

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

**MC Meeting #20
9:30 AM October 16, 2001
Cotillion Ballroom
Student Union
Nicholls State University Campus
Thibodaux, LA**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

I. A. Roll Call

The following Management Conference Members were present:

Mr. Kenneth Hemphill, for Mr. Jimmy Antoon, LA Dept. of Health & Hospitals
Dr. Len Bahr, Governor's Office for Coastal Activities
Mr. Tim Allen, Louisiana Landowner's Association
Mr. Randy Robichaux, for Mr. Don Briggs, Louisiana Independent Oil & Gas Association
Dr. Rex Caffey, for Dr. Paul Coreil, LSU Agricultural Center
Mr. Jim Rives, LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Mr. Paul Cancienne, Assumption Parish
Ms. Sue Hawes, for Col. Tom Julich, US Army Corp of Engineers
Mr. Archie Chaisson, for Mr. Alvin Hebert, Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District
Mr. Jess Curole, for Mr. Grady Galliano, Lafourche Parish
Mr. Windell Curole, Louisiana Association of Levee Boards
Dr. Jessica Kastler, for Dr. Michael Dagg, LUMCON
Mr. Donald Lirette, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Dr. Wallace Ellender, American Sugar Cane League
Mr. Loulan Pitre, Greater Lafourche Port Commission
Ms. Martha Segura, for Mr. David Fruge, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Mr. Ed Theriot, for Ms. Vicki Caridas, Plaquemines Parish
Mr. David Hughes, for Mr. Ronnie Wascom, LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Mr. Gene Loupe, for Mr. Donald Gohmert, USDA/NRCS
Mr. Roland Guidry, Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Mr. Al Levron, Terrebonne Parish
Ms. Ann Wilson, for Mr. Cecil Picard, LA Dept. of Education
Mr. Mike Lyons, Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association
Dr. Earl Melancon, Nicholls State University
Mr. Darryl Noll, for Mr. Kevin Belanger, South Central Planning & Development Commission
Mr. Rick Hartman, US National Marine Fisheries Service
Mr. Troy Hill, US EPA Region VI
Mr. John Woodard, for Mr. Brad Spicer-Louisiana Association of Conservation District
Mr. Butch Stegall, LA Dept. of Agriculture & Forestry
Dr. Glenn Thomas, LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Mr. O'Neil Marlborough, for Marnie Winters-Jefferson Parish

Organizations not represented:

US Geological Survey
Louisiana Farm Bureau
US Coast Guard
LA Dept. of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
South Louisiana Economic Council
Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Commercial Fisheries
St. Charles Parish

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Louisiana Environmental Action Network
Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association
Louisiana Science Teachers Association
Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana

Staff Members Present:

Kerry St. Pé
Richard Demay
Eddie Landrum
Sandra Helmuth
Matt Phillips
Andrew Barron
Alaina Owens

Guests Present:

Kay Radlauer-Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Cullen Curole-Barataria Terrebonne Estuary Foundation
Lynnette Cortez-Barataria Terrebonne Estuary Foundation
Katina Gaudet-The Daily Comet
Rod Emmer-Rodney E. Emmer & Assoc.
Lori LeBlanc-Restore & Retreat
Melanie Boulet-Les Reflections du Bayou
Beverly Etheridge-US EPA
Gabrielle Bodin-NWRC
Gary LaFleur-NSU
David Bourgeois-LSU Ag Center
Chuck Villarubia-LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Rebecca Triche-Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
James Miller-Terrebonne Parish
Vince Cottone-Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association
Doug Jacobson-US EPA

I.B. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the July 12, 2001 meeting

Jim Rives motioned to dispense of reading of the minutes and accept them as they are written. Ken Hemphill seconded that motion.

I.C. Program Activities (since July 12, 2001)

At the request of Kerry, Jessica Kastler, of LUMCON, gave a brief overview of the WETMAAP Workshops that were held this month at LUMCON.

Kerry informed the MC that the transition to LUMCON is going smoothly. There are things such as standard contract language and procedures that need to be ironed out but all is well. He stated that LUMCON has been very supportive.

Kerry then gave a brief overview of staff activities:

- ❖ **Presentations/Exhibits**-Marsh Maneuvers; Tarpon Rodeo; Environmental Justice Retreat; FCED; WETMAAP; Sea Grant; La Fete d'Ecologie; Wetlands Workshop; Stormwater Conference; Coastal & Estuarine Wetland Restoration into the New Millennium Conference; NEP Outreach Coordinators Workshop
- ❖ **Media Interviews**-LUMCON Newsletter; WDSU-La Fete, KLRZ- La Fete; KTIB Dialogue Show-La Fete

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- ❖ **Meetings**-Gulf NEP Director's; CWPPRA Task Force; Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District-Mary Landrieu; Non-Indigenous Species; Governor's Coastal Summit; Louisiana Seafood Promotions Board; CWPPRA Outreach Committee; Groundwater Management Committee; BTEF Board Meeting; La Fete Steering Committee; Clean Beach Meeting; Oyster Task Force; Fourchon Ridge Project

I. D. Set Date for 21st Management Conference Meeting

The date was set for January 24, 2002. MC approved this date.

II. ACTION ITEMS

II.A. Scope of Services for the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration Day

Richard reminded the MC that BTNEP put forth funds for this same project last year. Once again this project will focus on the importance of coastal maritime forest and beach habitats to Neotropical migratory birds and how this relates to the social, cultural, and economic interests of southeast Louisiana. Purpose of the event is to get people of Grand Isle and birders together to show them the importance of migratory bird habitats. Don Lirette motioned to approve the scope and Earl Melancon seconded. There was no discussion and no objections. It was approved by acclamation.

II.B. Scope of Services for 6th Annual La Fete d'Ecologie

Sandra explained to the MC, that because the next MC meeting will not be held until after the first of the year, the MC is being asked to allow the Action Plan Team to give approval on final scope. Sandra stated that it is the hopes of the program office to have this contract in place by January 1st. Sandra then asked for volunteers to join this Action Plan Team. Jessica Kastler volunteered. Sandra stated that the staff suggested we contact the City of Thibodaux, Thibodaux Civic Center and the local chamber of commerce to send a representative to be on the APT.

Kerry explained that the action plan that the festival falls under is SR-5, Cultural Heritage.

Don Lirette motioned to allow the APT to finalize the scope and Len Bahr seconded. There was no discussion and no opposition. The motion was accepted by acclamation.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Presentation on 5th Annual La Fete d'Ecologie

Cullen Carole gave a slide presentation showing photographs of the event. He stated that it is estimated that 5,000 to 6,000 people attended but he has not received an official count from the Thibodaux Police. He then thanked the MC for either attending or having someone there representing the agency. He stated that the speaker's forum inside the building at Peltier Park was well attended. Cullen then discussed different events that occurred at the festival.

Lori LeBlanc, with Restore and Retreat, stated that she was very impressed with the festival.

Cullen thanked Lynette Cortez for her hard work as chairperson for the festival.

B. Presentation on Americorps on the Bayou

Melanie Boulet passed out brochures for Americorps on the Bayou. She stated that this group was initially started to help carry out BTNEP's action plans. She stated that Americorp will begin the first citizen monitoring program in November. She stated that Americorps has three challenges in hosting this group in this area. The first being that the program is very heavy on the administration, and Les Reflections du Bayou, its host program, has limited staff. Les Reflections du Bayou has an accountant on contract and one to supervise the

group. The second challenge, Melanie added, is working with today's youth. Today's youth does not have a lot of experience working as a team and they are not very aware of the concept of service. The third challenge is the programming of the members. A lot of the projects are weather dependent and if the project gets cancelled, there are not many projects available for the members to participate in.

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Melanie stated she had 4 requests to make to the MC. 1) that if they have any projects that these members could assist in, to please call Ray Savoie, the groups director. 2) Americorp is looking for another host program because Les Reflections du Bayou is so understaffed that it cannot handle the administrative needs of the group. Melanie asked the MC to consider its individual agency, except the federal entities, to be the host for this group. 3) She also asked the MC to consider sitting on the group's advisory committee. 4) Melanie stated that she is the only fundraiser for Americorp. She informed the MC that Texaco and Freeport-Macmaran both have contributed funds. She asked the MC that if anyone new of a corporation that is looking to fund an environmental project such as Americorp, to please contact her or Ray Savoie.

C. Update on Bayou Lafourche Initiative Activities

Melanie Boulet informed the MC that the Bayou Lafourche Initiative consists of 4 elements:

- 1) To support an interactive alliances of cultural and environmental based organizations.
- 2) To assist nature based economic development along the bayou
- 3) Assist in the documentation and publication of information exchanges recorded along the bayou
- 4) Assist and advice ecological efforts along the bayou.

A database has been established of potential alliance members and assistance in fundraising for these organizations has begun. Grant writing workshops have been held.

Melanie then informed the MC of a statewide effort to educate the public on the importance of restoring the state's wetlands. The governor has been asked to designate a day in May for everyone to participate in some sort of restoration project. This is a result of the Governor's call to action at the Coastal Summit. This will be a way for the state to prove to the country that we do care about our environment and in hopes that this will encourage the federal government to give the state of Louisiana the funds to restore its coast.

Melanie then gave the MC a brochure for the Pirogue Trip. She stated that the purpose of the trip is to let the public see first hand the beauty of the bayou and to appreciate the problems that it has.

D. Revisit of Action Plan Team Concept

Kerry gave an overview of the program's development. He briefly discussed the program vision, program goals and the CCMP. He then reminded the MC of the Action Plan Team Concept. An APT will consist of anyone interested in helping to guide the development of projects. Kerry reminded the MC that this process was approved at the January 1999 MC meeting. Kerry stated that the original concept was to implement an APT for each individual action plan. Now, he realizes that that is not possible due to limited staff. The staff is now suggesting having an action plan team for only those action plans that the staff is focusing on and for those APT to meet only when necessary.

Windell encouraged the MC to give the APT the right to make decisions concerning projects, and then coming to the MC to give updates. This will clear the agenda for more presentations on issues such as Davis Pond and Bayou Lafourche.

Rick Hartman stated that he felt that the program has been spending most of its grant money on ecotourism and migratory bird. He felt that it was time for the MC to take the lead in helping the program office prioritize the action plans and help them decide what road to take.

Windell asked the MC to leave this meeting and think about what issues the program office should be dealing with.

Jim Rives agrees with Rick but he doesn't think the MC knows the status of the action plans. He would like to see a document stating the status of each action plan.

Kerry stated to Jim that BTNEP is required to report to EPA the progress of implementing the CCMP in such a form that he is asking for. This report is required in order for the program to receive its funding for the workplan.

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Paul Cancienne asked for information on the Bayou Lafourche Project. Windell told Paul that a presentation on that issue will be given later in the meeting.

Len Bahr agreed that this concept is desperately needed. However, he stated that we should not just concentrate on what is in the CCMP because there are new issues out there.

Windell asked the MC to contact the program office with its ideas.

Sue Hawes asked if the status of action plans could be put on the web. Matt gave an update of his website work.

E. Update on Brown Marsh Contracts and Studies

Greg Grandy, LA Dept. of Natural Resources, gave a chronology of events and brought the MC up to date on the work that has been done on the brown marsh phenomenon. He stated that the scientists involved have named this phenomenon the sudden salt marsh dieback syndrome. He informed the MC that approximately 20,000 acres of marsh grass suddenly started to die, and approximately 260,000 acres were severely stressed. In January 2001, NOAA received \$2.993 million to be used towards finding out the cause of the sudden salt marsh dieback syndrome and also for nutria control. In November 2000, before the funds were given to NOAA, with DNR being the state contracting agency, BTNEP re-formed its Scientific Technical Committee to develop a program to research the Brown Marsh. Several meetings were held throughout the months of November and December 2000, and January 2001. On January 31, 2001, a conference was held in Baton Rouge that comprised of 5 different issues. 1) The scope and magnitude of the problem, 2) causes of the problem, 3) data management system, 4) nutria control and 5) remediation techniques.

Greg stated that the STC advertised for scope submissions on February 7th. On March 5th and 6th the proposals were reviewed and then STC gave its recommendation on which proposals to accept to the State Wetlands Authority. In June, contracts were awarded and currently there are 18 active contracts with 61 principle investigators and over 30 tasks to perform. He stated that there were still 2 contracts not awarded because of problems with the contract language.

Greg informed the MC that field work for 6 of the tasks has been completed. Because no reports have been submitted on this field work, Greg could only give anecdotal observations. Of the 20,000 acres of marsh dieback some of it has generated a lot of regrowth, some has had little regrowth and in other areas there has been no regrowth. Greg stated that quarterly reports for all the tasks will be due soon and that they will be put on the Brown Marsh website.

Don Lirette asked if any research had been done to see if this has ever occurred before. Greg stated that yes, it has, but not to this scale and not during this time of year. It had been happening later in the year and not as spread out as it is now.

Windell asked if it had ever occurred during a 3 year period with the same climactic conditions and Greg stated no, it had not. Greg said that 100 yrs of data had been analyzed.

Kerry added that a lot of work went into the contract negotiations by DNR and Greg. Greg stated that hopefully if the opportunity to do research on this magnitude should arise, that lessons will have been learned from this experience.

Sue Hawes wanted to thank Greg for his hard work.

F. Update on Bayou Lafourche Project

Troy Hill, US EPA Region 6, reminded the MC, that back in 1993 the Breaux act put together a plan for wetland restoration that included the Bayou Lafourche project. In 1996 objectives for the project were developed. The Breaux Act allotted \$ 4.5 million for this project with the re-introduction of fresh water at 2,000 cfs. In 1998 that

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was readjusted because residents along the bayou were concerned that their property would be washed away. Therefore, the objective was changed to 1,000 cfs all year round. In 1998 the cost was estimated to be \$56.8 million. The project includes a small dredging operation and installing a new pump station. Troy informed the MC that Phase I was to include the design of the project that will cost \$9.7 million and Phase II is the construction that will cost \$95.6 million. Troy stated that he received a letter informing him that a special task force is being put together that includes legislators that will keep their eyes on the project and build a coalition to push for funding.

Archie Chaisson, of the Freshwater District, then gave his perspective of the project. Archie gave an update on the conditions of the bayou. Archie gave a slide presentation describing the pump station in Donaldsonville and its pumping capacity.

Windell Asked Archie if that was the same pump that was installed in 1950. Archie said that is the same pump but that several parts have been replaced. Archie then gave an overview of costs of repairing the pump.

Archie stated that the two biggest problems of concern of the Freshwater District are water levels in the northern part of the bayou and vegetation in the midsection of the bayou. Sedimentation around Paincourtville is also a problem.

Archie said that the solution to these problems would be the Bayou Lafourche Project. But if that project falls through, then the only other solution he sees is an independent dredging project.

John Woodard asked how far north the salt water intrusion traveled last year. Archie stated that it got all the way up to the Clotilde water plant, a mile north of Lockport.

Loulan Pitre stated that there has been a huge increase in public interest in the project particularly in the lower sections of the bayou since the saltwater intrusion incident. The saltwater intrusion has lowered the resistance, of the residents along the lower part of the bayou, to the project. Loulan stated that this project will be a test of the state's commitment to Coast 2050. If this project is not initiated, then the state needs to forget about Coast 2050.

Len Bahr stated he is proud of all entities that are involved in this project. Len encouraged everyone to attend the CWPPRA task force meeting on Oct. 25th where federal agencies will vote on the funding for the design of this project.

Windell asked for volunteers to join the Bayou Lafourche Action Plan Team. The following individuals volunteered:

Melanie Boulet, Paul Cancienne, Lori LeBlanc (restore and retreat), Loulan Pitre, Len Bahr, Sue Hawes, Cullen Curole, Beverly Etheridge, Ken Hemphill, Troy Hill, Archie Chaisson, James Miller, and O'Neil Marlborough.

Rick Hartman asked what the APT will be charged with. Windell stated that the APT will make decisions as to the different aspects of the project; i.e. design and engineering, and to discuss some of the general issues that were brought up such as cost. The APT will also come to the MC with its recommendations.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Windell asked that a committee be formed to meet with the Foundation to discuss the Foundation's role. Len

Bahr, Doug Jacobson, Kerry St. Pé and Windell Curole will form that committee.

Kerry informed that the first airing of "Wings Over the Wetlands" will be on LPB, November 7th at 6:30pm and 10:pm and also on November 25th at 10:30pm.

Also, Kerry stated that the Gulf of Mexico Program will be holding its state meeting on January 16th, 2001 at the Pennington Center in Baton Rouge.

V. ADJOURN