

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

MC Meeting # 53 Minutes

9:30AM-September 1, 2010

Nicholls State University

Ellender Memorial Library, Multipurpose Room

Thibodaux, LA

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Roll-Call

Management Conference Members Present

John Tesvich-Commercial Fisheries
Jason Smith-Jefferson Parish
Joey Breaux-LA Dept of Ag & Forestry
Anne Perry-LA Dept. of Economic Development
Emelise Cormier-LA Dept. of Environmental Quality
Linda Pace-LA Dept. of Natural Resources
Nick Matherne-Lafourche Parish
John Unman-Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association
Roland Guidry-Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Paul Johnson-Louisiana Science Teachers Association
John Conover-LUMCON
Randy Lanctot-Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Rex Caffey-LSU Ag Center
David Muth-National Park Service
Gary LaFleur-Nicholls State University
Albertine Kimble-Plaquemines Parish
Simone Maloz-South Louisiana Economic Council
Al Levron-Terrebonne Parish
Susan Hennington-US Army Corp of Engineers
John Burton-US Coast Guard
Doug Jacobson-US EPA
Robert Dubois-US Fish & Wildlife Service
Scott Wilson-USGS
Rick Hartman-US National Marine Fisheries Service
John Boatman-USDA/NRCE

Organizations Not Represented:

American Sugar Cane League
Coastal Conservation Association
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Governor's Office of Coastal Louisiana
Greater Lafourche Port Commission
Iberville Parish
LA Dept. of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
LA Dept. of Education
LA Dept. of Health & Hospitals
LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
LA Association of Conservation
LA Association of Levee Boards
Louisiana Farm Bureau
Louisiana Forestry Association
Louisiana Independent Oil & Gas Association
Louisiana Landowners Association
Point Coupee Parish
South Central Planning & Development Commission
St. Charles Parish
The Nature Conservancy

Guests:

Kristen Galler-NSU Student/BTNEP student worker
Jamie Cheramie-concerned citizen

Laura St. Pe'-concerned citizen
Ed Landgraf-Shell Pipeline
Mark McManus-US Coast Guard
Chris Polaski-Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Mike Lyons-Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association
Gary Ott-NOAA
Julie Falgout-LSU SeaGrant Program
Rebecca Templeton-Bayou Grace
Chris Macaluso-National Wildlife Federation
Leslie Suazo-Terrebonne Parish
Nancy Woodlock-Jefferson Parish
Susan Testroet-Bergeron-CWPPRA
Andre Williams-CWPPRA
Nikki Buskey-Courier/Daily Comet
Irv Mendelssohn-LSU
Ed Overton, LSU
Earl Melancon-NSU

BTNEP Staff:

Kerry St. Pe'
Richard DeMay
Dean Blanchard
Mel Landry
Andrew Barron
Alma Robichaux
Sandra Helmuth
Shelley Sparks
Matt Benoit
Michael Massimi

B. Reading and Approval of Minutes of the June 2, 2010 meeting

Randy Lanctot moved to dispense of the reading of the minutes. Doug Jacobson seconded the motion. There was no opposition.

II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES-Kerry St. Pé

A. Presentations/Exhibits/Field Trips

LA Coast Nesting Shorebird Surveys
Cornel Lab Ornithology Tour
Ft. Worth Zoo Staff Tour of Grand Isle
Weekly Reader to Grand Isle
Charles Borromeo Bible School Presentation
LA Garden Club Federation
Shell Deepwater Drilling Team Tour of
Grand Isle
Sea Turtle Rehabilitation @ Audubon
Center
NRDA Survey-Barataria Bay
Blind River Vegetative Planting
Staff visit to Audubon Aquatic Center

State of the Coast Conference
NPS Summer Camp
Bayou L'Ourse Planting w/NRCS
Grand Isle Tour for David Cough and Bill St.
Honker-EPA Region 6
H-2-O Workshop
Tipitina's Supply Drive
American Bird Conservancy Tour
Oil Spill Presentation to Houma-Terrebonne Aquatic
Chamber
Barataria Bay Oyster Transect
Tour for Center for Inland Bays NEP staff

B. Media Interviews (As of August 20, 2010)

Bloomberg News (online)

- "Collapsing Marsh Dwarfs BP Oil Blowout as Ecological Disaster" August 18, 2010

Cape Gazette (Rehoboth, DE)

- “Cape Region comes together for Gulf fundraiser”, July 12, 2010

Coastal Point: The Local Voice Of Your Community (Delaware)

- “Cape Region Comes Together for Gulf Fundraiser” July 9, 2010
- “Delaware coastal businesses rally for Gulf aid”, July 15, 2010
- “Thousands Rock Dewey for Gulf” July 16, 2010
- “Fundraisers Visit Louisiana to Deliver Check for Estuary Program”, August 18, 2010

Daily Comet (Thibodaux, LA)

- “Coastal group aims to protect nesting birds”, June 26, 2010
- “Storm could complicate spill battle”, June 28, 2010
- “Cleanup methods are best available, experts say”-July 12, 2010
- “Gulls head inland as spill curbs easy meals”, July 29, 2010

Delaware Online (online)

- “Coast-to-coast effort” July 12, 2010

Fox Live 8 (New Orleans, LA)

- “Coastal Scientists Concerned about Rock Barriers”, June 31, 2010
- “Environmentalist: No Way to Know How Much Oil Escaped Well” August 4, 2010

Franco-American News & Events (online)

- “Our Life, Between Sea and Oil” July 12, 2010

Gambit (New Orleans, LA)

- “Oil and Water: Clean Wetlands are the Key to Future Seafood Harvests”, June 15, 2010

Gonzales Weekly Citizen (Gonzales, LA)

- “Kids holding Luau to help oil spill affected wildlife”, July 27, 2010
- “Fishing Rodeo Marks 50th Anniversary Saturday” July 30, 2010
- “EASL Kid’s Fishing Rodeo attracts 216 participants”, August 6, 2010

Greater Baton Rouge Business Report (Baton Rouge, LA)

- “The spillover effect”, June 15, 2010
- “Stress test”, June 29, 2010

Hammond Daily Star (Hammond, LA)

- “Well Capping Brings Relief but Also Fear of Abandonment” August 8, 2010

KNSU (Nicholls State University Radio)

- Michael Massimi and Shelley Sparks. Marsh recovery, BTNEP activities, rehabilitated wildlife.

KTIB (radio)

- Andrew Barron and Shelly Sparks (Marsh grass recovery) June 2010

NBC News/MSNBC (National News)

- “Oil Seeps into Marshes” June 2, 2010
- “Hands-off Approaches to Oiled Marshes-Strategic or Chaotic?” July 22, 2010
- “Well Capping Brings Relief but Fear of Abandonment” August 7, 2010

Scientific American Magazine

- “Drastic Measures: 8 Wild Ways to Combat Invasive Species”, July 12, 2010

The American Press (Lake Charles, LA)

- “Gulf Coast skeptical of part-time point man”, June 19, 2010

The Advocate (Baton Rouge, LA)

- “Corps quiet on rock jetty proposal permits”, June 18, 2010
- “NOAA: 74% of oil in Gulf gone; moratorium stands”, August 5, 2010

The Alexandria Town Talk (Alexandria, LA)

- “Plugging brings relief but some fears”, August 8, 2010

The Cameron Parish Pilot (Cameron, LA)

- “Getting Ready!”-June 3, 2010

The Courier (Houma, LA)

- “Storm could complicate spill battle”, June 27, 2010
- “Gulls head inland as spill curbs easy meals”, July 29, 2010
- “Spill’s end brings relief, new anxiety”, August 8, 2010

The Daily Advertiser (Lafayette, LA)

- "Gulf skeptical of Obama's recovery chief", June 19, 2010
- "Barataria Bay 'devastation'", August 1, 2010

The Daily Report AM (Baton Rouge, LA)

- "News roundup: Regions opens fund to help estuary", July 28, 2010

The Hammond Daily Star (Hammond, LA)

- "Capping brings relief, fear of abandonment", August 8, 2010

The News Journal (Delaware)

- "Coast-to-coast effort", July 12, 2010

The Times (Shreveport, LA)

- "Well capping brings relief but also fear of abandonment", August 8, 2010

The Times-Picayune (New Orleans, LA)

- "Danger creeps up on state birds", June 2, 2010
- "Expose to oil can kill embryos in shell" June 2, 2010
- "Jefferson Parish to sink barges to block oil flow", June 15, 2010
- "No Place for Volunteers", June 28, 2010
- "Despite Science Against Jetties, Gov. Bobby Jindal Rocks On" July 28, 2010
- "Oil Spill Enters New Phase: Restoring the Gulf, Learning from Disaster" August 6, 2010
- "Gulf Coast residents fear abandonment", August 8, 2010
- "Scientists Wary of U.S. Report That Says Only 26% of Spilled Gulf Oil Left" August 17, 2010

The Tri-Parish Times (Houma, LA)

- "Deadline nears for migratory bird habitat program", July 28, 2010

Tonic.com (online)

- "How You Can Volunteer to Clean Up the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill" June 11, 2010

Washington Post (Washington, DC)

- "Determining Oil Spill's Environmental Damage is Difficult" July 5, 2010

WWL (New Orleans Radio)

- Kerry St. Pe', June 3, 2010, June 17, 2010, June 29, 2010, August 9, 2010

WWNO (national radio)

- Kerry St. Pe', Oil Spill recovery-June 1, 2010

Other interviews:

Children's Weekly Reader-A. Wagner and A. Barron

Radio Disney-A. Wagner

Don Dubuque's "Outdoors Show"-A. Barron

LPB-"Washing Away-After the Storm", Kerry St. Pe'

C.Meetings

CRIA Council

Lisa Jackson-USEPA

Lafourche Parish Mtg. w/BP

Art Studio Oil Spill Mtg.

Emergency CPRA Mtg. @ UNO

Delaware Center for Inland Bays "Coast Gulf Aid"
Fundraiser

Framework Development Team Mtg for Master
Plan 2010

Houma Town Hall Mtg.

2nd Annual LA Oil & Gas Symposium

LAPB Symposium

Groundwater Advisory Task Force Mtg.

Dispersant Meeting w/ BP

Seafood Institute Studies Mtg.

Offshore Marine Supply Assoc. Shrimp Boil

CPRA

CWPPRA Task Force

Terrebonne Parish CZM

Davis Pond Modification Mtg.

American Association of Port Authorities

ORRAP-Seward, Alaska

Environmental Education Literacy Plan Mtg.

GOMA Governor's Initiative & Action Plan Mtg.

Oil Spill Fact Sheet Mtg w/NOAA, SeaGrant & BP
Consultants

LUMCON Executive Board Mtg.

Website Redesign Mtg. w/ Dean Cooper

White House Mtg.

D. Projects Initiated

1. "Production and Promotion of 14th Annual La Fete d'Ecologie"-S. Sparks
2. "Layout and Design of the Warbler Publication"-R. DeMay
3. "Design and Layout of the 2011 Bird Calendar and 2011 Tidal Graph Calendar"-R. Demay and M. Landry

Kerry took a moment to acknowledge the passing of Miss Sue Hawes. Kerry reminded the MC that she was involved on the Scientific Technical Committee during the Planning years and attended almost every MC meeting. The MC took a moment of silence in honor of Sue.

Kerry then told the MC that BTNEP provided a tour for Shell executives. The Louisiana Seafood Marketing Board was present and told them about the oil spill impacts on the seafood market. Kerry talked to them about the known and perceived impacts. Mr. John Unman, the Vice-President of Safety & Environment, was present and asked for another tour for the Shell Deepwater Drilling Team, so the same tour was given to that group.

Mr. Unman is present today to present BTEF with a check for \$25,000. He told the MC that Shell sees themselves as a responsible member of the community in which they operate and live. So Shell wants to assist in helping restore Louisiana's richness in culture, economy and ecology. And that will only happen with education. So this check is Shell's support in this effort.

Mr. Unman then gave a brief overview of Shell's spill response plan.

III. Schedule Next Meeting Date: Date Suggested is Wednesday, December 1, 2010.

IV. Discussion Items

A. Update on Bird Surveys-Richard DeMay

Richard talked about the coastal breeding bird survey that was a 2009 workplan project. This project was a follow-up of the 2005 project. The 2009 project was to provide a new set of data so it could be compared to the base-line data collected in 2005. BTNEP funded this project fully. The focus of this survey is on four different species of birds; Wilsons plover, American oyster catcher, Snowy plover and Least Tern. The entire coastal area of the state was covered on foot, except the Atchafalaya Basin area.

Richard then showed slides comparing the 2005 data to the 2010 data. The data is being compiled to develop a new report that compares the two sets of data.

Richard stated that an oiled bird survey was taking place at the same time. BTNEP was a collaborator along with other organizations for this survey. This survey focused on the BTNE region because the Bird Resource Center at LSU was doing the same survey on the west side of the state. This survey was also partially funded with a donation from the American Birding Association.

When the survey began, May 3rd, no oiled birds were being found. By mid- to later May, when surveys were taking place on Isle Denieres and Timbalier chain, more oiled birds were seen. But it was only a small percentage of the birds out there. Late May to early June, the Chaland Headland, E. Grand Terre, Grand Terre were re-surveyed for the breeding bird survey and they would look for oiled birds. There were lightly oiled birds, but they found wading birds to be oiled instead of shore birds. Data will be collected every 30 days to survey the oiled birds.

Richard then talked about the possibility of finding funding to rebuild small islands for migratory birds.

Richard's last slide showed an effort to protect a stretch of beach inhabited by least terns by fencing it in. Signs were made to try and keep people out. It stayed up for about a week before it was torn down but BTNEP staff and volunteers went back out to rebuild it with orange fencing used in coastal restoration projects.

B. Presentation on Sea Turtle Rehabilitation- Dr. Cara Field, DVM, Audubon Nature Institute

Dr. Field stated she is the primary veterinarian for the institute and the rehab program. Normally the program brings in 10-12 turtles a year. During the course of the Deepwater Horizon incident, there haven't been many sightings of oiled sea turtles, so NOAA and LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries sent boats out to start looking for them. They brought in over 200 live turtles for rehabilitation. Only 3 have died.

Dr. Field discussed the process of the rehabilitation from transport to stabilization. She stated that now 45 turtles have been transported to secondary facilities. Twenty-two have been released back into uncontaminated parts of Florida. 145 turtles are still at the Audubon Institute.

C. Update on Impacts of Oil Spill on Oysters- Earl Melancon, Nicholls State University

Dr. Melancon informed the MC that the Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries is just beginning their assessment of the impacts on oysters. He was told that when you look at the actual oil impacts on oysters, it could be minimal at this time. There is not a lot of death due directly to oil. However, this animal is a filter feeder and there is still a lot of debate as to what might be in the water and how this may have an impact on the oysters at a later date and whether or not there has been stress to the point of maybe some physiological problems dealing with spawning.

There is an indirect impact however; it is the freshwater from the diversions. In the Barataria system, 100-150% mortality is being seen on leases. What is creating the biggest issue at this time is that oysters have a bimodal annual peak in spawning and set of larvae. It is in May-June and September-October. We lost the May-June spawn because they do need a certain salinity.

In the Barataria system, after sampling, Dr. Melancon found 70% of the oysters have spawned this fall. Today he received word, east of the river, in Breton Sound, they are seeing the same thing. For these oysters to survive and grow, the salinity needs to be about 8 parts per thousand.

Dr. Melancon stated that last week John Tesvich and others petitioned the state that the diversions be closed so that salinities could rise to the point where there could be a set and survival. Carnarvon was closed and salinities did rise particular in the Bay Gardine area. However, Davis Pond, as of yesterday, was still flowing at 8,000 cfs. So the salinities in the Barataria system are still very low and not conducive to oyster larvae survival and set.

He stated a letter has been sent to the state through OCPR and to LDWF to request that Davis Pond also be closed to see if we can have at least survival of these oysters.

He stated that if the fall spat set is lost also, it will take up to 20 months for an oyster to get up to 3-inch to 3.5 inch in size. So you need at least 2-3 years for an oyster lease to recover from any kind of catastrophe.

He then stated he helped draft the letter that went to Steve Mathies at OCPR and Randy Pausina, the Assistant Secretary at LDWF requesting that the closing down or reducing flow based on commercial fishery openings is not conducive any semblance of fisheries in the Barataria system because even those fishermen that have oysters to harvest this season, that survived, they will not have a crop for the next 2 years.

Rick Hartman made a motion that the BTMC support a resolution from the Oyster Task Force to return Davis Pond back to the original authorized flow rate. Randy Lanctot seconded the motion. Doug Jacobson asked for the opportunity to read the resolution before voting. He would like others from EPA to review it before he votes. Kerry asked Earl if he could send him a copy of the letter sent to OCPR.

There was no opposition. Motion was approved.

D. Pollution Impacts from Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill-Ed Overton, LSU

Ed Overton's gave an overview of how much oil was spilled from Deepwater Horizon. He stated approximately 200 billion gallons were spilled, making this the largest spill in history.

He stated that most impacts of the spill will not be known for many years. His presentation today will focus on dispersants and the rationale for that decision. Two million gallons of dispersants were used offshore and at depth. About 200-400 miles of the Louisiana coastline were impacted by the oil spill.

The most concern is the damage done on the sea floor and the root system of plants. With the Deepwater Horizon spill, we had liquid oil and natural gas. This caused naturally dispersed oil at depth and oil on the surface in globs; sometimes taking days to reach the surface. Adding dispersants causes weathering, giving us several different ecological impacts.

Ed then discussed the process oil goes through when dispersants are added. He then explained how dispersants work on the oil. He stated dispersed oil does not come ashore. Oil that is coming on shore is not dispersed. It cannot happen. Two things happen when oil is dispersed. It is diluted and the bacteria cannot colonize in these small droplets and start degrading the oil quicker.

Ed then discussed the composition of the dispersants. Dispersants are composed of chemicals found in everyday products used in your home.

E. Presentation on Marsh Vegetation Response to Oiling- Irv Mendelssohn, Dept. of Oceanography and Coastal Science, LSU

Dr. Mendelssohn's presentation was an overview on how oil affects wetland vegetation. He basically showed slides on controls on vegetation response and also recovery.

He talked about what controls the extent of oil impact on vegetation and how marshes naturally recover from oil. And he talked about an investigation on insect burning in wetlands and its value.

He assisted the LSU Trustees developed a vegetation monitoring plan for the NRDA process in conjunction with Mark Hester with ULL. He is not conducting any research funded by BP.

He went through the factors that have impacts on vegetation. Some factors are the type of oil, the concentration of oil, the extent to which it is weathered, the degree to which the oil has covered the plant material, whether the oil sinks into the soil or not, the species dominating that wetland, and what clean-up procedures are used.

He stated marsh response in recovered oil spills can be significant and more often than not, vegetation recovery occurs and can occur very rapidly.

F. Presentation on BTEF Donations since Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill- Earl Melancon, BTEF President and Mel Landry, BTNEP

Mel Landry informed the MC that early on when the oil spill occurred a lot of people called the BTNEP office saying they wanted to help out in some way or wanted to give supplies. BTNEP was in collaboration with the Gulf Response Involvement Team (GRIT) to collect these supplies. Mel spent 2-3 months down in Grand Isle at the LDWF Marine Lab coordinating the collection of these supplies. A list was developed of items needed and was posted on the BTNEP website.

The supplies were not solicited. If someone called, they were steered to the list on the website. Examples of items sent were 2,500 rolls of paper towels from the Georgia Pacific plant from Port Allen; as well as office supplies from various donors.

To distribute these supplies to those who needed them, web documents were developed where the supply's inventory was kept up to date.

There were 95 individual unsolicited supply donations, which valued at approximately \$100,000.

Mel then spoke of monetary donations received. BTEF received over \$160,000 in cash donations since the onset of the oil spill.

Since the oil spill, BTNEP has developed a website where anyone can go to donate electronically. The website is www.supportbtnep.org, or you can access it through the BTNEP website. Some of the donors are Riverside Brookfield High School, who was a group that has come down over the past 3 yrs to volunteer; Tipitina's, who distributed the supply list and people brought supplies to the bar as well as cash; Ft. Worth Zoo; Jefferson Chamber; Region's Bank, who set up an account for people to make donations to; Center for Inland Bays; American Birding Association; and Field Family Environmental Foundation.

VII. Adjourn