Louisiana Wildlife Federation

January - December

2025

LWF

January - December 2025

Since 1940, Louisiana Wildlife Federation has been the voice for Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources. Join us to protect Sportsman's Paradise for future generations.

Principles:

- **Conserve** Louisiana's natural resources with emphasis on wildlife and their habitats
- **Engage** outdoor enthusiasts who reflect the unique diversity of Louisiana
- **Advance** sound, scientifically established resource management principles
- **Promote** conservation management and policies through education and advocacy

This newsletter encompasses all of 2025. All updates on LWF activities can be found on our website and social media pages.

lawildlifefed.org
LouisianaWildlifeFederation
@LaWildlifeFed
@LaWildlifeFed
linkedin.com/company/louisiana-wildlife-federation

Cover Photo: Bonnie Taylor Barrie
Newsletter Design: nola-creative.com

LWF is an affiliate organization of National Wildlife Federation and together we form a powerful network for wildlife conservation locally and nationally.

LWF Staff

Rebecca Triche, Executive Director
Kelsy Yeargain, Development Director
Rick Owens, Advocacy Manager
Angela Hirstius, Membership & Operations Manager
Jayla West, Communications Coordinator, AmeriCorps

Board of Directors

Officers and Executive committee

Martin "Marty" Floyd, President
Charles Williams, 2nd Vice President, LA Ornithological Society
Mark Shurtz, Secretary, ASAP
John Miller, MD, Treasurer, District 6 At-Large
Isaac "Zac" Burson, LWF Past President, Friends of Red River
Jonny Fryar, District 8 At-Large
Charles "Charlie" Pfeifer, Orleans Audubon Society
Larry Raymond, Shreveport Bird Study Group
Robert "Bob" Stewart, LWF Past President

Board Members (Serving in 2025)

Fred Borel, District 7 At-Large
Glen Boyer, District 1 At-Large
Leslie Calhoun, Friends of Black Bayou
Greg Cedotal, East Ascension Sportsman League
Sydney Finn, District 3 At-Large
Herman Hartman, Sr., District 3 At-Large
Don Haydel, Friends of the Atchafalaya
Todd Hollenshead, At-Large State Director
John Michael Kelley, District 4 At-large
Terry Laborde, District 8 At-large
Elizabeth Ledet, Climate Reality Project NOLA Chapter
William "Bill" Robertson, At-Large State Director
George Schaffer, District 6 At-Large
Mike Stewart, At-Large State Director

Affiliates (As of November 2025)

Acadiana Native Plant Project
American Sportsmen Against Poachers
Baton Rouge Audubon Society
Bayou Chapter of the Ozark Society
Bayou Vermilion Preservation Society
Caddo Lake Institute, Inc.
Climate Reality Project – New Orleans Chapter
East Ascension Sportsman League
Friends of Black Bayou
Friends of Red River National Refuge
Friends of the Atchafalaya
Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists
Louisiana Native Plant Society
Louisiana Ornithological Society
Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association
Moncus Park
New Orleans Power Squadron
Orleans Audubon Society
Pontchartrain Conservancy
Rapides Wildlife Association
Shreveport Society for Nature Study
Toledo Bend Lake Association
Woodlands Conservancy

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We have been quite busy at Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) with several important issues. Two major projects, which have stirred up some controversy, have been the rejection of the long anticipated Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion Project (MBSD) and the Catahoula Lake project.

MBSD would have created a large amount of land in an area experiencing heavy loss. Unfortunately, the rejection of this decades-long studied project is a blow to the state both in land and in much needed jobs.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries reclaimed part of Catahoula Lake into the adjoined Dewey Mills wildlife management area, adding 2440 acres, and it is hoped that US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will do the same on the Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge. LWF has been working with our US Senators and Representatives in hopes that they can help encourage USFWS to extend their claim and again allow public access to a sizeable portion of the lake.

At the annual National Wildlife Federation meeting in Minneapolis in June, Louisiana proposed two of the nine resolutions, both of which passed: Addressing the Funds, Shortages, Staff Reductions and Public Engagement Through the National Wildlife Refuges, and Native Seed and Plant Supply.

Our new Advocacy Manager Rick Owens has been an important asset. His relevant background and contacts have helped further our efforts.

We have also participated in many of the National Wildlife Federation committees such as the Hunter and Angler Working Group (HAWG), Public Lands, Farm Bill, Tribal and Indigenous Partnerships Enhancement Strategy (TIPES), and Climate and Energy committees to learn about national, state and territory affiliates' projects.

LWF has been successful at protecting scenic rivers and keeping public lands in public hands. We were also successful in our initiative to prohibit the releasing of balloons outdoors, preventing both litter and harm to terrestrial and marine species, though this legislation was unfortunately vetoed by the governor.

We strive to curb the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease by opposing the reduction of the 25-mile control zone, study the impacts on habitat of carbon sequestration, and reduce impacts on migrating birds and other species through the Lights Out initiative. I appreciate LWF's commitment to keeping Louisiana the "Sportsman's Paradise" by protecting the resources necessary to ensure this vision for the future.

Martin "Marty" Floyd ■

NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We hope you enjoy this newsletter that highlights the work LWF accomplished in 2025. Usually we distribute two print newsletters per year but 2025 has been unexpectedly busy and filled with several changes that you'll read about. Thanks for your understanding. You can keep up with LWF's activities sooner by visiting the website. Better yet, make sure you receive the weekly e-newsletter by email. Sign-up for it at **lawildlifefed.org.**

I want to extend a heartfelt note of deep appreciation to immediate past president Isaac "Zac" Burson for his leadership for LWF from 2021 to 2024. Zac has been a terrific leader and champion for LWF. He continues to share his passion for hunting, stewardship of public lands, and welcoming all people to enjoy being outdoors.

Zac stepped into the role of president for LWF sooner than he planned but we needed his service at a critical moment and he took it on. He said yes to LWF when his family needed more attention, too, and he was planning retirement from his job. Little did he know that he would be in place to lead LWF during a pivotal time. Receiving a large bequest is a gamechanger for an organization of our size and he recognized that immediately. It has allowed LWF to be more visible with our work and expand our programs and policy initiatives. During Zac's presidency, LWF updated its strategic plan, expanded our communications, added staffing, produced educational materials with new partners, and increased programmatic work. He recruited new board members and we added new affiliate organizations. He stayed very engaged with the Edgar Veillon Conservation Leadership Corps students and attended National Wildlife Federation meetings in DC and New Orleans for LWF. He oversaw LWF developing positions about carbon sequestration projects, expanding renewable energy projects, changes to coastal restoration priorities, and the ongoing saga of Catahoula Lake during his tenure. All done while remaining president of Friends of Red River National Wildlife Refuge. His experience, positivity, and kindness are valuable qualities in volunteer leadership. On behalf of LWF's board, we also thank his wife, Dr. Julie Burson, for supporting him in giving the organization so much of his time and attention.

The LWF presidency is demanding at times, depending on how many issues we are tracking and the resources we have available to do it, but it can be very rewarding in achieving long-lasting impact for wildlife conservation in Louisiana. Our thanks to Zac for being a great volunteer to work with moving LWF forward.

Rebecca Triche ■

LWF CELEBRATES 85 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

By Kelsy Yeargain, LWF Development Director

In 1940, delegates from across Louisiana gathered in New Orleans to establish the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF), one of the earliest affiliates of the National Wildlife Federation. Their founding charter set an ambitious and lasting vision to restore, preserve, develop, and increase the birds, fish, game, forests, wildflowers, and all other wildlife resources of Louisiana. From the beginning, LWF worked to remove politics from wildlife management and champion decisions grounded in science, stewardship, and public participation.

By the end of its first year, LWF had united more than 30 affiliated clubs and several thousand members. Today, LWF is a statewide conservation organization with 23 affiliated organizations and more than 11,000 members from across the state representing a broad constituency of hunters, anglers, birders, boaters, campers, hikers, and outdoor enthusiasts. Celebrating 85 years, our mission is to be the voice of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources.

This year, LWF celebrated its 85th anniversary with Edgar Veillon Conservation Leadership Corps students, board members, and conservation leaders at the Louisiana Ecological Forestry Center. Surrounded by longleaf pines and active habitat restoration work, we honored the legacy of those early conservationists and reflected on eight decades of advocacy, education, and leadership.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to LWF's mission and energized by the strategic goals that will guide our next chapter: promoting wildlife sustainability, protecting Louisiana's water, securing conservation funding, ensuring habitat conservation, and strengthening the organization.

Eighty-five years ago, LWF was built to protect the places and species that people across Louisiana cherish. Although science, policy, and conservation practices have evolved, the unwavering commitment of our members, volunteers, and affiliates has never changed. Together, we remain united in protecting Louisiana's natural heritage. ■

IN MEMORY OF AMY WOLD

We were deeply saddened by the death of our colleague Amy Wold, who passed away in May, and extend our deepest condolences to Amy's family and loved ones.

Amy was widely respected across the coastal restoration, environmental, and research communities for her intellect, kindness, and professionalism. Over 17 years as an environmental reporter, eight years as communications director at The Water Institute, and most recently as policy director with LWF, Amy made a lasting impact on how Louisiana understands and addresses natural resource management.

A native of the Pacific Northwest, Amy made south Louisiana her home and helped others grasp the complexity of its landscape and the ways we live with it. She believed deeply in science and evidence-based decision-making.

After joining LWF in August 2024, Amy contributed significantly to our policy work. She identified best practices for solar siting, analyzed the proposed reorganization of the Department of Natural Resources, and brought her deep knowledge of coastal restoration to our defense of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project. She also crafted LWF's comments on changes to reptile and shark regulations and recovery plans for the Louisiana pine snake. She helped celebrate the ribbon cutting of the Maurepas Diversion project and represented LWF on numerous working groups.

Rebecca Triche, executive director of LWF, shared, "Amy was excited about elevating LWF's policy work, and our board was thrilled to benefit from her expertise. It was a delight to see her enthusiasm for the wildlife and habitat issues we prioritize. She is deeply missed."

Beaux Jones, President and CEO of The Water Institute, said, "Amy brought heart and an unwavering dedication to truth to her work — first as a journalist, then as a colleague, and always as a fierce advocate for Louisiana's coast and communities. At The Water Institute, she shaped how we communicate our science with integrity and insight. She was a patient teacher, a fair critic, and a loyal friend. Her quiet influence is everywhere in this work, and her loss is deeply felt." ■

MEET LWF'S NEW STAFF: STRENGTHENING OUR TEAM FOR 2025 AND BEYOND

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation is growing. In 2025, we welcomed three new staff members who bring deep expertise, fresh energy, and a shared commitment to protecting Louisiana's wildlife, natural resources, and outdoor heritage.

Rick Owens, Advocacy Manager
Joined May 2025

Rick brings thirty years of experience in public administration, policy management, and conservation law enforcement to LWF's advocacy team. He previously served with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division where he retired with the rank of Major. His background gives him a strong foundation for advancing sound wildlife and natural resource policy across the state. Rick is also an avid outdoorsman who enjoys upland bird hunting, waterfowl hunting in the Ouachita River Delta, and saltwater flyfishing in Louisiana's coastal marshes.

Kelsy Yeargain, Development Director
Joined July 2025

Kelsy joined LWF as Development Director after more than 15 years of experience in nonprofit leadership, program development, and management. Before coming to LWF, she served as Executive Director of a New Orleans based affordable housing nonprofit. Kelsy holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of North Texas and a Master of Arts from the American University in Cairo. She has lived and worked in seven countries, but New Orleans is where she found her true home. Her focus at LWF is building a strong and sustainable development program that supports our mission across the state.

Jayla West, Communications Coordinator
Joined September 2025

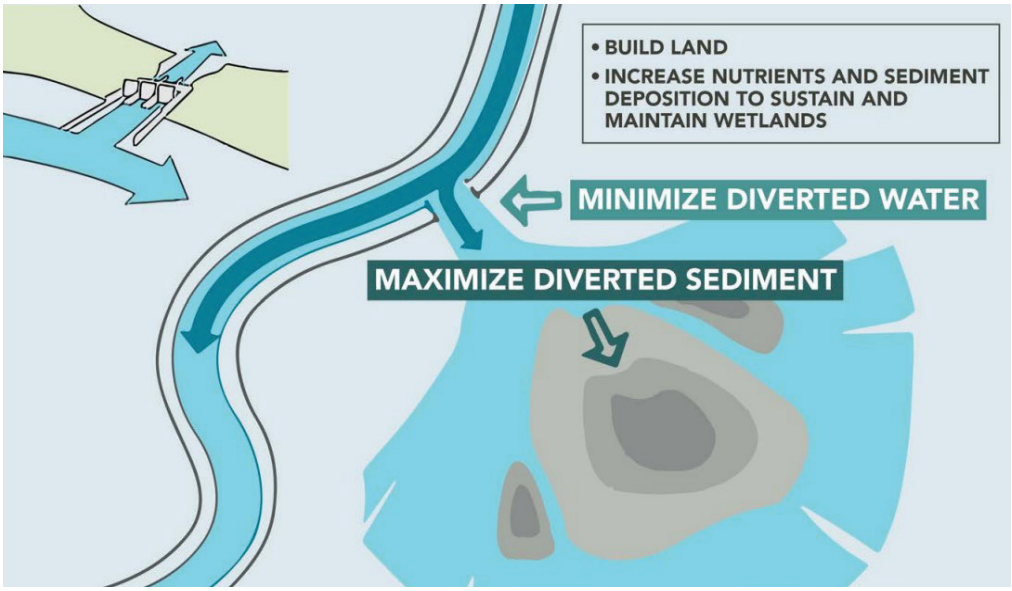
Jayla joined LWF as Communications Coordinator and brings strong skills in communications, public relations, and digital storytelling. She is an AmeriCorps member with a passion for policy and public service. Jayla holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies from LSU. A native of Baton Rouge, she enjoys hiking and boat rides during her time outdoors. ■

THE STATE'S DECISION TO CANCEL SEDIMENT DIVERSIONS IS WRONG AND A TRAGEDY FOR COASTAL RESTORATION'S FUTURE

By Rebecca Triche, LWF Executive Director

It is deeply disappointing that the state of Louisiana actively participated in the cancellation of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD) project. More recently the state has canceled the Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion project with little public input. How will this impact the coastal master plan that has included these major lynch-pin projects in planning and modeling for restoration of southeast Louisiana? Removing both projects from consideration in the Master Plan for 2029 is a great loss for the region's future in both habitat and project funding.

The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project was paid for. It meets the requirements for repairing the injuries from the Deepwater Horizon disaster. To not use the disaster funding dedicated to large sediment diversions is a tragedy for our coastal restoration efforts. It's a lost opportunity to show how Louisiana can plan and build a large-scale project that is desperately needed. It's lost economic impact for the area. What has happened to MBSD looks like the kind of politics that people expect from Louisiana. It's a step backwards toward what observers feared about political meddling that dismisses science and ignores evidence-based project planning. This is a second tragedy after the horrible disaster of the oil spill.



Coastal restoration is losing sight of sustaining Louisiana's famed fisheries Sediment diversions are not a science experiment. A river delivering freshwater, nutrients, and sediments is what creates and sustains an estuary. Redfish, speckled trout, tarpon, shrimp and many other species spend some part of their life cycle in Louisiana's coastal wetlands. This is crucial to understand when planning for coastal restoration and this knowledge has been a part of our collective dialogue for decades. Are the goals of sustaining our fisheries and wildlife being reduced with this pivot away from support for diversions?

Barataria Basin is sinking, saltwater is intruding further into the basin, and fisheries production is declining. This area deserves bold action that provides estuarine sustainability. It may get expensive rocks instead.

Rocks and ridges can protect existing wetlands and that's important for areas where there isn't a river to rebuild and restore wetlands. But rocks do not create wetlands that provide for fisheries production. Even marsh creation projects do not provide benefits to fisheries immediately. A river diversion can.

Simply using a river diversion to maintain salinity levels to benefit one species and a few special interests withholds all other opportunities. What about the benefits for other stakeholders and the rest of south Louisiana?

LWF is not giving up on the fisheries and abundant wildlife that earned our reputation as Sportsman's Paradise. Healthy rivers and river diversions are crucial tools in maintaining the habitat that wildlife needs. What's good for wildlife is good for people.

There is uncertainty around shifting priorities as we slide into parochial focus again. There are choices being made right now that disregard input and participation in a well-regarded planning process over many years in support of the coastal master plan. What are the current priorities for project selection? Is science being dismissed and planning being derailed?

Many of us remember the inadequacies of the parochial focus for levee protection and coastal restoration when dealing with the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. CPRA was created to meet the obvious problems associated with sustaining several coastal estuaries, each crossing multiple parish lines and involving multiple local entities. From what has been touted in the past few months, are we returning to decentralized project development without conformance to a plan that now has major holes in it with the removal of sediment diversions? Also what is the state's disposition for the other river diversions identified in the master plan? There is strong support for freshwater diversions, too.

Where is the transparency in today's coastal planning? What about the funding? We have not heard of real assurances that the state of Louisiana will not have to pay back the expenses for MBSD. The project was to be funded with money from the Deepwater Horizon's natural resource damages and Clean Water Act penalties to mitigate for the damage that was caused to the wetlands and habitat. Not every coastal project proposal is qualified to meet the standards required to restore the injuries from the oil spill. But MBSD does. Despite assertions from a few people, it is not assured that the Deepwater Horizon funds for MBSD can be spread around to the types of projects CPRA has proposed. The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group has to undertake restoration planning and ensure proposed projects meet the requirements of the Deepwater Horizon Consent Decree.

There has not been a full public accounting of the state being allowed to walk away from a thoroughly vetted project under construction. CPRA's termination of MBSD wasted $612 million in Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlement funds and restored no injuries from the oil spill.

We are looking forward to CPRA and the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group performing the required accounting and reconciliation of NRD funds and reporting that out publicly so that we know how the $612 million was spent. Neither the Deepwater Horizon restoration process or the Coastal Master Plan and CPRA Board procedures authorize closed door decisions.

LWF acted to defend and support MBSD and Louisiana's coastal restoration planning process. In July 2024, LWF joined other interested parties in intervening in Jurisich et al vs Corps of Engineers et al to support the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Due to LWF's stance since 1988 acknowledging the benefits of a sediment diversion, it was crucial to protect the progress made on this project. Despite the state of Louisiana canceling the project, the lawsuit has not been withdrawn by the plaintiffs and the Corps' permit for MBSD continues to be suspended, not canceled. LWF holds further comment on this while the case is still open.

By the end of 2024, LWF leadership recognized that no action was being taken by either party to resolve the lawsuit Plaquemines Parish Government v. Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and it was being used as a justification to stall the project. A non-disclosure agreement (NDA) related to this litigation was also being used as a justification not to publicly discuss or provide updates about the progress of the project to the public. Intervention in the state court litigation would potentially accomplish the goals of asking the court to decide whether CPRA is

required to obtain a local development/floodplain permit for the MBSD project. LWF was concerned that CPRA and Plaquemines Parish Government were mutually coordinating the project's termination without the public's continued input.

Ultimately, LWF supported the intervention filed by eight individuals who had strong personal and business interests in Plaquemines Parish. These eight individuals simply sought to allow an open debate in court on the merits of the claims that the parish permit was required by CPRA. Does requiring CPRA to comply with a local ordinance unconstitutionally violate the state's police powers? The legislature created CPRA to be the single state entity responsible for coastal protection and CPRA cannot cede its authority to local government. Coastal residents' livelihoods, health, welfare, and personal interests are adversely affected by increasing land loss and species and fish habitat loss.

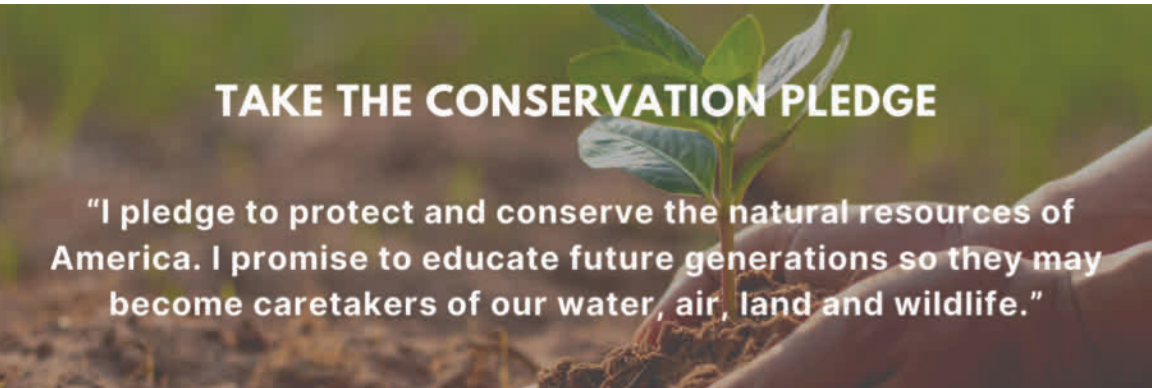
Once the State canceled the project, Plaquemines Parish Government withdrew the lawsuit and the intervention became moot. But the assertion that CPRA must comply with a local ordinance when it had not before for its projects was not tested nor decided by the court. It is unclear whether CPRA is currently obtaining local permits for other projects.

What's next for the Barataria Basin in the aftermath of the State canceling MBSD? The termination of MBSD calls into question every planned project in the Barataria Basin.

CPRA has not produced any feasibility or engineering studies for its pivot to a land bridge in Barataria Basin or updated feasibility studies for the smaller Myrtle Grove diversion, a diversion that will build less land while sending enough freshwater to lower the salinity in similar ways as MBSD. Any cost increases to Myrtle Grove likely require additional Congressional authorization. It is highly unlikely that project, if approved by the US Army Corps of Engineers and Congress, will be constructed in the next ten years.

It is unknown whether CPRA will implement other projects in the Barataria Basin with the remaining NRD funds. There has been no transparent discussion about replacement projects. The Barataria Basin was the most impacted area from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation's support for sediment diversions has not been canceled. We urge continued science-based coastal planning and restoration. In the aftermath of the current administration canceling two planned projects, and particularly one that had begun construction, we risk losing crucial support needed to address this crisis of land loss over the coming decades. The stakes are too high to play politics with our economic future. ■



BILL TO BAN OUTDOOR BALLOON RELEASES WOULD HAVE PROTECTED WILDLIFE, REDUCED LITTER WAS VETOED BY GOVERNOR

By Rebecca Triche, LWF Executive Director

The bill to ban intentional outdoor release of helium-filled mylar and latex balloons in Louisiana passed the legislature with strong bipartisan support, signaling broad recognition that balloon releases are a serious issue.

However, Governor Jeff Landry vetoed House Bill 581 and blocked the bill from becoming law.

Introduced by Representative John Illg, HB581 aimed to address balloon litter that often ends up in the state's lakes, rivers, forests, and oceans. These balloons don't simply disappear—they become long-lasting litter debris that harms wildlife, damages ecosystems, and poses risk to infrastructure.

Why Balloon Releases Are a Problem

When released outdoors, mylar and latex balloons often drift into natural areas and waterways. Wildlife may ingest balloon fragments or become entangled in their strings, leading to injury or death. Offshore anglers even find balloons far out at sea, where they pose a threat to marine life.

The impact goes beyond wildlife. Mylar balloons can damage power lines and electrical systems, and helium is a finite, non-renewable resource. Fallen balloons also become unsightly litter for others to clean up. That's why LWF passed a resolution urging lawmakers to ban this harmful practice.

Though the veto of HB581 is a setback, the issue of balloon litter isn't going away. LWF will continue to educate people about why this practice is harmful to wildlife and the dozens of alternatives people can choose instead of releasing helium-filled balloons that become litter somewhere else. ■

There are plenty of thoughtful, eco-friendly alternatives to balloon releases for memorials and celebrations:

- Plant a tree or native flower garden
- Display banners or fly flags
- Dance with streamers or ribbons
- Blow bubbles
- Fly kites
- Make pinwheels to take home
- Scatter wildflower seeds
- Light candles at a ceremony
- Release floating flowers or petals on water
- Organize a walk, race, or commemorative game
- Form a word or symbol for an aerial photo
- Donate to a local charity in someone's honor

These alternatives are memorable, meaningful—and safe for wildlife and the environment.

LWF CALLS FOR FULL ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF LAKE MAUREPAS CARBON SEQUESTRATION PROJECT

By Rick Owens, LWF Advocacy Manager

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) formally urged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed Air Products Blue Energy carbon capture and storage project in Lake Maurepas. In a letter submitted in July during the federal public comment period, LWF outlined significant ecological, public safety, and procedural concerns and requested an extension of the comment window to ensure meaningful public participation.

LWF's position reflects growing unease among residents and other groups about the scale and potential consequences of the project. Since the proposal was first announced in 2022, LWF had warned that installing wells, pipelines, and related infrastructure in an estuarine system as sensitive as Lake Maurepas carries risks that may not be fully mitigated.

Lake Maurepas and its surrounding swamp support a diverse array of fish, birds, and estuary-dependent species. The area includes more than 40 miles of cypress-lined shoreline, extensive wetlands, and the adjacent Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area, which provides critical habitat for bald eagles, osprey, and neotropical migratory birds. The lake also supports bass, crappie, catfish, bream, shrimp, and crab, and is heavily relied upon for recreation, hunting, and fishing.

LWF's letter raised concerns that drilling and pipeline installation could disturb fish and wildlife habitat, damage swamp and estuarine water bottoms, and require dredging that could release toxic sediments such as arsenic, mercury, and benzene. These contaminants had been confirmed in lake-bottom samples through studies by Southeastern Louisiana University. The organization also noted that seismic testing and early-stage project work had coincided with reported fish kills, algal blooms, and crab deformities. While causation has not been established, LWF argues that the scope of the project and the nature of its activities warrant a full Environmental Impact Statement.

In addition to environmental risks, LWF questions the fragmented permitting process used for the proposal. The piecemeal approach prevents the public from understanding the full scope of the proposal and might conflict with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. Residents have also expressed concern about carbon dioxide leakage from wells or pipelines in an area that included state-owned water bottoms and heavily used public recreation sites.

LWF acknowledged that carbon capture and storage could play a role in reducing atmospheric carbon emissions when properly sited and regulated. However, the organization did not support locating a project of this kind in Lake Maurepas, citing the unique ecological value of the estuary and the inability to guarantee adequate mitigation of damage.

LWF stated it would continue to advocate for a comprehensive environmental review and for the protection of Lake Maurepas' wildlife, water quality, and recreational value. ■

WHY CWD MATTERS AND WHY LOUISIANA HUNTERS SHOULD GET THEIR DEER TESTED

By Rick Owens, LWF Advocacy Manager

As Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) continues to emerge in new areas of Louisiana, hunters and land managers play an essential role in slowing its spread. For the 2025 to 2026 hunting season, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), in partnership with LSU, is offering free statewide CWD testing to give hunters the information they need to protect themselves, their herds, and Louisiana's hunting future.

CWD is a transmissible, always fatal neurological disease that affects white-tailed deer and other cervids. First identified in Colorado in 1967, it was detected in Louisiana for the first time in 2022 when a hunter in Tensas Parish encountered an older buck behaving abnormally and in poor condition. Recognizing the symptoms, the hunter alerted LDWF. Samples were collected, and early results suggested the deer were CWD positive. Cases like this highlight how essential hunter awareness and reporting are to tracking the disease.

The disease progresses slowly, and infected deer may take a year or more to show symptoms such as dramatic weight loss, stumbling, excessive salivation, and other neurological signs as the disease erodes brain and nerve tissue.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports no evidence that CWD can infect humans, the agency strongly advises against

consuming meat from a CWD positive deer. Testing harvested deer, especially in areas where CWD has been detected, is an important precaution.

Beyond the biological impacts, CWD threatens Louisiana's hunting culture and economy. The disease can reduce deer populations, discourage hunter participation, and significantly affect the value of hunting lands. The quicker cases are identified, the more effectively LDWF can respond, contain spread, and protect Louisiana's deer herd.

LDWF has established convenient sample drop-off sites in affected regions, particularly in Northeast Louisiana, and any hunter in the state can request free testing. Increased participation will help biologists better understand where CWD is present and how it is moving.

On the national level, Louisiana's congressional delegation, including Representatives Carter, Graves, Johnson, Letlow, and Scalise, has supported the bipartisan Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act, which would fund improved detection, research, and state-led containment programs.

CWD is a long-term challenge, but early detection, responsible hunting practices, and strong statewide surveillance can make a meaningful difference. LWF encourages every deer hunter in Louisiana to take advantage of the free testing program and help protect the future of deer hunting in our state. ■

LWF URGES ARMY CORPS TO RECONSIDER ALTERNATIVE A1 FOR THE PEARL RIVER PROJECT

By Rick Owens, LWF Advocacy Manager

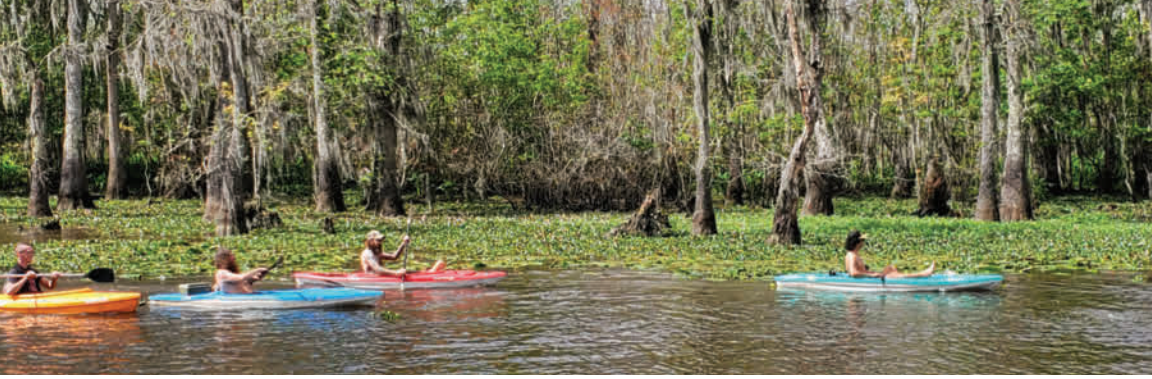
The United States Army Corps of Engineers has released its Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Pearl River Basin Flood Risk Management Project. The new document includes Alternatives D1 and E1, commonly known as the “One Lake” proposals, and removes Alternative A1 from further consideration.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation is urging the Corps to reject D1 and E1 and to reconsider Alternative A1. Plans that involve dredging, widening, or damming the Pearl River would cause significant ecological harm, put communities at greater risk, and create long-term costs for taxpayers. These proposals would encourage new development in flood-prone areas, worsen Jackson’s flooding and drinking water challenges, destroy hundreds of acres of habitat, and disrupt freshwater flows that support seafood, recreation, and tourism across the region.

LWF is also requesting a comprehensive Downstream Impact Study to assess how Alternatives A1, D1, and E1 would affect wildlife, water quality, and hydrology in Louisiana. The current analysis focuses only on a ten-mile stretch near the project area. Communities and resources further downstream deserve a full and transparent review. In addition, we support calls for an additional public meeting in Washington Parish, as requested by Louisiana State Representative Stephanie Hunter Berault, so Louisiana residents can fully understand and respond to the proposals.

The Corps’ latest cost projections show that Alternatives D1 and E1 would be far more expensive than previously estimated. Despite these rising costs, the environmental and community impacts remain poorly addressed in the RDEIS.

LWF will continue to advocate for solutions that protect communities, safeguard habitat, and respect the natural function of the Pearl River. A responsible plan must be based on sound science, a full understanding of downstream impacts, and a commitment to protect the resources that Louisiana depends on. ■



CHANGING SCENIC RIVER REGULATIONS SHOULD REFLECT WHAT IS BEST FOR OUR RIVERS

By Rick Owens, LWF Advocacy Manager

Louisiana's Natural and Scenic Rivers System has protected some of our most treasured waterways since its creation in 1970. Today, more than 60 rivers, bayous, and streams, totaling roughly 3,100 miles, are managed under this program by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Designated Natural and Scenic Rivers and Historic Rivers receive important protections that preserve their ecological, aesthetic, and recreational value. These safeguards help maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations, conserve plant communities, and protect the natural features that are so important to local communities.

A key element of the program is preventing activities that degrade river systems. Current regulations prohibit channelization, clearing and snagging, channel realignment, reservoir construction, commercial cutting of trees within 100 feet of the ordinary low water mark, and the use of motor vehicles in the stream. Any activity that could affect the ecological integrity or character of a designated river requires a Scenic River Permit with conditions designed to protect the stream's natural qualities.

Recently, the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission received a Notice of Intent proposing several updates to the Scenic Rivers Program. These updates would clarify allowable timber harvest practices, shorten public notice timelines, extend permit durations, and establish a general permit process for minor repairs. LWF supports several of these improvements because they streamline the program and align it with best practices.

At the same time, LWF believes the program must continue to strengthen transparency and public involvement. We encourage the state to make all Scenic River permits and public notices available online in one accessible location. This step would provide real-time transparency and make the Scenic Rivers Program consistent with other state permitting systems. LWF also recommends reestablishing the Scenic River Advisory Council to restore valuable oversight and guidance as interest in these waterways continues to grow.

For more than fifty years, LWF has been a strong advocate for Louisiana's Scenic Rivers. We reaffirmed this commitment in 2018 with a resolution supporting the long-term protection of the program. Scenic rivers store floodwater, support habitat, and provide outdoor opportunities for residents and visitors. As development pressures increase, strong and transparent guidelines are essential to ensure these rivers remain healthy and resilient. ■

ADVOCATING FOR CLEAR BOUNDARIES AND HEALTHY HABITAT AT CATAHOULA LAKE

By Rick Owens, LWF Advocacy Manager

Catahoula Lake has long been one of Louisiana's most important natural resources. It is the largest freshwater lake in the state and a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. Migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and countless other species rely on its seasonal flooding and diverse habitat. For generations, hunters, anglers, and birders have traveled from across the country to experience this unique landscape.

Yet today, the future of the Catahoula Lake Basin is uncertain. A series of court decisions, ongoing boundary disputes, and delays in land surveys have left the region in limbo. Habitat management has stalled, and public access has become more limited. Louisiana Wildlife Federation has been working to bring clarity, accountability, and responsible stewardship back to this critical ecosystem.

How the Crooks Ruling Changed Catahoula Lake

The Crooks v. Louisiana Department of Natural Resources case reshaped the legal foundation of this basin. In 2020, the Louisiana Supreme Court upheld a ruling that reclassified Catahoula Lake as a river that floods periodically rather than a lake. This shift carried major consequences. Under Louisiana law, rivers are privately owned up to the ordinary high water mark, while lakebeds are generally public.

The ruling meant that more than 23,000 acres that had long been managed as public lakebed could now be claimed by private landowners. The decision triggered a multi-year process to determine new boundaries, establish ownership, and define where public land still exists. Those surveys are still underway, and until they are completed, state and federal agencies cannot fully manage the habitat or provide reliable public access.

Why Boundary Decisions Matter

Catahoula Lake relies on seasonal water level management, vegetation control, and coordinated restoration. None of this work can move forward without clear ownership. Agencies must know where public land begins and ends before they can manage habitat, enforce regulations, or develop long-term plans. Private landowners need clarity for their own operations as well.

Meanwhile, thousands of acres sit unmanaged. The lakebed dries differently, vegetation patterns have changed, and waterfowl habitat has declined. Users have reported reduced access, inconsistent conditions, and fewer birds. Without coordinated management, the entire basin suffers.

LWF's Involvement Since 2019

LWF has been involved in this issue since 2019. Our work has aimed to protect public resources, support responsible habitat management, and ensure the public has accurate information about what is at stake.

2019 to 2020
LWF joined partners in filing an amicus brief supporting the state's position that Catahoula Lake should remain publicly owned. We also provided members with updates when the state's efforts to defend public ownership were denied, and emphasized the need to continue advocating for the habitat that supports thousands of migratory birds.

2020 to 2023
As legal decisions took effect, LWF urged the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to engage in boundary discussions and protect habitat where possible. LDWF's eventual expansion of Dewey Wills Wildlife Management Area by about 2,440 acres was a direct result of strong, proactive work with adjoining landowners. LWF publicly supported these actions and encouraged similar efforts from other agencies.

2023 to early 2025
LWF continued to raise the visibility of this issue. We submitted letters urging LDWF, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Army Corps of Engineers to maintain water management for the benefit of waterfowl. We educated members on the legal history and kept attention on the need for agency coordination. When confusion around the Crooks ruling grew, LWF provided factual updates and historical context to help the public understand what it meant for wildlife and access.

2025
This year marked a major push for progress. LWF conducted a public poll that received responses from a wide range of hunters, residents, and

conservation advocates. The results revealed strong support for habitat restoration, increased access, and land agreements that protect public use. Poll respondents overwhelmingly reported declining habitat quality and reduced recreational opportunity.

We also met with staff for Louisiana's Congressional Delegation and with USFWS regional leadership to urge faster action on boundary surveys and refuge expansion. LWF released updated statements calling for USFWS to claim the lands now identified as public around Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge and to finalize new boundaries. This step is essential for coordinated habitat work and expanded public access.

Throughout 2025, LWF issued public updates, an action alert that generated hundreds of messages to Congress, and a detailed four-page briefing that explains the Crooks case in plain language. You can read that on LWF's website at lawildlifefed.org.

Why the Outdoor Community Should Care

Catahoula Lake is not simply a legal issue. It is one of Louisiana's most significant wildlife resources. Its shallow water habitat supports some of the highest concentrations of migratory waterfowl in the region. When habitat is unmanaged, birds have fewer places to rest and feed. When access is limited, outdoor traditions decline.

The public poll conducted in 2025 reinforced these concerns.

- Eighty five percent supported creating a refuge or resting area in the basin.
- Eighty one percent believed habitat conditions have worsened in the past five years.
- Seventy six percent felt recreational access had declined.
- Seventy two percent supported public funding for land agreements and conservation work.

Hunters and birders have been clear. They want a healthy Catahoula Lake Basin with predictable access, coordinated water management, and thriving wildlife.

The Path Forward

The key to restoring Catahoula Lake is clear ownership. Federal and state agencies must finish surveys, establish new boundaries, and enter agreements with adjoining landowners. USFWS, as one of the largest landowners in the basin, plays a critical role in establishing boundaries for the Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge. LDWF will need continued support as they manage water levels and habitat within the areas under their care.

LWF will continue to advocate for a comprehensive approach that prioritizes wildlife, public access, and ecosystem health. We will keep working with state and federal partners, raising public awareness, and urging timely action. A healthy future for Catahoula Lake is still possible, but it requires clear decisions and coordinated effort. ■

WHITE LAKE TO RECEIVE LONG-NEEDED REPAIRS, RESTORATION

By Rebecca Triche, LWF Executive Director

Thank you to Governor Landry and his administration for prioritizing overdue maintenance needed to protect the vital wildlife habitat and coastal protection that White Lake provides in southwest Louisiana.

CPRA and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries are moving forward with a comprehensive master plan for White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area. At a public meeting in Gueydan in August 2025, the problems and priorities were identified and the final plan is due October 2025. Priority projects include:

- GIWW Shoreline Protection Project
- WLWCA Unit 2 Impoundment Levee Stabilization Project
- White Lake North Shoreline Protection Project

The costs could be $200 million or more (not the earlier projection of $40 million) mainly due to the expense of rocks for rip rap breakwaters for shoreline protection in portions of the lake and GIWW shoreline repairs that are the responsibility of the state to maintain. LWF continues to work with other organizations to support urgent response to the maintenance work needed for White Lake to provide the benefits for waterfowl, agriculture, whooping crane species recovery, and storm protection to the GIWW and residents in the area.

LWF's 20-Year Commitment to Public Stewardship at White Lake

In 2003, the 70,000-acre White Lake Property was donated to the State of Louisiana, but control was placed under a private corporation operating outside the state's public oversight laws. LWF intervened legally, arguing that public lands must be governed through transparent processes and accountable state agencies, not private boards.

Our advocacy helped bring statewide attention to the issue and established LWF as a leading voice for public stewardship of White Lake.

For more than twenty years, we have tracked the status of the property, pushed for reforms, and supported efforts to restore habitat, maintain public access, and ensure the area is managed in the best interest of Louisiana's wildlife and communities. ■

HONORARY AND MEMORIAL GIFTS (2025)

Thank you to the eight individuals who made honorary and memorial gifts to the Louisiana Wildlife Federation. By giving in the name of your loved ones, you are not only paying tribute to the lives they lived but also ensuring that their passion for Louisiana's wildlife and wild places lives on by protecting the lands they loved and inspiring others to follow in their footsteps. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and the lasting legacy it creates.

- In Honor of Charles D. Williams by Susan Dunbar
- In Memory of John Malcolm Ingram, Sr by Benjamin & Nancy Hillman
- In Memory of Donald J. Braud by Kris Holder
- In Honor of Amy Wold by Jared Kendall
- In Honor of Aaron & Brittany Svoboda by Alex Kufeldt
- In Memory of Barney Callahan by Duane Lee
- In Honor of Curran Burke by Barbara Mollere
- In Memory of Thomas "Tommy" Clark Walen by George Motygin ■

2025 REPORT FOR STATE LEGISLATURE

By Rebecca Triche, LWF Executive Director

The Regular Session in 2025 held in a fiscal-only year offered several bills monitored by LWF staff and leadership. Here's a summary of LWF engagement and outcomes.

Rep. John Illg's bill HB581 **banning the intentional outdoor release of mylar and latex helium balloons** was passed by the legislature but vetoed by Governor Landry. LWF will continue to provide education and engagement about alternatives to this practice that becomes litter and can harm wildlife. Read a separate article in this newsletter.

LWF supported the successful **creation of a Chronic Wasting Disease Task Force.** HCR75, presented by Rep. Neil Riser, establishes a CWD Task Force and LWF has representation on it where we are advancing concerns about inadequate monitoring and the need for greater coordination between the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in addressing containment of CWD. Read a separate article about CWD in this newsletter.

LWF opposed two bills that would have created long-term exemptions, or extended existing exemptions, for several **Scenic Rivers.** HB172 by Rep. Kathy Edmonston would have extended a recent five-year exemption for the Comite River and Bayou Manchac by an additional five years. SB124, by Senator Robert Owen, would have exempted the West Pearl River from the Louisiana Scenic River program for a period of eight years. LWF, along with other organizations, participated in committee hearings and were successful in having the Comite River removed from HB172, as well as providing opposition that resulted in SB124 being removed from consideration this year.

Of important interest is SB244 that became Act 459, which basically reorganized the previously named Department of Natural Resources, recently called Department of Energy and Natural Resources, but is now the **Department of Conservation and Energy.** This 227 page bill's overhaul of the agency included replacing the Office of Conservation and its Commissioner with the Governor-appointed secretary; expanding regulatory oversight; enhanced permitting and bonding requirements; and added stricter environmental remediation and pipeline standards. The bill also granted expanded authority over water resources and LWF will now focus on the long-needed comprehensive water management code that Louisiana should have to protect our most precious resource. Look for more information and action in 2026.

LWF supported HB615 by Representative Geymann to create a statewide framework for **regulating industrial solar development** to ensure that any new rules protect wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, and rural communities. LWF urged strong decommissioning and financial security requirements to ensure sites would be restored responsibly. After HB615 failed to pass the House, Representative Kim Landry Coates' HB459 was amended to incorporate some of its concepts. HB459 passed and became Act 279. The new law establishes a more limited permitting structure for facilities seventy-five acres or larger and gives the Department of Energy and Natural Resources authority to develop

rules for siting and decommissioning. Parishes with existing solar ordinances may opt out of certain state requirements. Act 279 also includes basic setbacks, vegetative buffers, noise limits, and public notice provisions. However, the law does not include many of the protections central to HB615. It does not require letters of clearance from LDWF or LDAF, and its public participation requirements are less robust. While Act 279 is a step toward oversight, it does not fully address concerns about habitat fragmentation, farmland conversion, or long-term site impacts. We will continue to participate in rulemaking for solar siting.

SB97 by Senator Pressly created the Coordinated Use of Resources for **Recreation, Economy, Navigation, and Transportation Authority aka "CURRENT"** that is housed in the newly-named Department of Conservation and Energy. This is designed for flood risk management and better strategic planning in upland areas not covered by CPRA. Something to watch in future.

The **Coastal Annual Plan**, which must be approved each year by the legislature, had a dramatic path through the session because it contained funding for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion but the fate of that project hung in the balance as the current administration put it on pause then later canceled the project. Several organizations spoke for – and against – the project at each of the four committee hearings for HR36 and SR28, which were passed. There is good testimony in the committee hearings about the progress of coastal restoration if you want to learn more about where Louisiana stands on progress. Please read the summary of LWF's position about canceling the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion projects in this newsletter.

LWF did not take positions on the nearly two dozen bills regarding **carbon capture and sequestration.** Very few bills were passed but there was long and lively debate related to siting and pore space, revenue sharing, eminent domain, and local governing authority.

HB 564 by Rep. Jacob Landry established the **Conservation Incentive Program** for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to participate in private-public partnerships for management practices to enhance wildlife habitat and manage native species that include feral hog control, prescribed burning and forest stand improvement, and water management for waterfowl.

Along with several partner organizations, LWF sought **funding for Louisiana Outdoors Forever** to provide state matching funds that draw federal funding for conservation projects in Louisiana. One million dollars was allocated to the program and LWF continues to make this a priority for long-term conservation opportunities similar to what other states enjoy.

LWF closely monitored HB 164 by Rep. Beth Billings that created an exemption for the **release of pen-raised mallards in the coastal zone** of Louisiana. Due to opposition and testimony presented, the final bill includes a narrower exemption zone.

Thank you to Rep. Zeringue and Senator Hensgens for supporting HCR27 that continued to draw attention to the state's participation in the Gulf of America **Hypoxia Action Plan and Task Force.**

Thanks to our members who took the time to respond to the LWF action alerts and helped LWF staff engage in the legislative process. ■

LWF HONORS 2024 CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENTS

By Jimmy Frederick, LWF Communications Director

Louisiana Wildlife Federation's (LWF) 59th Conservation Achievement Awards Program recognized five individuals and two organizations selected for their significant achievements in natural resources conservation and education at a banquet, held in Baton Rouge on Friday, April 25. These awards, represented by unique wildlife statuettes, were jointly presented by Louisiana Wildlife Federation President Martin "Marty" Floyd (left), and National Wildlife Federation Board Member Arthur Johnson (right).

Floyd expressed his admiration for the honorees, stating, "It's heartening to learn how these dedicated people inspire others and conserve Louisiana's natural resources for future generations."

The 2024 conservation recipients include:

Heidi Adams, PhD of Ruston was named 2024 Conservationist of the Year. Heidi's work in 2024 focused on introducing more young women to the possibilities of working in forestry and wildlife management through her Women in the Woods project, Louisiana Tech's STEMinist event, and working with high school students from around the state, while also teaching seven to eight undergraduate and graduate classes throughout the year.

Jason Adriance of New Orleans was named the 2024 Professional Conservationist of the Year. Jason is the Finfish Program Manager for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. His expertise and scientific analysis have been instrumental in decisions made for altering size and bag

limits for Redfish and Speckled Trout to ensure the health of those fish species in Louisiana waters. His analysis has been used to lengthen the Red Snapper season in Louisiana, to protect Southern Flounder stocks, and regulate the commercial Menhaden fishery.

Charles Williams of Greenwell Springs was recognized as the 2024 Volunteer Conservationist of the Year for his work with Louisiana Wildlife Federation and other conservation organizations. Charles has been instrumental in spearheading LWF's Lights Out Louisiana campaign to help raise awareness about migratory birds colliding with buildings. He has been a leader on issues related to Catahoula Lake, reforestation, and migratory bird populations.

James "Jim" Foret of St. Martinville was named the 2024 Conservation Educator of the Year. Jim inspired students as a professor in the School of Geosciences at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and expanded educational and recreational activities for all ages as a superintendent of New Iberia Parks. His work with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development on the Wildflower Seed Bank Project provided wildflower plantings along the State's interstate highways. Moving and conserving a 150-year-old oak to save it from destruction represents Jim's deep commitment to conservation.

Bossier Parish School for Technology and Innovative Learning (BPSTIL) in Bossier City was recognized as the 2024 Conservation Organization of the Year for its continued dedication to providing middle and high school students in Bossier Parish with technical education and service opportunities that span multiple disciplines. In 2024, the students of BPSTIL used their unique talents and interests to make a meaningful impact on the Red River National Wildlife Refuge.

Natchitoches Parish 4-H in Natchitoches was honored as the 2024 Conservation Youth Organization of the Year. 2024 was a big year for Natchitoches Parish 4-H as they kicked off their successful Natchitoches Parish 4-H Celebrates Conservation program. The program directly reached 500 students and indirectly nearly 2,500 students throughout the parish. The program taught environmental stewardship, helping to foster a generation that values conservation and responsible recreation.

Mark Shirley of Abbeville received the 2024 Lifetime Achievement Award for more than 40 years of service to conservation in Louisiana. After earning a master's in wildlife management from LSU in 1979, he worked at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge before beginning a 41-year career with Louisiana Sea Grant and the LSU AgCenter. A trusted expert on coastal restoration and sustainable fisheries, Mark provided invaluable guidance to shrimp, crawfish, and alligator industries across South Louisiana. His signature program, Marsh Maneuvers, has taught more than 3,000 students about wetlands and resource management since 1989.

Thank you to our generous sponsors for their help in making the 59th Conservation Achievement Awards Banquet special. Their support makes it possible to celebrate the incredible people and programs shaping Louisiana's conservation future. We're grateful to have such outstanding champions by our side: Drax, Lamar, Allyn and Clifford Dukes, Delacroix Corporation, Friends of Black Bayou National Wildlife Refuge, Mike and MC Stewart, Rapides Wildlife Association, Robert and Norma Stewart, and Zac and Julie Burson. ■

LWF CELEBRATES 2024 YOUTH HUNTERS OF THE YEAR

By Kelsy Yeargain, LWF Development Director

Each year, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) honor young hunters whose stories reflect the joy, learning, and tradition of hunting in Louisiana. More than 35 youth applied in 2024, and two stood out for their heartfelt essays and memorable experiences: Caroline Ellerbe, 13, of Wisner, and Kaiden Scarborough, 12, of Haynesville.

2024 Female Youth Hunter of the Year

Caroline Ellerbe, 13, Wisner, LA
Caroline's story combined humor, determination, and sisterhood. After a tough first season, she stayed committed. On a hunt with her aunt Kalli, complete with a noisy stand, ladybugs, and red wasps, she finally got her moment. "I thought I'd never see anything today, but when he stepped out just right, I pulled the trigger and dropped him right in his tracks. I thought my heart was going to beat out of my chest." Caroline harvested her first buck, a heavy 8-point, and called herself "hooked on hunting forever."

2024 Male Youth Hunter of the Year

Kaiden Scarborough, 12, Haynesville, LA
Kaiden wrote about the bond between father and son and the lessons that come with time in the woods. After days of scouting, he wanted to hunt a stand where a big buck had appeared, but his dad encouraged patience and a rut strategy. "As we started packing up, I look down the lane and see the biggest buck I have ever seen in my life." Kaiden harvested a massive 10-point and reflected, "Hunting has taught me patience and appreciation. Thanks, Dad, for teaching me these skills and developing my love for the outdoors."

This year's submissions were stories of perseverance, mentorship, and joy. They show that Louisiana's hunting heritage is thriving in the next generation. Congratulations to Caroline and Kaiden and thank you to every young hunter who shared their story.

Thank you to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for continued partnership for this program and to sponsors Baton Rouge Chapter of Delta Waterfowl and Andrew J. Harrison, Jr. with Harrison Law, LLC. ■

RESOLUTIONS AND RECOGNITION AT LWF'S 86TH CONVENTION

By Jimmy Frederick, LWF Communications Director

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation's 86th Annual Convention and General Assembly took place March 14–15 at the beautiful Wesley Center in Woodworth, Louisiana.

Festivities kicked off Friday with a gathering of the Edgar Veillon Conservation Leadership Corps (EV-CLC), followed by a night hike and s'mores around the campfire, bringing together new and returning members for a memorable evening outdoors.

Saturday morning began with birdwatching before more than 60 EV-CLC alumni, board members, and affiliate delegates convened for the 2025 General Assembly. After swearing in this year's officers and executive committee members, attendees heard updates from the National Wildlife Federation. NWF Board Member Allyn Dukes reaffirmed the organization's commitment to its Strategic Plan and to strengthen programs, people, and partnerships, even in uncertain times. Geralyn Hoey, NWF Director of Conservation Partnerships, emphasized the critical role that LWF and its affiliates play in keeping conservation stories alive and making sure decision-makers understand their local impact.

One of the day's most celebrated moments was the presentation of the President's Cup, awarded each year by the president in consultation with the executive director. President Marty Floyd announced this year's well-deserved recipient was Charles "Charlie" Pfeifer, who took a lead role in working with NWF on a resolution addressing the McKittrick Policy at the national level.

In addition to leadership transitions and inspiring speakers, the General Assembly is where members debate and vote on resolutions that guide LWF's advocacy, communications, and outreach. This year, five resolutions were adopted, focused on issues ranging from wildlife-friendly solar development to roadside habitat management to addressing chronic wasting disease. To read the full resolutions please check out our website at **lawildlifefed.org/resolutions.**

Resolution 1: LWF supports wildlife-friendly regulations for utility-scale solar development in Louisiana, including native vegetation, agrivoltaics, and local input, and calls for a mitigation fee on projects on public lands to support habitat and wildlife programs.

Resolution 2: LWF urges Louisiana to manage roadside mowing and spraying to better support pollinators and wildlife by preserving native vegetation, reducing herbicide use, and encouraging wildflower planting and public education.

Resolution 3: LWF opposes the use of public funding for saltwater fish hatcheries and instead supports investing in habitat restoration as a more effective strategy for sustaining Louisiana's fisheries.

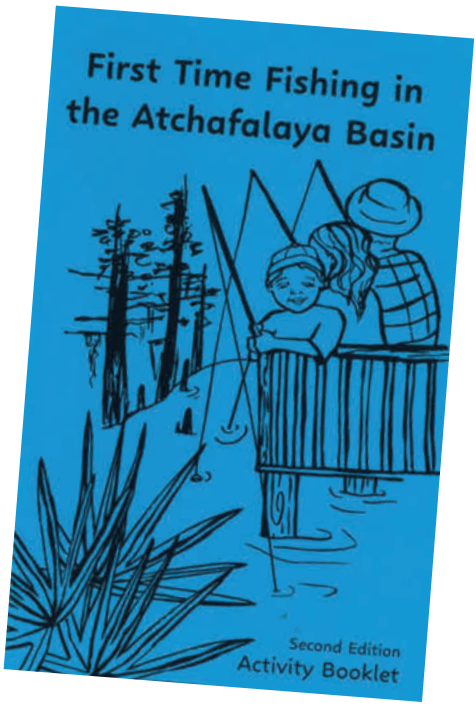
Resolution 4: LWF calls on Congress and partner organizations to address the harmful impacts of staff reductions in the National Wildlife Refuge System, which have limited public access, conservation education, and wildlife protection efforts.

Resolution 5: LWF urges aggressive surveillance, transparency, and inter-agency coordination to contain the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease in Louisiana's captive and wild deer populations and supports stronger legislative action if needed.

Thank-you to everyone who joined us for this year's Convention. Your dedication helps ensure Louisiana remains a thriving Sportsman's Paradise for generations to come. ■

FIRST TIME FISHING IN THE ATCHAFALAYA BASIN: SECOND EDITION RELEASED

By Kelsy Yeargain, LWF Development Director



Louisiana Wildlife Federation has released the second edition of *First Time Fishing in the Atchafalaya Basin*, a free activity booklet developed by LWF in partnership with the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area. The booklet has served as an entry point to fishing education in the Basin for more than a decade.

The guide follows a child's first fishing trip and introduces basic skills such as casting, baiting a hook, and understanding size and licensing regulations. The updated edition includes new illustrations by New Orleans artist Anna Wilson, along with games, checklists, and illustrated native fish.

The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area is part of the National Park Service's National Heritage Area program and was designated by Congress in 2006. Its mission is to preserve and promote the Basin's nationally significant natural, cultural, and historic resources while strengthening connections between people, culture, and the environment. This project reflects a productive partnership focused on practical conservation education in Louisiana.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a membership-driven organization with partners and affiliates across the state. Projects like this booklet demonstrate how conservation outcomes are strengthened when organizations, local leaders, and engaged citizens work together to support education, access, and responsible use of Louisiana's natural resources. ■

LWF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS SPEAK UP IN MINNEAPOLIS

By IJ "Zac" Burson, LWF Board Member, Past President, Friends of Red River

From June 3 to 6, 2025, just downriver from the headwaters of the Mississippi in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) held its 89th Annual Meeting. The event brought together the NWF Board of Directors, staff, and delegates from each of its 52 state and territorial affiliates.

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation was proud to have a strong presence at the meeting. Executive Director Rebecca Triche led our delegation and helped shape national conversations around wildlife habitat improvement. As part of that work, she introduced and passed a resolution focused on habitat restoration and hosted a presentation on the benefits of the Certified Wildlife Habitat Program for both organizations and communities. Learn more at: **https://certifiedwildlifehabitat.nwf.org/Habitats/Information**

LWF President Marty Floyd served as our official delegate to the assembly, with Jonny Fryar serving as alternate. LWF sponsored two resolutions this year, an uncommon move that reflects our growing leadership in national conservation policy. This is only the second year in a row that LWF has taken on the role of sponsor. But we did not do this alone. Several other affiliate organizations joined us as co-sponsors, helping to advance national policies that reflect urgent conservation priorities. Our strength comes from our numbers.

One of our resolutions began as a state-level initiative developed by Rebecca Triche and LWF affiliates Friends of Red River and Friends of Black Bayou. Originally focused on the shortage of education, biological, and technical staff at National Wildlife Refuges in Louisiana, the resolution quickly grew to address a national concern. With support from NWF staff, including Geralyn Hoey, and other state affiliates, the resolution was adopted as a national call to address funding shortages, staff reductions, and public engagement throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In a second resolution, Rebecca Triche and members of the Louisiana Native Plant Society worked to address seed and plant sourcing problems that affect habitat restorations on a large scale and in ecologically diverse regions across the country. They were instrumental in crafting language that calls for increased investment in the development of native seed and plant supply chains.

To read all of this year's adopted NWF resolutions, visit:
https://affiliates.nwf.org/policy-resolutions/

In addition to sessions and networking, attendees also had the opportunity to see the results of conservation work happening in the region. Some visited the Gar Lab in St. Paul, where the ecology, conservation, and management of non-game native fishes like paddlefish and gar fish are being studied. Others, like LWF's Zac Burson, kayaked the Upper Mississippi River, splitting the heart of the Twin Cities. Zac shared, "Having now experienced the Mississippi from near its headwaters all the way down to the great delta it created in Louisiana is to be in still greater awe of the power of that river."

The 2026 Annual Meeting will take place next June in Providence, Rhode Island. ■

LWF WELCOMES THE 2025–2026 EDGAR VEILLON CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP CORPS COHORT

By Kelsy Yeargain, LWF Development Director

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) is proud to announce the 15 students selected for the 2025–2026 Edgar Veillon Conservation Leadership Corps (EV-CLC). Established in 2018, the EV-CLC prepares undergraduate students from across the state to become Louisiana's next generation of conservation leaders. Over the course of a year, participants take part in three immersive training sessions that combine hands-on learning, leadership development, and exposure to real-world conservation challenges.

Through case studies, field experiences, and mentorship from experts in the conservation community, students build skills in communication, advocacy, and collaborative problem-solving. Graduates join an active and growing alumni network with opportunities for continued mentorship and professional development.

Highlights From the First Session at the Louisiana Ecological Forestry Center
The first in-person session for the seventh cohort took place October 31 to November 2 at the Louisiana Ecological Forestry Center at Hodges Gardens, surrounded by longleaf pine habitat where restoration efforts are underway.

The weekend opened with Past President Zac Burson, who spoke about the importance of public lands and the power of everyday outdoor enthusiasts to influence conservation when they choose to use their voice. LWF Board Member and retired U.S. Forest Service wildlife biologist Jonny Fryar provided a look into conservation careers within the Forest Service and an overview of the Kisatchie National Forest. Dr. Virginia Burkett, USGS Emeritus, followed with an engaging presentation on how climate change is reshaping Louisiana's future.

Students toured active restoration sites at the Forestry Center and even spotted a Red-cockaded Woodpecker, an experience that quickly became a favorite moment of the weekend. Another highlight of the weekend was a night hike to spot wildlife and a morning birding hike led by LWF Board Member Larry Raymond.

Participant Christopher Hill reflected on the session, sharing, "Growing up in southwest Louisiana, I wanted to make a greater impact in protecting our ecosystems. Hearing from this weekend's presenters showed me that with training and experience, anyone can help drive meaningful change."

Looking Ahead: Session Two in Baton Rouge
The next EV-CLC training session will take place in Baton Rouge, where students will explore Louisiana's most pressing coastal issues. The weekend will focus on advocacy, policy engagement, and communication strategies, giving participants the tools to speak confidently on behalf of Louisiana's wildlife, water, and habitats.

Meet the 2025–2026 Cohort
LWF congratulates the 15 students selected for this year's Corps. Their dedication and enthusiasm reflect a new generation ready to take on the challenges facing Louisiana's natural resources.

- Christopher (Kit) Hill — Baton Rouge Community College
- Dustin Milam — South LA Community College
- Ferdand (FJ) Derouen — LSU-Eunice
- Franchesca Ruiz — LSU
- Geremiah Perkins — Baton Rouge Community College
- Jesse Mehaffey — Baton Rouge Community College
- Jessica (Micah) Poole — Northwestern State
- Johnnie Bernard — UNO
- Katie Mahl — UL-Lafayette
- Mishanti Johnson — Southern University
- Nevaeh Barriere — LSU
- Nia Sampson — LSU
- Rachel Abbott — LSU
- Shelbe Trapp — LA Tech
- NgocMai (Maria) Vu — LSU
- Johnnie Bernard — UNO ■

CHECK OUT NWF'S FILM SERIES "COAST TO COAST"

The National Wildlife Federation's new Offshore Wind Film Series "Coast to Coast" highlights responsible offshore wind development across the country, including voices from Louisiana. The series emphasizes how offshore wind can expand clean energy while avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating impacts on marine and coastal ecosystems and the wildlife that depend on them.

NWF's position is that offshore wind can support both people and wildlife when projects are sited, planned, and developed responsibly. They emphasize the use of the best scientific and technological information available to guide decisions that protect habitats, species, and coastal communities.

You can find this by searching for "Coast to Coast NWF" and watching on YouTube or find the link on LWF's website at lawildlifefed.org.

LWF agrees with the need for science-based decision making and has closely monitored offshore wind activity with a focus on environmental risks, particularly to migratory birds. Through its 2023 resolution, LWF supports offshore wind as a tool for emissions reduction but insists on strict standards that safeguard wildlife and habitat, along with meaningful engagement of state and local stakeholders. LWF also stresses the importance of balancing development within Louisiana's working coast with strong habitat management, proven impact-reduction strategies, and comprehensive decommissioning plans to ensure long-term protection of critical areas. ■

BECOME A MONTHLY STEWARD

Yes! I want to be a monthly Steward
❑ $5 ❑ $10 ❑ $15 ❑ $20

❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard ❑ Discover
❑ American Express

NUMBER:

_____

EXP. DATE:

_____

SIGNATURE:

_____

❑ MR. ❑ MRS. ❑ MS. ❑ DR.
NAME:

_____

ADDRESS:

_____

CITY/STATE/ZIP:

_____

PHONE:

_____

E-MAIL:

_____

I want to renew an annual membership:
❑ Sustaining - $35 ❑ Family - $50
❑ Sponsor - $100 ❑ Patron - $250
❑ Benefactor - $500 ❑ Conservator - $1,000
❑ I want to make a one-time donation: $_____
❑ Check enclosed (made payable to LWF)

Mail payment with this completed form to:
Louisiana Wildlife Federation
P.O. Box 65239
Baton Rouge, LA 70896-5239

Or pay online at lawildlifefed.org

Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

For the next three months everyone who signs up to become a monthly steward will be entered to win a LWF personalized Land's End cooler bag that holds up to 30 cans, perfect for hiking, hunting, fishing, or enjoying a picnic by the water!

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BATON ROUGE, LA
PERMIT No. 1393

Louisiana Wildlife Federation
P.O. Box 65239
Baton Rouge, LA 70896

Return Service Requested

LWF

SL88