

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

MC Meeting # 49 Agenda

9:30AM-September 2, 2009

Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve

314 St. Mary St.

Thibodaux, LA

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Roll-Call

The following MC Member were present:

Archie Chaisson-Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District
John Tesvich-Commercial Fisheries
Jason Smith-Jefferson Parish
Anne Perry-La Dept. of Economic Development
Ann Wilson-LA Dept. of Education
Emelise Cormier-LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Linda Pace-LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Vince Guillory-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Nick Matherne-Lafourche Parish
Dwayne Bourgeois-LA Association of Levee Boards
Tim Allen-Louisiana Landowner's Association
Ed Landgraf-Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association
Paul Johnson-Louisiana Science Teacher's Association
Murt Conover-LUMCON
Randy Lanctot-Louisiana Wildlife Federation
David Bourgeois-LSU Ag Center
David Muth-National Park Service
Gary LaFleur-Nicholls State University
Jo Anna Jones-South Central Planning & Development Commission
Simone Maloz-South Louisiana Economic Council
Al Levron-Terrebonne Parish
Jean Landry-The Nature Conservancy
Sue Hawes-US Army Corp of Engineers
Doug Jacobson-US EPA
Andre' Williams-USGS
Rick Hartman-US National Marine Fisheries Service
Quin Kinler-USDA/NRCS

Organizations not present:

American Sugarcane League
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana
Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Greater Lafourche Port Commission
Iberville Parish
LA Dept. of Ag & Forestry
LA Dept. of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
LA Dept. of Health & Hospitals
Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts
Louisiana Farm Bureau
Louisiana Forestry Association
Louisiana Independent Oil & Gas Association
Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Plaquemines Parish
Pointe Coupee Parish

St. Charles Parish
US Coast Guard
US Fish & Wildlife Service

Guests:

Jennifer Robinson-LUMCON
Siva Nunna-BTNEP Intern
Marilyn Barrett-O'Leary
Laura St. Pe'
Mary Bourgeois
Kristen Galler-BTNEP student worker
Susan Hennington-US Army Corp of Engineers
Mattie Dantin-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Bill Spitzer-USDA
Adele Swearingen-NRCS
Cynthia Dubois-NSU Library
Nikki Buskey-The Courier/The Daily Comet
Myron Fischer-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Tomma Barnes-US Army Corp of Engineers
Mark McElroy-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries

B. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the June 2, 2009 meeting

Tim Allen made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes and to accept as submitted. Ed Landgraf seconded that motion. There was no opposition, no discussion.

II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES-Kerry St. Pé

A. Presentations/Exhibits/Field Trips

GOMA/NEP Diversity Symposium	Friends of Grand Isle
Brookside High School Volunteer Event	Tilapia Monitoring
Wetshop Teacher Training/Field Trip	NPS Summer Camp
Louisiana Yards & Neighborhoods	COSEE-Mandalay
Plant ID Course	Grand Isle Beach Sweep
Volunteer Event for Seattle Academy	"Aliens in the Estuary" Teacher Workshop
Rustic Pathways Volunteer Event- Lake Boudreaux	WETMAAP
Tarpon Rodeo	Dedication for NOAA Community Based Restoration Projects
America's Wetland Conservation Corp Training/ Planting	

B. Media Interviews

Daily Comet(Thibodaux, LA)

- *"Marathon of Science: Campers get knee deep in coastal science"*, June 24, 2009
- *"Cheers and Jeers: Up-close lessons"*, June 27, 2009
- *"Seattle student put down roots in Louisiana"*, July 6, 2009
- *"Volunteers from across the nation help restore Louisiana coast"*, July 24, 2009
- *"Help clean up Grand Isle beach"*, August 10, 2009

Post/South (Plaquemine, LA)

- *"Invasive plant life plague Louisiana waters"*, June 11, 2009
- *"Numerous foreign creatures invading Louisiana ecosystem today"*, July 16, 2009

The Courier (Houma, LA)

- “Cheers and Jeers: Up-close lessons”, June 27, 2009
- “Seattle students put down roots in Louisiana”, July 5, 2009
- “Volunteers from across the nation help restore Louisiana coast”, July 24, 2009

The Lafourche Gazette (Larose, LA)

- “Donaldsonville to the Gulf cost share agreement approved”, July 12, 2009

The Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)

- “Nutria eating less of state’s wetlands”, July 17, 2009

The Tri-Parish Times (Houma, LA)

- “Reader: Flood protection: with levees or without?”, editorial, July 15, 2009

Water Quality Training Video
Gulf Guardian Video

WLAE-Lindsey Pick, producer of “Category 5”
National Science Foundation video

C. Meetings

Public Meeting on Tilapia-Port Sulphur
OCPR Mississippi River Pipeline Project
ORRAP Educational Sub-panel Conf. Call
Teacher’s Educational CD Planning Meeting
Louisiana Invasive Aquatic Species Task Force
Environmental Ed. Art & Language Art Contest
Award Ceremony
Terrebonne Natural Resource Committee
CPRA
USDA/ARS-soil chemistry of ridge
National Wildlife Federation
US Army Corp of Engineer Panel-Corp Changes
Envirothon Training-Audubon Zoo
NEP Gulf Alliance Meeting-Mobile, AI
Davis Pond
Climate Change Workshop

CWPPRA Task Force
Sustainable Development
Donaldsonville to the Gulf
Environmental Ed. Symposium Planning Meeting
State Senate Candidate Norby Chabert
Pouder Project w/ Linda Mathies
LDNR-discuss White Paper on Dredge Material
from Houma Navigational Canal
Leeville Bridge Dedication Ceremony
BIG Meeting
LCA Needs Assessment Meeting
LUMCON Executive Board Meeting
CWPPRA Outreach Committee
ORRAP
Louisiana Assoc. of Professional Biologists
Historic New Orleans Collection

One important meeting Kerry mentioned was the Davis Pond Meeting, which was an effort to change the operational plan to operate at near its maximum. Right now it is governed by salinities. Andrew Barron introduced Tomma Barnes, the project manager, with USACE, and asked her to briefly go over the fact sheet for the Davis Pond PDT that was distributed.

Tomma stated that the Corp has the authority through WRDA 2007 to change the operation of the structure. She stated that the focus is solely on making that change. There will be some modeling in the very near future of flow through the structure to see if they help meet the objective which is to get more water, nutrients and sediment in the marsh. If the water flow alone does not help meet this objective, then modifications to outfall may have to be studied also. She stated that the average CFS now is 4 to 5 thousand, it can be run up to 10,000, when salinities are too high.

She invited everyone to the Public Scoping Meeting that will be held on October 6th.

C. Projects Initiated

1. "2009 GIS Assistance"-M. Landry
2. "Water Quality Instructional Video Production", A. Barron
3. No Cost Time Extension for "False River WETMAAP Teacher Training Workshops and Material", S. Testroet-Bergeron
4. "LSTA Teacher Training Partnership", S. Testroet-Bergeron
5. "Design and Layout of 2009-2010 Educational CDs and Lessons"-S. Testroet-Bergeron
6. No Cost Time Extension for "Scientific Content for Birding Curriculum", S. Testroet-Bergeron
7. "Bottomland Hardwood Forest Restoration through Invasive Species Removal", M. Massimi
8. "Restoration Pilot Project in Woodlands Trail and Park", M. Massimi
9. Contract Amendment for "Audubon Invasive Cichlid Exhibit", M. Massimi
10. "Righteous Fur", M. Massimi
11. "Understanding Coastal Communities and Wetland Resources through Mapping Technology"-S.Sparks

III. **Schedule Next Meeting Date:** Date Suggested is Wednesday, December 2, 2009.

IV. Discussion Items

A. **Review of Invasive Species Rapid Assessment & Symposium-Dr. Marilyn Barrett O'Leary**

Michael Massimi informed the MC that Dr. O'Leary was the contractor for 2 projects. The Rapid Assessment which took place in August of 2008 and the Gulf of Mexico Program funded symposium teacher workshop that recently took place at the Barataria Preserve. Today's presentation is on the rapid assessment and its findings.

Dr. O'Leary stated that the goal of the project was to secure a snapshot of the invasive species in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary. Specifically, to identify the invasives fishes, macro-invertebrates and plants. Data had been previously gathered back in the 1930's so the team was trying to update data. They were trying to find out where things were located and if there were any new species. Why did they pick the BTE? Louisiana Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan called for a rapid assessment of all the coastal waters of the state. Because the Louisiana Coast is such a convoluted coastline, 3 different assessments needed to be done.

A rapid assessment is a one week intensive sampling effort. The Cameron area was going to be sampled first but then Hurricanes Katrina and Rita wiped that area out. So those funds had to be turned back. The BTE is very vulnerable to invasive species because of the Mississippi River.

One big challenge to doing a rapid assessment is finding the right people to assist, as well as equipment. Sampling locations needed to be decided upon also. It took a year to recruit people and to get everything set up. Fifty people from state, federal, universities, in-state and out-of-state were recruited to assist.

Headquarters was set up at the Plant Materials Center, in Galliano. Specific teams with specific protocols were set up and were provided with similar equipment and data sheets. Each team sampled in the same way. Dr. O'Leary then discussed the sampling procedure.

Dr. O'Leary stated that the sampling found no new invasive species. However, invasive species were found in new areas where they weren't found before. The two big discoveries that were made were 1) giant salvinia in several places in the estuary and 2) rio grande cichlids on the west bank of New Orleans.

Conclusions gathered from the assessment were that the estuary has comparatively healthy aquatic habitat with species the team was looking for. In many cases where invasive species were found, they were not in high density. No new species were found, only new locations were added. Data is now available showing the spread of the Rio Grande cichlid and the Giant Salvinia.

Dr. O'Leary stated that things were learned about rapid assessments themselves as well. Rapid assessments are not a perfect way to get information. It does what they said they wanted it to do, it gives a snapshot. But the invertebrate sampling was weak, and that could have been because they were trying to sample for a too broad a range of species.

This report will recommend to other state agencies to add invasive species to their regular sampling activities. It will also recommend more education about invasive species towards the public. It recommends more research and bio-control as well.

B. Update on Invasive Tilapia in Port Sulphur-Mark McElroy, LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries

Mark McElroy stated that at the end of 2007 LDWF received a report that there was tilapia in the Port Sulphur area. In his opinion, tilapia are dangerous because they are mouth breeders, they carry their young in their mouth, they carry their eggs in their mouth, they handle poor water quality conditions very well, especially low dissolved oxygen. They can handle both salt and fresh water conditions.

Tilapia don't tolerate cold weather well, however, the temperatures in the Winter of 2007 didn't get low enough to kill the tilapia so come early 2008, the tilapia population expanded. A plan was developed to address this. Teams were set up to decide what techniques needed to be used in certain areas. Once the area in Port Sulphur was marked off, the Secretary of LDWF closed off all fishing in that area. Experts, such as BTNEP, UNO, DEQ, Tulane, were brought in to draft a plan.

There were fish found in three types of habitats: ponds, drainage ditch and sub-surface drainage. Fish were also found in the pumping stations outside the marked off area which was a big concern because the Parish could not turn off the pumps during rain events. It is believed that some tilapia were pumped into the marsh.

Rotenone was used to eradicate the tilapia. However it was found that it didn't dissolve well in water so spraying on top of the water was not an option after trying it. It was later found the best way to apply it was to pump it into the water, on the bottom.

Mark stated that public hearings were held in the parish to explain to the public what was going to happen and that it would be illegal to handle or collect any of the dead fish.

Rick Hartman asked how the fish got there. Mark stated there is a criminal side to this issue that is ongoing. Where that is at right now, he did not know.

Mark stated now they are up to the point where they are facing the final two aspects of the plan. The first is to stock native fish, fish that are predators to tilapia in case some tilapia were missed. The last thing the plan included is to start a long term monitoring plan which will be contracted out. He stated there have been two proposals submitted, one from NSU and one from UNO.

Mark then thanked all the collaborators which included BTNEP.

C. Update on Tri-Parish Sediment Delivery Project-Laura Belden, LA Office of Coastal Protection & Restoration

Laura stated that the project goal is to design and construct an efficient sediment delivery pipeline system from a renewable resource in the Mississippi River to strategic locations in the Barataria Basin.

The project is funded by a combination of Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funds or surplus funds. There was approximately \$66 million allocated for this project. Thirty-four million dollars of that comes from CIAP funds and \$32.5 million comes from surplus funds. Of the \$34 million from CIAP funds, \$31 million is from the State and approximately \$1 million each from Plaquemines, Jefferson and Lafourche Parishes.

Laura stated that the project will be implemented in phases which allows Phase I to be constructed while the planning for the entire project is finalized and land rights can be secured for the entire project.

Phase I will be advertised for construction in December 2009. Three potential sites have been considered for Phase I: 1) Myrtle Grove-Naomi Area, 2) Wilkinson Canal, and 3) West Point aux la Hache.

For Myrtle Grove, the pipeline would run south avoiding the pen area then run west. At the Wilkinson Canal site, the pipeline would run south down Wilkinson Canal before heading west and include West Pointe aux la Heche and continue west.

After looking at the analysis and criteria of each site, the West Point aux la Hache site seems to be the best location. Land right issues are at a minimum and barrow sites in the river are best and navigation issues won't be much of a problem. It also seems to have the most indirect impacts by protecting areas to the north from storm surge. Another benefit to this location is that there are two other existing projects in the vicinity that can actually use the pipeline that will be built.

Laura stated that a Stakeholders Meeting is scheduled to take place on October 15th, she said that once a room is confirmed, an invitation will be sent out.

D. Update on CIAP Projects-Greg Grandy, LA Office of Coastal Protection & Restoration

Greg Grandy first explained the CIAP timeline to MC. He stated that it was part of the Energy Bill that was passed in August of 2005, prior to Hurricane Katrina. The plan was approved in November 2007.

He stated that some of the goals of the projects were to choose projects that could be moved into construction quickly. He talked about 8 of 23 that are currently under construction today.

The first project is the Lake Salvador Shoreline Protection Project Phase III, funded by St. Charles Parish and the State of Louisiana. It was to build 7,300 ft. of shoreline protection.

The second project is LA 1 Phase I-C, the 5-mile stretch from the Leeville Bridge approach on the southern end, all the way down to where LA 1 turns at Port Fourchon. He stated this will be approximately 7 miles of 40-ft. wide, 2 lane elevated highway.

The third project is the Barataria Land Bridge to be built with dedicated dredging with goals of marsh creation and nourishment of a 752 acre area. This project is funded 60% with CIAP funds.

The fourth project is the E. Grand Terre Island Restoration project. There will be beach fill on the front side and marsh creation on the back side.

The fifth project, Rockefeller Refuge Shoreline Demonstration Project, with beach fill alternatives being looked at currently.

The next several projects Greg mentioned, which will be initiated soon, are shoreline protection projects in Cameron Parish and Terrebonne Parish, a beneficial use of dredged material project in the ship channel in Cameron Parish in the Black Lake area.

He then briefly mentioned the other projects that are still in the design stage.

Greg then briefly mentioned some of the state CIAP projects. He mentioned to the MC that there is an electronic newsletter available to those interested that gives an update on these projects.

Discussion on several of the projects followed Greg's presentation.

E. Status Briefing on the Invasive Cactus Moth in Louisiana-Bill Spitzer, USDA

Bill stated that the Cactus Moth originally came from South America in 1925. He discussed the reproductive process of the cactus moth.

He stated some countries used the moth to purposefully eliminate the prickly pear cactus. It reached the U.S. in 1989, although it wasn't thought to be a deliberate introduction here. Since 1989, it has moved about 100 miles per year. He stated that the USDA has since then considered it an invasive species.

It is now prevalent in Louisiana, with several sites in the southeast region, including Grand Terre and along Hwy 1 and north of Cocodrie, along Hwy 55. He stated traps have been placed in these areas to slow down the spread to the west.

Here in Louisiana, landowners don't seem to want the prickly pear cactus, so they are more than agreeable to having the traps put on their property. However, in western states, there is an ecological need for the plant. In Mexico, it is a cash crop, so they have given the U.S. funds to help eliminate this pest.

He then discussed the mechanics of the trap. He stated that cactus can also be removed by hand with a mower, then have a herbicide applied afterwards to prevent regrowth.

He stated that once the population has been reduced, a sterilization insect technique can be applied where sterile males will be distributed over an area, reducing reproduction.

He stated that mowing on Grand Terre would start in late October.

Kerry asked Bill if assistance would be needed once the sterile male moths were ready to be distributed. Bill stated that once they get to that point, they may very well need it.

Jean Landry asked if all of the prickly pear cactus on top of Fort Livingston on Grand Terre would be removed. Bill stated as much as possible. She asked if herbicide would be applied afterwards, and he stated probably not there. She stated if herbicide was applied, an entire habitat would be wiped out, Bill agreed with her.

F. Update on Elmer's Island-Myron Fisher-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries

Myron stated that the Grand Isle Fisheries Facility will be managing Elmer's Island. He stated when the beach opened in July, it was only open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. However, through public demand, it is now open daily.

Vehicles are now allowed on the beach, but driver's are at their own risk due to soft sand. It is 700 ft. of soft sand from the end of the road to the beach. So with lots of people expected for Tarpon Rodeo, emergency funds were allocated to put in a quick highway. Articulated concrete mats were laid within 3 days, giving a 16 ft. wide roadway. The mats were covered with sand and lined with PVC stakes.

He stated that because new vegetation has been planted in the marsh area, no vehicles of any kind will be allowed in that area. Sand fencing will also be installed. He also mentioned that the Elmer's Island Trash Bash would be taking place in a few weeks, which will be a great help since there will be no trash pickup.

Richard DeMay stated that he personally was very concerned about vehicles being allowed on the beach because of the nesting birds there. Myron stated that the rules are very flexible and could change. He also stated that he could take these statements to Baton Rouge, or that anyone could take their concerns to Baton Rouge themselves.

Randy Lanctot stated that the speed limit on the beach needs to be watched very carefully because people speed up and down the beach and someone is going to get hurt.

G. "A Schoolhouse View of the Estuary" CD-Susan Testroet-Bergeron

Susan stated that this project has been in the works for about 2 ½ years. She stated that the funds were initially to be used for the Travelling Children's Museum, however, that did not come to pass for several reasons. So the funds were used for educational resources, such as "A Schoolhouse View of the Estuary" CD.

The partners in this project were CWPPRA, NRCS and LSTA.

Susan stated that BTNEP is hoping to be able to distribute the CD at the LSTA Convention that will be held in Shreveport in November and La Fete in September.

This product is for the educator. The CD is organized in elementary, middle and high school sections, a "classroom" for each level. All of the products that BTNEP has developed over the years were then organized by each level.

Each product is in pdf format so that they could not be changed.

Susan then demonstrated a few sections of the CD.

H. Wetland's Education Theater Outreach, Mindy Mayer

Mindy informed the MC that she is a writer and stated that this project combined three things that she cares about; theater, education and the wetlands. She stated it was funded by a 2008 BTNEP mini-grant.

She stated her project was designed to offer the audience, in this case, children, a different point of entry to the topic of wetlands.

Mindy informed the MC that one of her partner's is the nature photographer, C. C. Lockwood. Other

partners include Dean Smith, who assisted with the Power Point Presentation that was used in the beginning of each performance to settle the children down, Jo Anne Burke, with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, and the Wetland Express from the Audubon Zoo.

Mindy showed slides from performances that took place at schools in the New Orleans area. She stated the budget for this project supported 10 performances. The grades reached ranged from first to fourth, reaching over 400 students in the BTES.

I. "Louisiana Estuary Cuisine" Event-Susan Testroet-Bergeron

Susan stated that she was here to talk about this event on behalf of Dr. Earl Melancon, the president of the BTE Foundation. Susan stated everyone should have gotten an invitation to the "Taste of the Estuary" dinner that will be held on October 30th. It will be an evening of music and food to celebrate the "Louisiana Estuarine Cuisine" cookbook that was produced by BTNEP.

This event will also be a thank you to those who have donated to the BTEF. Those corporate sponsors will be given complimentary tickets.

Susan stated that the dinner will be held in the NSU Ballroom from 6:30pm to 9:00pm on October 30th and tickets will be \$50 per person.

VI. New Business

VII. Adjourn