have reached out to parish government leaders about these new findings and our updated approach, and we will continue to engage them throughout the permitting process and beyond. Mid-Breton is slated to be one the most impactful coastal restoration projects in Louisiana history, and we aim to also make it one of the most productive for generations to come.”

Update on CPRA Conflict Mitigation Plan for GEC

Governor's Office attorney Megan Terrell reported on steps being taken to avoid any real or perceived conflicts of interest now that former CPRA chairman Johnny Bradberry has been hired by GEC, an engineering consultant firm that has existing contracts with CPRA.

"CPRA and the CPRA Board have required GEC to take steps to ensure that Mr. Bradberry's employment will not create any conflicts and to submit to CPRA a conflict mitigation plan outlining these measures," said Terrell. "GEC's conflict mitigation plan includes employment restrictions that prohibit Mr. Bradberry from performing work for CPRA, providing services to or for CPRA on behalf of GEC, and reviewing any writing or participating in any discussions involving services which GEC is rendering to or for CPRA."

CPRA remains committed to ensuring that its employees and contractors perform their duties with integrity and transparency, and both the Board and the agency will continue to monitor work performed by all of its contractors in order to carry out this responsibility.

Louisiana seeking a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERRS)

CPRA and Louisiana Sea Grant recommended to the Board that Gov. John Bel Edwards be asked to initiate the process of establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Louisiana.

"The process starts with a letter of interest from the governor to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration," Dr. Robert Twilley, Louisiana Sea Grant, said. Identifying a site and the type of facility that would be built or established is all worked out in the application and review process."

Almost every coastal state in America already has such a reserve and its establishment here could generate additional federal funds for the coastal restoration and protection program.

"The Reserve would use mostly federal funds, and could generate extra revenue for coastal restoration research, education and outreach," said Haase.

Louisiana Brown Pelican and Queen Bess Island Restoration

Katie Freer, a project manager at CPRA, and Todd Baker, with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, provided an update on the Queen Bess Island Restoration project, which seeks to restore almost 37 acres of colonial water bird nesting and brood rearing habitat on Queen Bess Island (approximately three miles northeast of Grand Isle). The project's public comment period will end on Jan. 22 and CPRA will request funding in April pending final plan approval. If the project receives funding, construction could begin around September.

Update on Coastal Mineral Agreements

CPRA General Counsel David Peterson provided an update on CPRA's proposed regulations for Coastal Mineral Agreements. If these rules are adopted, CPRA could enter into agreements with landowners to establish agreements concerning mineral and surface rights relative to existing lands and lands that reemerge through reclamation projects. Peterson explained the requirements for these agreements established under the proposed regulations must be strictly followed before CPRA will consider and enter into such agreements.

"These Coastal Mineral Agreements are strictly voluntary on the part of CPRA and may be used by CPRA as another tool in its toolbox if such agreements would assist in the development of CPRA projects. However, the ability to enter into such agreements does not mean that CPRA is making any fundamental changes in the way it currently acquires land rights for CPRA projects and the way the State has generally done so for more than twenty years." Peterson said. "CPRA looks forward to working with all stakeholders in developing proposals as set forth in the proposed regulations."

CPRA shall be taking written comments on the regulations through March 20, 2019.

[Click here](#) to view presentations.

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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 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.