

**Management Conference
Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program**

**MC Meeting #17
9:30 AM January 18, 2001
Century Room
Plantation Room, Student Union
Nicholls State University Campus
Thibodaux, LA**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Roll Call

MC Members Present:

Tim Allen – Louisiana Landowner’s Assoc.
Randy Robichaux – Louisiana Independent Oil and Gas Assoc.A
Dr. Rex Caffey, for Paul Coriel-LSU Agricultural Center
Jim Rives-LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Sue Hawes-US Army Corps of Engineers
Jena Langley, for Alvin Hebert – Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District
Jess Curole, for Grady Galliano-Lafourche Parish
Windell Curole-LA Assoc. of Levee Boards
Dr. Jessica Kastler, for Michael Dagg-LUMCON
Wallace Ellender-American Sugar Cane League
Loulan Pitre – Greater Lafourche Port Commission
Martha Segura, for David Fruge-US Fish & Wildlife
Ed Theriot, for Victoria Caridas-Plaquemine Parish
Atly Brasher, for Ronnie Wascom-LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Quin Kinler, for Donald Gohmert-USDA/NRCS
Karolein Debusschere, for Roland Guidry – LA Oil Spill Coordinators Office
Ed Kesler-US Coast Guard
Ann Perry, for Vic Lafont-South Louisiana Economic Council
Randy Lanctot-Louisiana Wildlife Federation
James Miller, for Al Levron-Terrebonne Parish
Vince Cottone, for Mike Lyons-Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Assoc.
Dr. Gary LaFleur, for Earl Melancon-Nicholls State University
Pam Roussell, for Kevin Belanger-South Central Planning & Development Commission
Dianne Lindstedt, for Rick Hartman-US National Marine Fisheries Service
Monica Young, for US EPA
John Woodard, for Brad Spicer-LA Assoc. of Conservation Districts
Butch Stegall-LA Dept. of Ag & Forestry
Pam Blanchard, for Jean May-Brett-Louisiana Science Teacher’s Assoc.
Dr. Glenn Thomas-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Kathleen Daubler, for Marnie Winter-Jefferson Parish

MC Members Absent:

Jimmy Antoon-LA Dept. of Health & Hospitals
Dr. Len Bahr-Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities
Paul Cancienne-Assumption Parish
Donald Lirette – Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Dennis Demcheck - USGS
Ron Harrell – Louisiana Farm Bureau

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Sharon Calcote-LA Dept. of Culture & Tourism
Peter Vujnovich – Commercial Fisheries
Cecil A. Picard – LA Dept of Education
Marylee Orr – LA Environmental Action Network
Raymond Butler-Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association
Charles Caplinger-Coastal Conservation Assoc. of Louisiana

BTNEP Staff:

Kerry St. Pé
Sandra Helmuth
Deborah Schultz
Eddie Landrum
Rachel Somers
Matt Phillips

Guests:

Katina Gaudet-The Daily Comet
Rod Emmer-FEMA
Cullen Curole-BT Estuary Foundation
Troy Hill-US EPA Region VI
Nathan Levy – LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Pam Hart – US Coast Guard
Jarvis Guidry – US Army Corp of Engineers
Bob Thomas – Loyola University
Brent Ache – Battelle
Jon Porthouse – LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Earl Melancon – BT Estuary Foundation

B. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the September 13, 2000 meeting

A motion was made to dispense with the reading of the minutes and to accept as submitted; it was seconded. There was no discussion, and no objections. The minutes were accepted by acclamation.

C. Program Activities

- ❖ **Presentations/Exhibits**-Seminar on Invasive Species (Aquarium of the America's); Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce; E.D. White; Project Wet Water Festival; Vanderbilt High School; Assumption High French Club; Louisiana Wildlife Biologist Assoc.; Thibodaux Rotary Club; Ducks Unlimited Banquet; WETMAAP Workshop; Portuguese Environmental Journalists; Plaquemines Parish Wetland Workshop; STEPS Workshop; Clean Gulf Conference; Oakshire Elementary; UNO; Bayou Lafourche Tour; International Conference on Shellfish Restoration; South Terrebonne Levee District; Dying Marsh; Climate Symposium; LSTA Convention; Labadieville Elementary School
- ❖ **Media Interviews-KTIB "Dialogue"**: La Fete d'Ecologie; **KTIB "Houma Live"**; **Daily Comet**: Sara Onishi, La Fete d'Ecologie, Plaquemines Parish Coastal Wetlands Workshop, Brown Marsh Issue, Reauthorization of Estuary Bill, WETMAAP; **The Times of Acadiana**: Brown Marsh Issue; **Lafourche Gazette**: America's Vanishing Treasure Video; **The Advocate**: Brown Marsh Issue; **Bayou Business Review**: La Fete d'Ecologie; **Times Picayune**: Reauthorization of Estuary Bill; **The Courier**: Brown Marsh Issue
- ❖ **Meetings**-CWPPRA Outreach Committee; Davis Pond Technical Advisory Group; Water Quality Focus Team; Non-Indigenous Species; ANEP/NEP Director's Meeting; CWPPRA Task Force Meeting; Wildlife Biologists Assoc.; Coast 2050 Task Force; British Petroleum Pre-Appl. Hearing; Louisiana Rural Tourism Conference, Terrebonne CZM Meeting; Loss Prevention Audit Training, HazWHOPR Training; FEMA-BTNEP Workshop;

CPR/First Aid Training; Lake Fields Field Trip; Migratory Bird Trail; Stormwater Pump Project; ISSC/GMP Water Quality Workshop; BTNEP Scientific Technical Committee and Sub-Committee meetings

D. Set Date for 18th Management Conference Meeting

The date for the 18th Management Conference meeting was set for April 19, 2001.

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. Proposal for a Comprehensive Coastal Issues Communications Strategic Plan

Bob Thomas, of Loyola University, spoke about his project and his objectives. He presented a program to educate the "average" person using the resources of Loyola University Communications Department regarding all the issues concerning coastal Louisiana, and using their department to produce and get the message out to the public. The goal of the project is to create a strategic media plan to help coordinate our efforts in getting the message to as many people as possible, i.e. clubs, girl & boy scout troops, teachers, congressmen, etc. Bob expressed the need for a statewide list serve to help in this endeavor. This effort will also create a web site, which would address all of our states issues. There is also a need to advise any and everyone who comes to Louisiana as to how important we are to their particular state. It was also determined that we need a consolidated effort; that all groups are needed in order to make effort work.

B. La Fete d'Ecologie Update

Sandra Helmuth discussed all the different activities that took place at the festival while presenting various pictures from the festival; which included cultural dancers, children's activities and many others.

She then introduced Dr. Earl Melancon, President of the B-T Foundation, who gave some of the statistics regarding the attendance in spite of the inclement weather the day before. There were 18 environmental exhibits provided by federal, state, parish and non-profit agencies. In addition, there were 3 economic exhibits, and he expressed the foundation's desire to encourage more of this type to show our cooperation between environmental and economic groups. He then gave a brief description of some of the ways the festival was advertising the activities, and mentioned their efforts to get the message across statewide.

Sandra then mentioned the participation of Duck's Unlimited Green Wing Day at the festival and the positive effect this had on attendance. Earl then requested from each management conference member present that they join the foundation in order to help it become a more viable organization in assisting BTNEP. Kerry spoke about his ultimate goal in getting the festival to become self-sufficient for the foundation. Randy Lancot suggested that the Foundation participate in the statewide duck-calling contest held in October.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the scope of services for the 5th Annual La Fete d'Ecologie Festival. There was no further discussion and no objections. The Scope was approved by acclamation.

C. Scope of Services for the "Development of Wetland Education Workshop and WETMAAP Website Enhancement for the Cocodrie Area Study Site.

Deborah Schultz explained that even though the scope of services for this project had already been approved, it was better to rewrite the contract than to extend the current one. She told everyone that the site for the workshops will be LUMCON and went on to express the advantages to all for this location. A motion was made and seconded to accept the scope of services. There was no further discussion and no objections. The scope was approved by acclamation.

D. BTNEP Scientific Technical Committee

Kerry combined this part of the agenda with the Brown Marsh Update. He gave a description of the severity regarding this phenomenon as well as reminding everyone of the Governor' Executive Order in which BTNEP is to work with them to develop a collaborative process to address the dying marsh issue. Kerry then explained the beginnings of the estuary program and how it has developed a trust over the years with other organizations. He reminded the MC of

the original Scientific Technical Committee and its job to complete the huge tasks that were required. Since that original committee no longer exists, Kerry asked for MC approval to reestablish the STC to accomplish several objectives: 1) to provide a forum for the discussion and coordination of existing research, data-gathering activities, and programs directed towards the Barataria-Terrebonne dying Spartina phenomenon and 2) to provide a consensus-based mechanism and procedure for developing scopes of services and contracts for new data gathering efforts and research related to the dying Spartina issue. The STC would also be an advisory committee to the State Wetlands Authority who will in turn advise DNR on this response. There have already been meetings regarding the proposed Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Program STC.

According to the STC Administrative Procedures, the estuary program may have to go outside the estuary to other universities in order to properly address the things happening within our system. EPA encourages this sharing of information by other agencies and universities. Kerry stated that at one of these meetings, he was elected chairman and Sue Hawes was elected Vice Chairman. It was also stated by Kerry that the committee wanted a chairperson that would be looking at the proposals, developing the proposals and helping find bids for the proposals, but not directly bidding on them. He agreed to accept the chair of the committee.

Kerry then asked the MC to approve the STC as a part of the BTNEP and as an advisory committee directly to the State Wetlands Authority. Dr. Irv Mendelsohn, of LSU, has repeatedly talked to the STC and expressed that this is an opportunity for science and scientists who have wanted a bigger voice in restoration. Kerry stated that this is an emergency and we have a serious situation in that we need to know what is causing this, but more importantly, what are we going to do about it. There are several components on the track to be taken, 1) a research and assessment sub-committee, 2) a remediation sub-committee, 3) a data -synthesis sub-committee (to compile all the independent data), 4) a nutria control sub-committee. With all these things considered, Kerry expressed how one issue cannot be singled out, and that all of the issues must be considered together. A motion was then made to accept this sub-committee of the B-T National Estuary Program and was seconded.

A discussion then opened regarding the monies and where they would come from to take care of this serious issue. The reconvening of the STC was approved by acclamation. This was followed by a motion to accept the STC Administrative Procedures and seconded. There was no further discussion and no objections. The procedures were accepted by acclamation. A third motion was then made to accept Windell Curole, Management Conference Chair, to represent MC on the STC and to give him the right to take action on issues in the framework of the Governor's Executive Order with the ability to appoint someone to replace him when necessary. There was a discussion in reference to the procedures regarding the appointments to the sub-committee. After a brief discussion, a second was made. There was no further discussion and no objections. Then by acclamation it was accepted that the MC Chair, Mr. Windell Curole, would represent MC on the STC and be given the right to take action on issues in the framework of the Governor's Executive Order.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. DIMS Activities Update

Matt Phillips gave an update on DIMS (The Data and Information Management System for BTNEP) and the website activities. There are plans to have something very similar to a mass list serve set in place at BTNEP to help get the messages out to as many people as possible. This list serve will include current issues, activities, schedule events, etc. Matt then informed the MC that a database has been set up on the BTNEP website for everyone to submit information as to what each agency is doing to implement the plan. This information will be used in the matrix section of the Triennial Implementation Review. This matrix should include updates regarding the action plans, what has been done, their progress and status as required by the Triennial Review.

It was suggested that a link be established between Mike Lane (rodreel.com) and BTNEP. Matt informed everyone that he would be emailing them with this new web page for their review and comments. His goal is to have this eventually be a communications hub for all. Kerry then spoke about the Triennial Review that led to a discussion on how to currently obtain information from each entity in order to complete this report.

B. Formal Education and Outreach Update

Deborah Schultz gave a presentation on several workshops on WETMAAP at LUMCON, a Coastal Wetlands Workshop from the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana at Woodland Plantation, and Valerie Butler's Workshops, a teacher from Hahnville High.

Deborah then told the MC that she and Rachel Somers were currently working on efforts to coordinate educational materials in all subject areas on Migratory Birds as a direct result from Richard DeMay's Migratory Bird Committee. Deborah then informed the MC of Rachel's activities that include helping to plant over 20,000 marsh plants in and around the area with the Americorp on the Bayou group. She has also been instrumental in arranging training for many people of different groups on what our issues are for BTNEP. Rachel also goes out to many classrooms and workshops where she gives presentations on environmental stewardship. She also developed a storm drain marking decal that is being applied to storm drains. Deborah also introduced Rachel's Salt Marsh Coloring Book with activities that kids can do. The hope is that this will be the first in a series.

Also discussed was the Coastal Roots program being developed by Pam Blanchard who will be working with high school teachers to set up green houses for growing restoration plants in six different schools within the estuary.

Deborah then mentioned the column that comes out every other week, "Point Coupe to the Gulf", by Rod Emmer through the BT Estuary Foundation. Rod then asked for the cooperation of all MC members who might have an article they would want to write or submit regarding issues within the estuary.

C. Environmental Indicator Workshop Update

Brent Ache, from Battelle, expressed EPA's recommendation that each estuary program track its progress in implementing the CCMP in three ways: 1) documenting and reporting progress of each project or program and how they are being implemented, 2) what is the ecological condition of the estuary as far as status and trends over time, and 3) reporting implementation progress to EPA and stakeholders, and developing some association between items #1 and #2, which would entail actually doing the projects, developing the partnerships, getting the plans in developing the CCMP, and then determining what is the ecological condition of various components within the estuary since this has been very difficult within estuary programs, i.e. cause and effect, and how to know what to do in the way of projects which are actually beneficial. Because of this, item #2 will be the focus of the workshop to develop a suite of indicators that will use existing data.

To maximize participation in this workshop, he then asked for everyone's input on where to have it. After discussion, it was decided upon Baton Rouge. He then asked if it should be done in two days, which led to an in-depth discussion on what the agenda would be and who would be asked to participate.

D. Shellfish Challenge Projects Update

Eddie Landrum gave a presentation and an explanation and update on the kiosk. He then stated that if anyone was interested in using the kiosk, please let him know. Eddie also gave an update on the Shellfish Challenge Web page. He then asked the MC to approve giving the action plan team the authority to find a replacement for Wendy French's contract in the same dollar amount. It was moved and seconded. There was no further discussion and no objections. It was approved by acclamation.

E. Citizen Monitoring Workshop Update

Deborah Schultz went over the agenda for the upcoming Citizen Monitoring Workshop. She also gave an overview of how it came about and how it meets one of the requirements of an action plan, which states that BTNEP will promote, facilitate and implement citizen's monitoring throughout the estuary.

Deborah also advised everyone that this would not be funded through DEQ's non-point source program. She explained that DEQ had concerns about the citizen's use and/or misuse of the data with the potential of lawsuits. Kerry then described some of DEQ's concerns with water quality issues regarding the possibilities of lawsuits stemming from some of the citizens monitoring data obtained. This then led to a lengthy discussion during which MC

representatives expressed support for a BTNEP-directed Citizen's Monitoring Program. Concern from MC members was expressed about the withdrawal of planned DEQ funding for the BTNEP Citizen's Monitoring Program. Someone then suggested that MC obtain the legal explanation from DEQ concerning this issue.

Deborah mentioned that citizen monitoring could be adapted to school programs that could enable students to learn how to use equipment, teaching them scientific methods, and preparing them for the work force. She also stated that this would encourage them to take a stewardship role and an interest in the estuary. She then stated the EPA workshop would be held as planned.

F. Integrating FEMA programs in the NEP

Dr. Rod Emmer explained that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is looking at different ways to form partnerships with several agencies within BTNEP to demonstrate how the Federal Emergency Management Agency can be integrated into the National Estuary System. It has been proposed to have a two and a half day workshop during the latter part of May.

In conjunction with the Gulf of Mexico Program and other estuaries from around the gulf, FEMA programs, national estuary programs, and EPA programs will work together collectively on the issues within the estuary. Once the workshop and information is complete it is FEMA's hope to take the information to Washington and distribute to the national estuary programs around the country. Several people are working together on the details and final arrangements for this workshop.

He then invited everyone to participate in the activities within the workshop and that the people within the various Gulf of Mexico agencies meet with the various agencies within BTNEP in order that a cross section report can be established and submitted throughout the nation. Kerry then asked to be notified if anyone was interested in sponsoring social "get-together" for the event.

G. Coast 2050 Barataria Feasibility Study

Jon Porthouse, LDNR, explained the Coast 2050 Feasibility Study. He asked the MC to look at the data that was passed out and advise him of their suggestions. He is also asking for the information as soon as possible for it will be presented on February 21. There were some questions asked to Jon regarding the study and it's status.

H. The Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program for NRDA Update

Karolein Dubusschere, the Deputy Oil Spill Coordinator, explained to the MC that several state and federal agencies could make sure that the public is compensated from impacts from oil spills. She also explained the federal and state legislation acts that enable us to do so. These acts provide for regional restoration planning for NRDA. We are the first state that is trying to develop a program for natural resource damage assessment. She then expressed that she could not go into the lengthy criteria of procedures and processes regarding the requirements. She did however volunteer to answer any questions.

Her presentation then went on to give the projects that have resulted from oil spill impacts. Her main objective was to institute this entire process and provide a framework for NRDA with the ultimate goal to make it more efficient. The proposal is that the state will be divided into nine regions with a possibility with a 10th being offshore which will then encompass the whole state. A restoration plan would be developed for each of the regions. It is anticipated that a programmatic environmental impact statement will be developed that will identify the entire decision making process for NRDA and the state of Louisiana. The regional plans will be attached to it and each will identify the resources that could potentially be impacted from a spill. Site-specific projects will be used to restore injured resources. A formal solicitation on potential projects will be going out to the entire state and each region. She stated that a NRDA restoration trust fund will be established in order to receive the cash supplements and legislation will have to be developed. There will be a trustee council that will administer the entire program to consist of all the federal and state trustees.

She then went into a lengthy discussion of how this would work and its benefits to all. Several planning meetings have already taken place to formulate this plan since there is none to model from. She states the possibility of the first plan being on the ground in October and then they will move to other regions for development. Karolein reiterated that a solicitation of the project on this program from various regions throughout the state would be performed at the same time. Karolein asked the MC to start thinking about projects.

I. Discussion of FY2001 Workplan Projects

Kerry reminded the MC of the re-occurring projects that the program office funds every year, such as the Coalition's wetland workshop, Bayou Camps and the Festival. Kerry then stated that BTNEP has a total of \$300,000 from the federal grant to spend on projects, \$120,000 goes to the recurring projects; but that is not set in stone. Kerry then asked that if anyone has ideas, send them to Sandra at the Program Office. Kerry ask for volunteers in helping with the development with our work plan ideas.

J. Reauthorization of Estuary Bill Update

Monica Young, EPA Region VI, informed the MC that in November of 2000, President Bill Clinton signed the Estuaries Clean Water Act of 2000. This legislation contains 9 titles, 2 of which are directly applicable to the NEP. Title 3 amends a section of the Clean Water Act. This reauthorizes the program and authorizes \$35,000,000 for each fiscal year for the next five years beginning 2001-2005. \$35,000,000 has been authorized for the National Estuary Program upon national level. She added that basically up until this point the wording in the legislation for funding the National Estuary Programs was strictly for the planning phase. In subsequent years, this amendment changed that by stating that it can be used for implementation. A major impact for all NEPs is the cost share for the program office. The match will go from 75%-25% to 50%-50%, effective immediately. The Estuary Restoration Act establishes a national goal to restore one million acres of estuary habitat by 2010 and authorizes \$27,000,000 over the next five years with matching funds for local estuary habitat restoration projects. Monica stated that this legislation also specifies the Lake Pontchartrain Basin for priority consideration for inclusion in the National Estuary Program.

K. NEW BUSINESS

No new business

L. ADJOURN