

Management Conference
Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

MC Meeting # 28
9:30AM-November 5, 2003
Nicholls State University Campus
Plantation Room-Student Union
Thibodaux, LA

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Roll-Call

The following members/alternates were present at the meeting:

Anthony Roussell-LA Dept. of Health & Hospitals
Len Bahr-Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Tim Allen-Louisiana Landowner's Association
David Bourgeois-LSU Ag Center
Chuck Villarubia-LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Sue Hawes-US Army Corps of Engineers
Archie Chaisson-Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District
Windell Curole-Louisiana Association of Levee Boards
John Conover-LUMCON
Steven Peyronnin-Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Scott Wilson-USGS
Addie Callais-Greater Lafourche Port Commission
Ronnie Paille-US Fish & Wildlife Service
Syeda Qadri-LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Gene Loupe-USDA/NRCS
Roland Guidry-Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Brian Black-US Coast Guard
Lori LeBlanc-South Louisiana Economic Council
Al Levron-Terrebonne Parish
Jean May-Brett-LA Dept. of Education and LSTA
Mike Lyons-Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association
Gary LaFleur-Nicholls State University
Anne Perry-LA Dept. of Economic Development
Rick Hartman-National Marine Fisheries Service
Doug Jacobson-US EPA
John Woodard-LA Association of Conservation Districts
Mike Walker-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
John Walthers-Coastal Conservation Assoc. of LA
Vicki Duffourc-Jefferson Parish
Angela Rathle-National Park Service
Buck Vandersteen-LA Forestry Association

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Organizations Absent:

Louisiana Independent Oil & Gas Association
Assumption Parish
Lafourche Parish
American Sugar Cane Association
Plaquemines Parish
Louisiana Farm Bureau
LA Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Commercial Fisheries
St. Charles Parish
LA Dept. of Agriculture & Tourism
Gulf Intracoastal Canal Assoc.
The Nature Conservancy

Staff Members Present:

Kerry St. Pe'
Sandra Helmuth
Richard DeMay
Deborah Schultz
Leslie McVeigh
Dean Blanchard
Justin Meunier
Andrew Barron

Guests Present:

Neil Pollock-Propoganda, Inc.
Dr. Stephen Hulbert-Nicholls State University
Lisa Zeringue-NRCS
Jack Fredine-US Army Corps of Engineers
Katina Gaudet-The Daily Comet
Robert Twilley-University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Carol Crapazola-LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Joni Blanchard
Bob Roberts-LA Dept of Natural Resources
Wendi French-Wyndston Services
Carla Andrews-University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Walter Morrison-LSU Ag Center
Robert Crumm-Illinois Geological Survey
Cullen Curole-LA Dept of Natural Resources
Suzanne Terrebonne-Reflections du Bayou
Mark Matthews-US Coast Guard
Doug Daigle-Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Earl Melancon-Nicholls State University

James Miller-Terrebonne Parish CZM
Celeste Regal-Tri-Parish Times
Vince Cottone-Louisiana Oil & Gas Assoc.

B. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the July 30, 2003 Meeting

Jean May-Brett moved to dispense of the reading of the minutes and Windell Curole seconded the motion. There was no opposition; therefore the minutes were approved as submitted.

II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Presentations/Exhibits: RFRI Fishing Rodeo; Downtown Live!; Assumption/St. James Parish Sewage Treatment; Shrimp & Petroleum Festival; Dr. Earl Melancon's Biology Class; LSU Ag Center Water Education Group; La Fete d'Ecologie; Estuary Live!; Wings Over the Wetlands Festival (Lafitte, LA); Thibodaux Women's Club; MSRB/Mekong River Commission Exchange Program; NSU A+ Scholar Event; Jason Project (Boston, MA); TaWaSi Organization; NSU Graphics Art Class; Bayou Haystackers

Media Interviews: KTIB and KLRZ-La Fete d'Ecologie; Estuary Live!; Jason Project

Meetings: LCA Public Meetings; Invasive Species Action Plan Team; Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District; LCA Stakeholder's Meeting; Education Action Plan Team; Mobile Bay NEP Invasive Species Inventory; South East Region NEP Fisheries Workshop (Melbourne, Florida); CWPPRA Outreach Committee Workshop; National Institute of Governmental Purchasers Conference (New Orleans); EPA/NEP Meeting(Seattle, WA); Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists; Vegetative Planting at Beson's Landing(Golden Meadow); Jason Project; Rural Tourism Conference; NRCS LACD Meeting; Migratory Bird Action Plan Team; Louisiana Abandoned Crab Trap Removal Program; Long Distance Transport of Dredged Material Workshop

Projects Initiated: 2004 Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration Event; Development of a Multi-Page Brochure Addressing Chenier Ridge and Maritime Forest Habitats and Their Importance to Nearctic Migrant Birds; Building of a Boardwalk on LUMCON Property, Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana; Support for the Development of the Barrier Shoreline Document to Address the Natural Resources and Social Importance of the Barataria-Terrebonne Basins; Continued Development and Implementation of the Data and Information Management System for the Barataria and Terrebonne Estuarine Complex; Back Up Support for the 3rd Annual Paddle Bayou Lafourche Trip; Land Support for the 3rd Annual Paddle Bayou Lafourche Trip; Students and Teachers as Educational Partners (STEPS) 03-04; Marsh Mission Project (C. C. Lockwood); Update of BTNEP Self-Guided Field Trip Handbook; Design and Production of the Estuary Compact; Creative Development of Display and other products to be used In Conjunction with BTNEP Outreach and Education Efforts; Mississippi River Freshwater Re-Introduction into Bayou Lafourche: Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with LDNR; Business Peer Group Exchanges and Field Trips for Mississippi River Freshwater Re-Introduction into Bayou Lafourche

Grants Initiated: Section 320, Federal Clean Water Act, Fiscal Year 2004 Work Plan; Maritime Forest Ridge & Marsh Restoration at Port Fourchon, LA; UNO Research & Technology Foundation "2003 Gulf Shoreline Restoration Science Advisory Report

Rick Hartman asked about the Marsh Mission Project progress and Deborah Schultz stated that C. C. Lockwood would be leaving on his mission on November 8th. Rick asked if the BTNEP website would have a link to the Marsh Mission site and Deborah said yes there would be.

Kerry stated that Mr. Lockwood has secured a houseboat and additional funding from LA Dept. Natural Resources.

II. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be held on February 19, 2004.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Davis Pond Update-Jack Fredine, US Army Corps of Engineers

Kerry reminded the MC that the Davis Pond Diversion Project is one of the largest diversions in the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary and was dedicated a year and a half ago and that it has experienced some problems with being able to function.

Jack stated that what the project will attempt to do is to push isohaline lines closer to the coast. Jack stated that the project was authorized in 1965 and was dedicated in 2002. A post-authorization change will need to be made in order for this project to change its operating constraints. The project is currently being re-evaluated.

Jack showed photos of the project showing that some diversion is taking place but not as much expected. He then showed graphs of statistics of salinity during certain times of the year.

Kerry asked if higher salinities are being seen more frequently now than we were seeing those 10 yrs ago or are lower salinities being seen more frequently. Jack stated that big swings are being seen but he does not have the data to back that up.

Lori LeBlanc asked what changes will be made. Jack stated he did not have the answer in detail because once the re-evaluation is made; a study will be made looking at all of the various considerations.

Kerry stated that because this project is a prominent issue in the BTNEP CCMP, he offered the program office's assistance in anyway needed to get this project moving and made a priority to get it into operational condition.

Jack informed the MC that on December 1st, this project will operate at high capacity, depending on how high the river will be. This is being done to test the levees to see if they will operate at the high flow levels. If it is successful, Jack added, then diversions will continue as per operational guidelines and the technical committee will decide how the project will continue after that.

Windell suggested to Jack that the fact sheets concerning fisheries should be made available

Lori LeBlanc stated that she thinks that the post-authorization timeline really needs to be followed and that it is critical to the national perception.

B. Bayou Lafourche Project Update and Website Demonstration- Bob Roberts, LDNR and Wendi French, Wyndston Services

Kerry reminded the MC that BTNEP received funding to manage the outreach component of the Bayou Lafourche Project.

Bob Roberts informed the MC that the engineering design phase of the project has started, with T. Baker Smith & Sons doing the survey. He stated that this phase will be a six month effort that will include static GPS control work and installing secondary control elements. He stated that outreach presentations are scheduled for Ascension, Assumption and Lafourche Parishes in November.

He announced to the MC that the official website is officially completed due to a partnership between BTNEP and LDNR. It was developed to inform people of the progress of the project as well as the culture and area of Bayou Lafourche. The website address is www.bayoulafourche.org

Len Bahr urged Bob, during the survey phase, to get T. Baker Smith & Son's to look for appropriate places where water can be withdrawn from the bayou as it is flowing downstream. He thinks that will add enormous environmental benefits to the project.

Archie Chaisson asked about the status of comparing the old channel to the alternate channel around Donaldsonville. In other words, how much weight is going to be put on what the public wants? Bob stated that there are 12 alternatives to the plan, some that were submitted by the public. Archie asked if the financial issues of this project were being discussed. Bob stated that LDNR is only working on the engineering phase at the moment. He stated that once CWPPRA Task Force approves the engineering phase, the other phases will be initiated. Archie stated that at the US Army Corps of Engineers project selection meeting held the previous week in Lafayette, the socio-economic issues of this project were not selected as a project at that meeting. He asked Bob if DNR has this included in this project and Bob stated that yes it is because this project has benefits other than wetland benefits. The socio-economic benefits will depend on the wetland benefits.

Wendi French then demonstrated to the MC difference pages of the site.

Len Bahr stated that the Governor's Office has been a big proponent of this project for years and should have their logo on the website as should the Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. Leslie stated that the CWPPRA Logo will be added and there are esthetic changes to be made

A PowerPoint slide show was then shown to the MC that is available on the website.

Gary LaFleur stated that he would be able to help spread the word about this project if he has access to the images that were shown in the presentation. Wendi stated that there is an image

credits page on the site that will state which images are available for use. Gary stated he was particularly interested in the maps and Wendi stated that all of the maps were property of BTNEP and are a part of public domain.

C. Lake Verret Rotenone Sampling Results- Mike Walker, LWF

Mike stated that, in July and August of 2003, rotenone samples were taken in Lake Verret as well as Grassy Lake and Lake Palourde. However, due to the time constraints given to him for his presentation, he only had time to present the data on Lake Verret. But, he also stated that the other data is available.

He informed the MC that all the fish that were harvested were sorted by species, weight and count for each inch group. Some of the species found were channel catfish, blue catfish, and flathead catfish. Comparing data from past samplings, Mike stated that the fish counts were basically stable. However, the count for small mouth buffalo was high, compared to previous years. He stated he did not have a reason for this. He stated that black crappie was much more predominant than white crappie.

He stated in looking at the over all results, the shift in the small mouth buffalo and freshwater drum is directly responsible for the increase total pounds per acre. The time of year the samples were taken may also have direct relation to the increase in small mouth buffalo and freshwater drum. He stated that in the past, most of the rotenone samples were taken in March and April.

The data gathered showed that overall these are very high pounds per acre, probably some of the highest in the state, if not in the United States. This is an indication that Lake Verret is in very good condition as far as fisheries goes.

Rick Hartman asked if an estuarian component has been detected in the Lake. Mike stated that there are a large number of bay anchovies but they do not show up in very large pounds per acre because they do not weigh much. He stated that there were several other species to indicate this.

D. LCA Ecosystem Model Presentation-Dr. Robert Twilley

Dr. Twilley stated that although the term "restoration" is what is being used when talking about saving the Louisiana coastline, in reality, restoration can not be done. "Rehabilitation" is really what is trying to be accomplished. Rehabilitation is defined as having something that we can call a sustainable coast that meets the ecosystem needs of sustainable natural resources and at the same time maintains the economic development that is very important to this coast.

He stated that trends are very important in determining what is wrong. From those trends a conceptual model can be developed to see how the system works; then hypotheses are made.

Dr. Twilley stated that there are 5 modules to the model to come up with the predictions. They are: 1) hydrodynamics; 2) land building; 3) habitat types; 4) habitat use and 5) water quality conditions.

Dr. Twilley stated that there are 45 groups on the team that developed this model, which included state and federal agencies, academics, and private consultants. He stated that the idea was to

come up with restoration alternatives that will reduce, maintain and enhance the coastline. There are 3 factors to consider in developing these alternatives and they are physical processes, geomorphic features and ecological successions.

Dr. Twilley stated that monitoring is not just evaluating a project, but also used to improve the modeling relative to hypothesis testing, with Caenarvon being a good example.

Kerry asked if the model was used in the LCA process to pick potential measures. Dr. Twilley said that it was used only to evaluate measures that had been developed. He stated the 32 alternatives were run through the model to evaluate or calibrate them. He stated they looked at which alternatives hit the target and which ones didn't and then those results were then run through a benefit package to actually evaluate and rank the ecosystem benefits of each of the relative alternatives. There were seven that made the final selection.

Sue Hawes asked Dr. Twilley if the hydrodynamic model had to be run each time this model was ran. He stated no, he stated that it is based on changes in salinity and that information was already known from the information in hydrologic model that LSU developed.

Windell Curole stated that there will be geological, biological and sociological changes in these issues and asked if there was room in the model for this. Dr. Twilley stated whenever new information comes in on subsidence rate, it is applied in the model.

E. LCA Document Discussion-Kerry St. Pe

Kerry reminded the MC that the LCA document still has not been released as of today. He stated that timing is going to be an issue and that this is a huge document and involved issues that took the Program five years to weed through. Kerry stated that the Program Office is looking for guidance and that a Restoration Action Plan Team was put together to give that guidance. On the other hand, he stated, the MC went through a process that defined restoration and what it means to the people of the Barataria-Terrebonne system. He would like to maintain that what was developed through consensus is still relevant today. He feels, personally, that if this same process were to be started all over again, we would come up with something very close to what we have now.

He recognizes that there have been some changes, such as a lot of land lost since 1996 when the CCMP was developed and the peoples perception has changed to where they understand what land loss will mean to them and their families. So, Kerry stated that a decision needs to be made on whether or not the MC should take what little time will be given to review the LCA and make recommendations or should they just lay down what is already written in the CCMP.

Rick Hartman stated the last he heard was that the document will list all of the 7 alternatives and not give recommendations as to what alternatives to use. Therefore, he stated that maybe the MC doesn't have too strong of an action and that it isn't a certain position that the MC might be opposed to.

Sue Hawes stated that the State insisted that no preferred alternatives be listed. The State hopes that the people will make that decision. She stated that a series of public meetings will be held so

the public can say which alternatives they prefer and why.

Lori LeBlanc stated that this is probably the MC's last chance to have a say on what goes into the final study that will go for authorization. Sue Hawes stated that June 2004 is the deadline and every day that goes, it gets more and more difficult to meet that deadline.

Earl Melancon asked if they are anticipating people to say they like parts of different alternatives and then have to go back to the drawing board. Sue Hawes is hoping that that will not be the case but it is a possibility.

Rick Hartman stated that as an agency, NMFS will look at the alternatives or array of alternatives that will benefit their issues the most since his agency thinks they know better which plan does that and will tell the Corp of Engineers which one that is.

Kerry stated that this is an example of what he is talking about. These discussions should go on, he said, and that these exact arguments DID go on starting in 1991 and what was developed from those discussions was the CCMP. The CCMP states what the MC and the people are willing to accept. Kerry realizes that the CCMP does not give exact details but it laid down what the public is willing to accept. Unfortunately, he added, the CCMP was not an intricate part of the LCA process up to this point. He stated that the MC will have to decide if CCMP is what it still believes in or move into the direction of the LCA.

Vicki Duffourc stated that she thinks that there should be a technical committee formed from the MC that looks at these seven alternatives and ranks them as to how close they are too the CCMP. She stated that if the MC cannot take an official stance before the report is released, a matrix should maybe developed showing which alternatives match certain points in the CCMP.

Earl Melancon reminded Kerry that when the CCMP was developed it was recognized then that it would be a living document. A document that might have changes here and there but the essence of the document hasn't changed. He stated that the MC is gathered together as an affirmation of the CCMP that is in existence now with the understanding that it is a living document with enough essence to address what is happening now with the LCA document. He stated that in his opinion the MC MUST respond to the LCA document, whether it be strong or weak. He suggests that the MC use the CCMP as the framework to discuss the LCA document. He suggested that all seven scenarios be studied to see which meets the CCMP.

Kerry stated that each member of the CCMP was given a list of members on the Restoration Action Plan Team. He stated that he doesn't think that the Restoration Action Plan Team would have time to come back to the MC with its assessment.

Scott Wilson stated that not only does the LCA document list the alternatives but it also lists science needs. So there are more than just the projects that need to be commented on.

Rick Hartman stated that it would take each person at least a week to read the document and really understand it, and that is just the portion of the modeling and what the alternatives are and what the outputs are. He also stated that as a member of the LCA committee, he cannot

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comfortably choose who would be on the action plan team to make decisions for the MC as a whole. Kerry stated also that he would be reluctant to turn over complete control over to a sub-committee to make this important decision, without coming back to the whole MC with its

decision.

Windell motioned to have a special MC meeting to discuss the MC's position of the LCA Document, setting the date based on when the document is made available to the public. Rick Hartman suggested a month after the document is officially released, giving the MC 2-4 weeks to put together a response. Scott Wilson stated the target date as of yesterday, November 4th, is Dec. 10th and that the public meetings would be held in January. Buck

Vandersteen asked if the Program Staff would be able to review the document to see where there are inconsistencies with the CCMP and where there are inconsistencies bring that before the MC. That way the MC can focus on what is not compatible with the CCMP. He stated he realized that puts more work on the staff but it would be easier on the MC. Vickie Duffourc stated that she imagines that that would be something the action plan team would do.

Al asked Doug Jacobson that if the MC comes up with a decision that is inconsistent with the CCMP, would that be something that would up set EPA.

Doug Jacobson stated that CCMP's were not intended to be static documents. He stated that one of the requirements is that there be periodic review of CCMP's to see if action plans need to be re-prioritized or to see if an action plan is still valid.

Roland Guidry seconded Windell's previous motion. Sue Hawes asked to amend this motion by having the Action Plan Team meet to discuss and synthesize the document and then bring that to the MC. Rick Hartman stated that there are only 4 or 5 alternatives in the BTE, not 7, so that should allow the staff to do this.

Doug seconded Sues substitute motion. But then Al asked for a general show of hands to see who favored Sue's alternative. There were only nine people favoring that alternative therefore Windell's original motion was accepted.

While lunch was being served Roland Guidry asked if BTNEP has any input in the Oil Spill Coordinator's Regional Response Plan and Dean stated that the program did not. Roland stated that this program pre-selects areas with restoration needs due to oil spills. He stated one was just completed from the Westchester Spill where a crevasse was created down in Pass a Loutre to create 5 acres of marsh in an area that was badly eroded. He stated that 12 picnic tables and 12 barbeque pits were also put in the wildlife management area there.

Kerry stated that due to staff limitations, BTNEP was unable to get involved in this program. Roland stated this is a model for the whole nation and that every parish is getting involved.

F. La Fete d'Ecologie Update-Leslie McVeigh

Leslie reminded the MC that this year's festival was held on September 27th, as planned. She informed the MC that the layout of the festival at Peltier Park was different than in past years.

She stated it was better for all of the participants and exhibitors because they were all lined up on

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the concrete area of the park. There was less of a drainage problem since it rained the day before. She stated that the festival did raise some money for the Foundation. There were some new exhibitors this year as well as new entertainment. Leslie informed the MC that there are some

alternate sites have been offered to BTNEP/BTEF next year's festival, although those sites are still in Thibodaux.

Leslie stated that this year's theme was the Louisiana Purchase and that a local artist, Susan Hoffman, did a poster that depicted the resources of the BTE against a back drop of the Louisiana Purchase.

Leslie then re-introduced Joni Blanchard and Neil Pollack and stated that they both will be helping in different components of the Bayou Lafourche Project. Joni will be assisting in the implementation of the business and industry round table discussions and field trips. Neil will be doing some creative work on the displays and traveling exhibits for the project.

G. Estuary Live! Update-Deborah Schultz

Deborah reminded the MC that the day before the festival, September 26th, Estuary Live took place and was a complete success. She stated she was quite impressed with the MC participation. She stated she did not have time to put together a presentation for this but would have one at the next MC meeting. She stated some pre-recorded footage was made on Elmer's Island that was shown but the actual event took place on the Golden Meadow Hurricane Protection Levee. She stated that there was a video produced from the Estuary Live show and Pam Blanchard, with LSU Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction, and Dianne Lindstedt, with LA SeaGrant, developed some curriculum materials to go along with the Video. Deborah stated that these activities are on the BTNEP website. She stated the Pam and Diane would be doing a presentation on this curriculum at the upcoming LSTA conference in December.

Deborah stated that Estuary Live was an internet broadcast where teachers and students could email in questions to each site. She stated that there were emails from all over the country, as well as Cuba.

H. Bayou Lafourche Paddle Trip Update-Deborah Schultz

Deborah stated that this is the third year that this event has taken place. The trip will start in Donaldsonville on Friday, November 7th and end in Lockport, on Monday, November 10th. She stated that there is funding from the Dept. of Natural Resources to enhance the trip in such a way that there will be additional evening events and more publicity. Deborah stated that there are currently 55 people registered with 25 of those are registered for all 4 days.

Deborah thanked Archie Chaisson, Cullen Curole and Windell Curole for all their help as well as many other people.

She stated that there will be several journalists and artists that are registered and that her 86 year old father will be paddling also.

I. Jason Project-Deborah Schultz

Deborah stated that the Jason Project is a science based non-profit organization founded by Bob Ballard, the person that found the Titanic. The project name was derived from Jason and the Argonauts. This group does various expeditions around the planet and develops curriculum

materials and videos and the expedition itself is broadcast live over the internet. This year their choice of places to concentrate on were the Florida Everglades and Louisiana. They received a warmer reception for this idea from Louisiana and realized that BTNEP was the key to getting to key people. So, again, there are several MC members involved in this project; Earl Melancon, Denise Reed, Mark Schexnayder and a representative from LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries, to talk about nutria, are among a few.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Windell Curole stated that the West Bay Project is allowing the flow of Mississippi River water to the marsh directly west of the river with a flow rate of 25,000 cubic feet per second. This is something that has been needed to be done for 20 years.

Windell also informed the MC that vertical elevation data is being examined in surrounding parishes. The data shows that in a 20 year period, the average drop of the plates in the high lands has been one foot. He stated that this is critical in dealing with future existence.

He also stated that the Appeals Court upheld the lower court decision on a \$1.3 billion award to oyster farmers.

David Bourgeois thanked the Program office and SeaGrant for its 15 years of support to the Marsh Maneuvers. He stated that because of the uncertainty of the facility on Grand Terre, LSU has made the decision to move the program to Rockefeller Refuge. Deborah stated that Mike Liffman assured her that BTNEP issues will still be on the agenda for the program.

Richard DeMay informed the MC that the 2004 Tidal Graph calendar is currently at the printer. BTNEP has ordered 10,000 this year. He stated each month has a different story line dealing with a contemporary issue of coastal restoration, fisheries or some similar issue.

The meeting adjourned at 1:43 p.m.