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CPRA Releases 2020 Year in Review Highlighting Agency Accomplishments in Coastal Protection and Restoration

BATON ROUGE, LA – Today, the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) released its 2020 Year in Review outlining the agency’s accomplishments in coastal protection and restoration. The past year saw the advancement of 112 coastal projects, including 49 projects in construction, surpassing last year’s record of 40 projects in active construction.

“In a year of unprecedented challenges, our team at CPRA pressed forward with unrelenting focus in order to advance projects and deliver results to the citizens of coastal Louisiana,” said CPRA Chairman Chip Kline and Executive Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Activities. “We had a record-breaking number of projects in active construction, and we embarked on a number of new policy initiatives that will transform the way our state approaches the sustainability of our coast. This year, like perhaps no other year since 2005, showcased the continued and dire need for the work that we do. It also fulfilled the promise of a protection and restoration program able to advance projects adequate to the scale of the problem.”

“Despite COVID, working remotely, and a record seven tropical storms and hurricanes affecting Louisiana, CPRA never missed a beat,” said CPRA Executive Director Bren Haase. “Thanks to our agency’s hard-working team, we were able to complete construction on 12 projects with a total value of more than \$185.4 million, and we moved into the construction phase on 15 more projects totaling more than \$405.6 million.”

Haase said other projects continuing this calendar year, along with projects now in engineering and design heading to construction, will improve 110 miles of levees and restore our barrier islands, marshes, swamps, and ridges for the citizens of our state and the fish and wildlife that call our coast home.

Since its creation in 2007, CPRA and its partners have dredged and pumped more than 157 million cubic yards of sediment to benefit 48,894 acres of coastal habitat, created 60 miles of coastal barrier islands and berms, and improved 336 miles of levees.

In 2020, CPRA's major accomplishments included:

HURRICANE PROTECTION

- Seven storms impacted Louisiana during the 2020 Hurricane Season. CPRA fulfilled requests for 638 super sack sand totes, 95 pumps, and various other flood fighting assets to protect coastal communities ahead of anticipated storm impacts.
- CPRA completed a \$30 million, 2.9 mile levee-enhancement project in Jefferson Parish, the first in a series of projects that will protect the greater Lafitte-Barataria-Crown Point community from tidal surge flooding and other extreme weather events.
- Working with the St. Mary Levee District, CPRA began construction on a permanent floodgate on Bayou Chene below Morgan City. The \$80 million project will provide flood protection for portions of six parishes and is anticipated to be complete by 2021.
- CPRA began an emergency beach nourishment project on the west end of Grand Isle that will rebuild nearly two miles of beach and dune, revitalizing a critical shoreline that sustained significant damage throughout the 2020 storm season. The project is anticipated to be complete by the end of this year.

COASTAL RESTORATION

- CPRA completed the \$18.7 million restoration of Queen Bess Island, a 36-acre rookery for Brown Pelicans and other birds near Grand Isle in Jefferson Parish.
- CPRA completed the \$35.4 million Rockefeller Refuge Gulf Shoreline Stabilization project, building three miles of encapsulated lightweight aggregate breakwater structures and protecting approximately 256 acres of marsh.
- CPRA began dredging on Rabbit Island, a major bird rookery in Cameron Parish. The \$16.4 million project will restore approximately 88 acres and is expected to be complete by February 2021.
- CPRA began dredging on Trinity-East Island, one of three islands scheduled to be restored as part of the \$167 million Terrebonne Barrier Island project, located in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. All three islands are anticipated to be complete by 2022.

- CPRA began construction on the Caminada Headland Back Barrier Marsh Creation project which will restore approximately 1,000 acres of marsh and is expected to be complete by August 2021.
- CPRA began construction on the Cameron Meadows Marsh Creation and Terracing project, located in Cameron Parish. The \$32 million project will restore approximately 304 acres and is expected to be complete by February 2022.
- CPRA began construction on the 473-acre Bayou De Cade Ridge and Marsh Creation project in Terrebonne Parish. The project includes over two miles of ridge habitat and is expected to be completed by January 2022.
- CPRA continued and expanded construction of the \$22 million Northwest Turtle Bay Project, creating approximately 1,100 acres of marsh in Jefferson Parish below Jean Lafitte.
- CPRA began construction of West Grand Terre Island in Jefferson Parish, restoring 235 acres along 12,700 feet of beach and, along with 66 acres of back barrier marsh.
- CPRA continued progress on the engineering and design of proposed sediment diversions into the Barataria and Breton basins, including Environmental Impact Studies.
- CPRA opened bids for the first increment of a large-scale restoration strategy for the Barataria Basin, the \$100 million Barataria Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation-Spanish Pass Increment project that will create and nourish approximately 1,358 acres of marsh and create 132 acres of marsh ridge.

MAJOR FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The RESTORE Council approved \$130 million in *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill dollars to fund the River Reintroduction into the Maurepas Swamp project. The project will revitalize 45,000 acres of the Maurepas Swamp, the state's second-largest coastal swamp forest.
- The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (LA TIG) approved \$204.7 million for a variety of projects to assist in the development of Louisiana oyster beds, increase oyster production, improve the response effort for stranded dolphins and whales, and create approximately 1,200 acres of marsh in the upper Barataria Basin.
- The LA TIG approved \$215 million to construct Lake Borgne Marsh Creation – Increment One in St. Bernard Parish and Spanish Pass in Plaquemines Parish, which together will restore more than 4,600 acres of wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitats.
- The LA TIG approved \$234.6 million in funds for restoration projects that will create and restore wetlands in Plaquemines and Terrebonne Parishes.

RECREATIONAL USE

- CPRA completed five Recreational Use projects funded with settlement funds resulting from the aftermath of the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster.
- The Island Road Fishing Pier project in Terrebonne Parish includes an improved boat launch, five fishing piers, and parking along Island Road.
- Two recreational use projects in the Pass-a-Loutre area of the Plaquemines Parish Mississippi River Delta: The Pass-a-Loutre Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Campgrounds project improved five campgrounds and the Pass-a-Loutre WMA-Crevasse Access project created five crevasses through dredging to enhance boating access to prime hunting and fishing areas and to allow river water and sediment to nourish them.
- The Rockefeller Piers and Signage project in Cameron and Vermilion Parishes added three new fishing piers and improved signage on the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge.
- The Atchafalaya Delta WMA Boat Access Project dredged waterways to improve boating access to recreational areas.

POLICY

- Partnering across agencies like never before, the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities took steps to advance the state's ambitious policy agenda in a way that will continue to set Louisiana apart from its peers. The policy initiatives listed below require interagency cooperation, the continued reliance on partnerships outside of government, and are built on a foundation of science-based decision-making. CPRA's mission will remain focused on the protection and restoration of our coast, but through the efforts listed below, other partners will contribute to a more resilient and sustainable coast for our people.
- Gov. John Bel Edwards announced and began following through on his second term coastal priorities, which included:
 1. Building resilience and establishing a Climate Initiatives Task Force: Through two executive orders signed in August, Governor Edwards created the state's first Chief Resilience Officer to coordinate interagency activities to build resilience and established the first Climate Initiatives Task Force to recommend strategies to reduce our state's greenhouse gas emissions.
 2. Pursuing a more integrated approach to the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers: The state is coordinating our efforts in the Atchafalaya with our work on the Mississippi to arrive at a more equitable and science-based approach to resource management. Efforts will include a partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Army Corps of Engineers to examine flow regimes from

the Mississippi down the Atchafalaya River to better benefit the people and habitats of the Atchafalaya Basin, and we will be forming an Atchafalaya Task Force to garner resources, raise awareness, and renew a sense of cooperation to enhance this vital and important area of coastal Louisiana.

3. Pursuing initiatives that will ensure a sustainable oyster industry: Working with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries we are programmatically looking at how coastal restoration projects can also benefit oyster resources and the oyster industry and also look for ways to reduce conflicts and unnecessary expenditures arising from multiple competing user groups active in the coastal zone.
4. Growing, diversifying, and protecting the economy through investments in coastal protection and restoration and coordinated advocacy: In partnership with Louisiana Economic Development, CPRA is establishing the Coastal Technical Assistance Center so that Louisiana businesses can capture as much benefit from investments in the protection and restoration of the coast as possible.
5. Establishing the Coastal Innovation and Collaboration Hub to focus expertise and share knowledge: The progress of the coastal program to date has been made possible by grounding our decisions in strong science. The state is seeking to enhance collaboration and the sharing of information to improve decision-making through the establishment of the Coastal Innovation and Collaboration Hub at the Water Institute of the Gulf. This effort will create a clearinghouse for expertise generated across Louisiana's universities and private sector so that the tools available to combat the coastal land loss and storm surge based flooding can be gathered, utilized, and advanced.

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