

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

MC Meeting # 51 Minutes

9:30AM-March 10, 2010

Nicholls State University

Ellender Memorial Library-Multipurpose Room

Thibodaux, LA

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Roll-Call

Management Conference Members Present:

Herman Waguespack-American Sugarcane League
Archie Chaisson-Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District
Natalie Snider-Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Nancy Woodlock-Jefferson Parish
Joey Breaux-LA Dept. of Ag & Forestry
Ann Perry-LA Dept. of Economic Development
Loren Barrios-LA Dept. of Education
Emelise Cormier-LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Chasity Cheramie-LA Dept. of Health & Hospitals
Carol Crapazano-LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Melissa Kaintz-LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Nick Matherne-Lafourche Parish
Tim Allen-Louisiana Landowner's Association
Paul Johnson-Louisiana Science Teacher's Association
John Conover-LUMCON
Randy Lanctot-Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Julie Falgout-LSU Ag Center
David Muth-National Park Service
Gary LaFleur-Nicholls State University
PJ Hahn-Plaquemines Parish
Sue Hawes-US Army Corp of Engineers
Doug Jacobson-US EPA
Ronnie Paille-US Fish & Wildlife Service
Scott Wilson-USGS/NWRC
Rick Hartman-US Nation Marine Fisheries Service
Quin Kinler-USDA/NRCS

Organization not represented:

Coastal Conservation Association
Commercial Fisheries
Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Iberville Parish
LA Dept. of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
LA Assoc. of Conservation Districts
LA Assoc. of Levee Boards
Louisiana Farm Bureau
Louisiana Forestry Association
Louisiana Independent Oil & Gas Association
Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association
Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Pointe Coupee Parish
South Central Planning & Development Commission
South Louisiana Economic Council
St. Charles Parish
Terrebonne Parish

US Coast Guard

Guests:

Sue Hennington-US Army Corp of Engineers
Jenny Ledet-NSU Biology Student
Stephen Vern-NSU Biology Student
Robert Routon-State of LA
Rebecca Templeton-Bayou Grace Community Service
Mark Lanctot-guest of Randy Lanctot
Cynthia DuBois-NSU Ellender Memorial Library
Michelle Roberts-CH2M Hill
Tom Cancienne-CH2M Hill
Liz Barnes-LPB
Ken Poon-associate of Ted Hardin
Nikki Buskey-The Courier
Karim Belhadjali-OCPR
Kirk Rhinhardt-OCPR

BTNEP Staff Present:

Kerry St. Pé
Sandra Helmuth
Richard DeMay
Dean Blanchard
Mel Landry
Andrew Barron
Alma Robichaux
Shelley Sparks
Michael Massimi

B. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the December 8, 2009 meeting

Randy Lanctot moved to dispense the reading of the minutes and to accept them as submitted. PJ Hahn seconded the motion. There was no objection.

II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES-Kerry St. Pé

A. Personnel Change:

Alma Robichaux-Education Coordinator

B. Presentations/Exhibits/Field Trips

Terrebonne Parish Tree Project
American Fisheries Society Conference
Avian Survey-Fourchon
Louisiana Environmental Education Symposium
Fourchon Ridge Tour & Planting with Lafourche Parish
Officials

Jefferson Parish Christmas Tree Project
World Wetland's Day
Eagle Expo
Fourchon Ridge Planting with Viterbo
University

C. Media Interviews

Advocate Ascension Sec. (Baton Rouge/Gonzales)

- "Inside Report: Estuary revival will require people's help"-January 20, 2010

Daily Comet(Thibodaux, LA)

- "Water-weed fight affected by state cuts"-January 1, 2010
- "Students to catalog area's vanishing culture"-January 16, 2010

Gambit (New Orleans, LA)

- Event Listings: Preview: "Creature Comforts-Righteous Fur Nutria Design Challenge Fashion Show"-January 5, 2010

The Advocate (Baton Rouge, LA)

- "Bald Eagle fans will flock to Morgan City for birding event"-February 21, 2010

The Courier (Houma, LA)

- "Water-weed fight affected by state cuts"-January 1, 2010
- "Asian silver carp infiltrating bayous and lakes"-January 3, 2010
- "Students to catalog area's vanishing culture"-January 16, 2010
- "Houma native hosts Super Bowl, wetlands fundraiser in California"-February 17, 2010

The Donaldsonville Chief (Donaldsonville, LA)

- "2nd Annual Swamp Stomp Festival to feature regional bands, promote Cajun culture"-February 11, 2010

The Times (Shreveport, LA)

- "Asian silver carp infiltrating bayous and lakes"-January 2, 2010

The Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)

- "Nutria fur is focus of fashion, performance art event highlighting the animal's role in wetlands loss"-January 8, 2010
- "Benefits: Righteous Fur Nutria Design Challenge Fashion Show"-January 8, 2010

The Tri-Parish Times (Houma, LA)

- "Houma site to celebrate World Wetlands Day", December 15, 2009
- "CWPPRA begins divvying funds for region's coastal projects"-February 3, 2010

The Vacherie Enterprise (Vacherie, LA)

- "Nicholls State University's Second Annual Swamp Stomp Festival"-February 17, 2010

Town Favorites (Baton Rouge, LA)

- "Cajun Coast Announces 5th Annual Louisiana Eagle Expo"-January 2010

Other interviews:

2/4/2010: Jenny Loyal, LSU Shreveport graduate: effects of Hurricane Katrina on Plaquemines Parish

D. Meetings

LUMCON Executive Board Meeting
Orleans Audubon Boardwalk
Sabine Refuge/CWPPRA Education
New Orleans Historical Collection Oral History Project
CWWPRA Task Force
Terrebonne Parish CZM Meeting
CWPPRA Calendar Meeting
Dinah Maygarden-UNO
Legislative Education Sub-Committee Mtg.
OCPRA
Wilson Plover Survey Meeting

Groundwater Advisory Task Force
LCA Science Board Meeting
Donaldsonville To the Gulf PDT
State Parks & Recreational Committee
Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration
Planning Meeting
Christina Melton-LPB
Joint Legislative Meeting on Natural
Resources
Spring ANEP/NEP Meeting
Dean Cooper-Website

E. Projects Initiated

1. "Along Our Bayous and In Our Backyards: An Oral History Project"-A. Robichaux
2. "2010 From H-2-O:A Water Quality Workshop for Teachers"-A.Robichaux
3. "2010 Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve Wetlands Camp"-A.Robichaux

4. "2010 Louisiana Environmental Education Symposium"-A. Robichaux
5. "Indexing For "Wetlands Weblibliography"-A. Robichaux
6. "Survey and Tracking of Rio Grand Cichlids"- M. Massimi
7. "Development of the 2011 Bird Calendar Text and Storyline for a Newspaper Insert Promoting the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration"-R. DeMay
8. "Support of the 5th Annual Eagle Expo in Morgan City, Louisiana"-R. DeMay
9. "Continue Web and Email Support for the BTNEP"-M. Landry
10. "Production of Paddle Bayou Lafourche 2010"-S. Sparks
11. "Development of and Production of Folklife and Wetlands Cultural Day in Conjunction with other Jubilee Festivities-2010"-S. Helmuth
12. "Coastal Louisiana Statewide Breeding Beach-nesting Bird Census"-R. DeMay

III. Schedule Next Meeting Date: Date is set for Wednesday, June 2, 2010.

IV. Discussion Items

- A. **Update on Plaquemine Parish Tilapia Monitoring**-Melissa Kaintz, LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Melissa first gave some brief background information about tilapia. She stated the Louisiana passed a law prohibiting the possession, sale or purchase of certain species of fish, including tilapia. This does not include tilapia purchases in grocery stores or restaurants, because they are not alive. Aquaculture facilities that produce tilapia are permitted and regulated. It does strictly prohibit the transport of live tilapia into the state for the use of forage fish.

Tilapia is considered an invasive species and once an invasive species is present in a system, the most important aspect is how we as managers manage the situation to protect our native fishes.

She stated that in April 2009, LDWF became aware of a tilapia population in Port Sulphur, LA. This introduction became an immediate concern because of it's close proximity to the open marsh. Two different types of species were found to be present, both of them salt and cold tolerant. After the type of species was observed, the geographic extent of the population needed to be determined. Over 100 stations were sampled in surrounding marsh, drains, ditches, rivers, barrow pits, puddles...basically any water body that could be found.

The majority of the tilapia were found in a drainage system that consisted of a 7.5 mile long drainage canal and 2 large barrow pits. Sampling in the marsh determined the fish were spreading through two pumping stations located along the canal. Sampling was also done in the Mississippi River to see if the fish were using the river as a corridor.

Once LDWF was confident of the geographic extent of the tilapia, the Secretary of LDWF immediately put a fishing closure into place. The closure started at St. Jude Rd. and continued to Lime Dr. and included all private and public water bodies in that area. This closure initiated LDWF's Incident Action Plan.

Preliminary observations suggested that LDWF use a rotenone concentration of at least 5 ppm to have any effect. Before applications began, two public meetings were held to let the public know what the department was dealing with, give them background on the species, what the department plans to do and what they can expect to see and/or smell after the application.

LDWF received no negative comments from the public, everyone was very supportive.

The first rotenone application took place on June 9, 2009. Approximately 1,400 gallons were applied, using a variety of methods. Treatment zones were divided into 350 meter wide transects along the canal.

On June 10, 2009, an extensive monitoring effort was made. Each monitoring crew was responsible for recording the number of fish by species. An area density method was used to estimate the number of tilapia that was eliminated in the canal and the barrow pit. Approximately 1 million tilapia were removed from the canal and 4,000 tilapia were removed from the barrow pit.

Because live fish were observed after this first treatment, a second treatment was applied during the week of June 29, 2009. Over all, four rotenone treatments were made, two included the entire drainage system. The other two were made in the canal only.

Since the last application, LDWF has started stocking predatory fish to try and control any tilapia that may be remaining in the system. Post monitoring has found few tilapia still remaining in the area that survived the rotenone treatments.

Good news is Port Sulphur has been experiencing freezing temperatures this winter. Temperatures in the drainpipes have been warmer than in the canals so tilapia could survive in the drain pipes.

Melissa stated monitoring will continue and LDWF will be working with NSU and UNO to conduct presence/absence sampling and monitoring any range expansion of this population. They will be analyzing stomach contents of the predatory fishes, monitoring changes in population abundance of the tilapia and monitoring changes in the community structure within the drainage canal.

She then thanked all the organizations, universities and agencies that helped with this effort.

At this point in the meeting, Kerry wanted to remind everyone that since the last MC meeting, we all lost a very good friend of the BTNEP..David Bourgeois, with Sea Grant. Kerry said that David was such a good friend and an excellent supporter and champion for the program. And that he was such a compassionate man and that he had a high level of support for the Coastal Roots Program. Kerry informed the MC that David's family requested that in lieu of flowers, that friends and family donated money to the Foundation and that those funds be put toward the Coastal Roots Program. The Foundation has collected over \$1,000 in donations for that program.

B. Presentation on Coastal Restoration Project Prioritization Tool-Kirk Rhinehardt and Karim Belhadjali-OCPR

Karim gave some background first on the 2007 Master Plan, which was a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, in 2005. The Master Plan had 4 goals: to reduce risk to communities; resource sustainability; maintain a diverse array of fish and wildlife habitat and to sustain Louisiana's heritage and culture.

Legislation stated that the Master Plan had to be updated every 5 years at a minimum. So now is the time to start on that update. The update will continue the integration of protection and restoration. A prioritization tool is being developed also that will be guided by a coast wide divisions that uses measurable targets.

The planning framework is first taking the four Master Plan objectives and narrowed them down to two goals: 1) reduce risk damage from storm based flooding and 2) to restore the coast to support sustainable eco-systems, communities, and commercial/recreational activities that people do on the coast.

The Plan will take this spatially explicit vision and come up with quantifiable targets to be able to measure progress toward meeting that vision.

The Prioritization Tool was designed to help answer critical planning questions such as what projects are going to be consistent with the goals of the Master Plan and which projects should be prioritized, given the decision criteria and the planning constraints.

The way the tool works is that it looks at four different steps:

1. Developing the inputs that are evaluated in individual projects,
2. Compare vision target to output of project
3. Prioritize the individual project by looking at decision criteria
4. Assemble project portfolios subject to implementation constraints

What needs to be determined now is that if the tool is able to differentiate between different projects under different scenarios and that it actually works. Thirty existing and hypothetical models were run through the tool to see if it could differentiate between the different scenarios.

Karim stated that the tool will give different results depending on what is most important to the individual. He then discussed 3 different results of the tool using 3 different scenarios.

Karim stated that what the Prioritization Tool does is allows you to evaluate all existing projects and identify new project needs. It does not make the decision for you, however, it forms choices and illustrates tradeoffs.

Karim stated what needs to be done next is develop the Vision and take engage the Stakeholders by holding Regional Stakeholder meetings to explain the choices that were made. This will allow OCPR to refine the elements of Vision by different regions. And then combine those elements into one Vision so that the conflicts can be identified. That Vision will then be translated into targets.

He stated more information on the Prioritization Tool can be found in the Final Draft of the Annual Plan.

A question and answer period followed after Karim's presentation.

Kerry asked what assurance is there that this tool will stick around. He stated that this effort has been attempted numerous times. He understands the each new administration has a new modeling effort, a decision maker...BTNEP participates in every one of those efforts in the hope that it is adopted. But every administration changes and that effort is wiped out and everything is started over. Someone stated that politics are involved. Kerry agreed and asked how do we get assurance that THIS effort will be adopted and stick.

Kirk Rhinehardt stated that past efforts did not provide spatially explicit targets where this one does. You have to define where you are going with your plan. Then you can decide, incrementally, how you get there, what's feasible, how much does that cost...to get past the politics of it all, Kirk stated that this administration is committed. Without the vision, you will never be successful.

- C. **Harvested Sediment Restoration Plans in Plaquemine Parish-** P. J. Hahn, Plaquemine Parish CZM
PJ Hahn stated that the problem Plaquemine Parish has is that they will never build levees high enough to protect this area from storm surge. He stated he plans to cover three things today in his presentation: 1) the plan and the importance of Plaquemine Parish, 2) Tiger Pass and 3) the parish's efforts to look at a dredge.

He stated the Plaquemine Parish has 500 million tons of cargo annually transported on the Mississippi River. It is the 12th largest port in the US. It is home to the largest fisheries. 90% of the state's citrus crop comes from the parish. The parish is the first line of defense when you look at the direction most hurricanes come into the state. There are 750 miles of oil and gas pipeline in the parish.

He stated that the parish took all the projects that were slated for the parish, took them up to ERDIC in Vicksburg, MS and asked what would all of these projects do if done tomorrow. So a model was ran, and found that as far as storm surge protection, it gives the parish less than half a foot of protection. So a team was developed and all of these projects were augmented so that natural features that were once there could be included into the projects that were going to be developed.

It was recently discovered that Tiger Pass has almost eroded away. Some rock fill is being brought in so it won't completely wash away, and then some beneficial dredging will be done and sediment pumped in. It is believed the river could change course if this is not stopped.

So it was decided a forested ridge, along with a scrub brush and existing brackish marsh, would help hold back storm surge. The model show that the tree line would knock the storm surge down to a point that even with the non-federal levees that the parish has, it would qualify as 100-year flood protection.

Kerry asked where that forest ridge would be placed. PJ pointed out on his maps where those ridges would go. The Corps models showed this area would be the fastest, cheapest, give biggest bang for the buck and go north from that point. This area is being called Reach B-2.

Sue Hawes asked what kind of trees will be used. PJ said they will be planting black mangroves, cypress and other salt tolerant trees.

PJ then stated they designed a dredge and found that the cost to run it would be \$2.86 per cubic yard. He hopes to get the dredge specs out by April 5th and get them back by May 3rd and sign a 2-year lease with a dredge company.

PJ stated that if anyone would like to see the modeling results, he'd be glad to share them. He stated the parish is trying to make this a plan for the entire state.

D. Bayou Lafourche Project Engineering and Construction Update-Robert Routon, OCPR and Archie Chaisson, Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District

Archie informed the MC all the bids for the project came in \$3-7 million over budget so the tree clearing part of the bid was separated, which involves removing the heavy vegetation, brush and trees. The stumps were left up due to concerns about potential slumping between the time of the clearing project and dredging project.

The contract was awarded last November and the contractor started work beginning of December. There are 5 off-load sites where the trees are being trucked to a burn site, which is 4-miles from the bayou in Donaldsonville. The contract is due to expire in June. As of today, the work is about 60% complete. If the weather holds out, it should be complete at the end of the month, or first week in April.

Archie showed before and after photos at different spots along the bayou.

He stated that at the next Freshwater District meeting, OCPR will have the final bid package ready for inspection for the dredging project. Bidding will start on March 29th and end on April 27th. They hope to award that bid mid May.

Kerry asked Archie to comment how the public's concerns in the beginning of this process have been handled. Archie stated that in the beginning they were concerned about the size of the project. But once they were shown maps of the actual footprint of the property, there were still a few with concerns about losing private property. But he feels those fears have been alleviated. The project is within state property boundaries. There are a few that built bulkheads that will be removed but those bulkheads were built on state property.

Kerry stated that WRDA had \$100 million authorized for this project. He asked if that money is there to be appropriated to this project. Kirk Rhinehardt stated that if the Corp will accept what has already been done, then funding can be requested.

E. Winter Piping Plover Survey Update-Richard DeMay, BTNEP

Richard stated that this project involves a partnership with the Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries and the US Fish & Wildlife Service, conducting winter plover surveys across the Louisiana coast. He stated there are several plover species that live along the beaches of Louisiana during different times of the year.

The primary focus of the survey being conducted is the piping plover but data is also being collected on the Wilson and Snowy plover.

Richard stated the piping plover is an endangered species in the US. In 2001, the total estimated population was around 3,000 breeding pairs. It winters along the northern Gulf Coast and southern Atlantic coast but it breeds primarily along the north Atlantic coast from N. Carolina to Eastern Canada, portions of the Great Lakes and from Nebraska up to the prairie pothole region of Canada.

Since 2006, BTNEP has been working with LDWF and USFWS conducting surveys along the coast. Other states are conducting similar surveys and sending data to USFWS to get a better handle on what this bird is doing during the winter months.

BTNEP is focusing on Big Timbelier, East Timbelier, West Belle Pass, Fourchon Headland, Elmer's Island, Grand Isle, Grand Terre and E. Grand Terre Island. Teams of volunteers are coordinated by asking interested birders for their help; people who know what they are looking for. They collect GPS data on the locations of those birds, the numbers they encounter and the band combinations as were shown in the slide presentation.

VI. New Business

Randy Lanctot stated that Louisiana Wildlife Federation recently adopted a resolution to support the National Park Service's acquisition of additional 4,000 acres for the Barataria Preserve. Randy stated he modified that resolution to be pertinent to the MC. Randy asked for a motion to adopt this resolution to support this effort and that the members of the MC that represent organizations, and as individuals, to contact Senator Mary Landrieu, Senator David Vitter, Senator Charlie Melancon and Rep. Joseph Cao.

A motion was made and it was seconded. There was no objection. The motion was carried. David Muth abstained from the vote.

Randy then stated that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation will have legislation filed in the upcoming session to establish the Caminada Headlands State Seashore.

Shelley Sparks announced that Paddle Bayou Lafourche registration is now open and that the event is April 8-11, 2010. She announced that the Saturday lunch, at the Plaisance Fruit Stand, will be dedicated to Mr. Cleveland Plaisance, who passed away during the past year. She also announced that the Downtown Donaldsonville Development District will hold an event for the paddlers on April 7th, the evening before the paddle trip begins. It will include dinner, entertainment and camping out.

VII. Adjourn