

Louisiana Wildlife Federation

July - December
2024



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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 is printed biannually for members and supporters. Updates on LWF activities and events can be found on our website and social media pages:

-  lawildlifefed.org
-  [LouisianaWildlifeFederation](https://www.facebook.com/LouisianaWildlifeFederation)
-  [@LaWildlifeFed](https://www.instagram.com/LaWildlifeFed)
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-  [linkedin.com/company/louisiana-wildlife-federation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/louisiana-wildlife-federation)

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

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Amy Wold, Policy Director
Angela Hirstius, Membership & Operations Manager

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Caddo Lake Institute, Inc.
Climate Reality Project – New Orleans Chapter
East Ascension Sportsman League
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Friends of the Atchafalaya
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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

Louisiana is home to 30 annual Christmas bird counts — just one of the ways the effects of climate change and its impacts on wildlife are tracked. Over the years since joining my dad on my first count at age 12, I have participated in more than 300 Christmas bird counts. At one of the five counts that I participated in this year, I was encouraged to see two kids actively engaged and adeptly identifying birds by their calls.

Fostering interest and a sense of responsibility in younger generations is crucial to sustaining our state's rich ecosystem.



Serving again as president of LWF, I look forward to helping steward our state's natural resources for future generations, advance important conservation initiatives, and advocate for wildlife protections. Our organization will continue to offer expert scientific assessment and opinions on subjects that impact Louisiana's environmental legacy.

The detrimental effects of coastal land loss continue to demand much of LWF's focus, effort, and support. The construction and operation of solar and wind energy requires our attention as land use for these new technologies impacts habitats. Our 'Lights Out' project addresses the harm that lighted buildings in cities have on migrating birds and other animals.

LWF will also continue to assist our affiliates on a variety of vital projects. Recent support includes providing needed solar batteries to ensure the eagle cameras in Kisatchie National Forest, with nearly 9,000 subscribers, continue to livestream. We will also continue to maintain an interest related to waterbodies — such as Catahoula and White Lakes, among others — to ensure the proper management of habitats.

Our work with the indigenous peoples of the state began with educational coloring books identifying animals in the Tunica and Biloxi languages. This year, we will work on a similar project with members of the Caddo Tribe in four states — Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. We will also continue to help with natural resources for the tribes' uses. For basketweaving, we are involved with re-establishment of common reed, and we collect feathers for their ceremonial use.

Nature doesn't stand still. As Louisiana's ecology is ever-evolving, critical new projects will continue to present themselves and require LWF's smart insight and thoughtful direction to ensure that wildlife and their habitats are sustained for future generations.

Martin "Marty" Floyd ■

NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Looking back on 2024, I'm excited to report that LWF is growing. We gained more than 12,000 members and welcomed new affiliate organizations. One of the benefits of membership is your eligibility to join the board of directors and/or serve on committees.

If you're new to the organization, please know that we welcome members to participate in LWF's committees, as they provide important input and guidance for our strategic priorities:



Awards • Education • Fundraising • Avian Conservation • Boating and Fresh/Saltwater Fisheries • Environmental Quality • Forest and Upland Wildlife • Habitat Conservation and Management • Waterfowl Conservation

We value our members' support and the volunteer leaders who give their time and talents to the Federation. You can get to know other like-minded members from around the state who help with our programs and guide our wildlife policy positions. To learn more about these committees, message me at rebecca@lawildlifefed.org or call 225-344-6707. Thanks for your continued support. *Rebecca Triche* ■

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION RECEIVES LARGEST BEQUEST IN ITS 85 YEAR HISTORY

Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) has been bequeathed \$5 million that will enhance its mission of wildlife conservation and being the voice of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources. The gift from the estate of Marian Plant Petry was finalized in December and has been put to immediate use by LWF. It is the largest bequest received by LWF since its creation in 1940.

We are deeply honored by Mrs. Petry's generosity. As a former teacher and avid gardener, she cared about children and nature and enjoyed being outdoors. Her gift supports LWF's priority to leave future generations abundant wildlife and wild spaces to enjoy in Louisiana.



Her gift has allowed LWF to encourage new partnerships that advance habitat conservation, collaborate on education and policy, and engage more citizens throughout our state. The issues we grapple with today include coastal land loss, water management policy, potential impacts on wildlife habitat from expansion of energy production and carbon management, increased wildlife diseases and invasive species, and prudent management of public lands.

The Petry bequest helped fund LWF's partnership with the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana to produce two educational coloring books that promote and preserve the native Tunica and Biloxi languages using wildlife as the focus. These two coloring books are now available in every public library in the state and can be found on the LWF website at lawildlifefed.org.

The funding has also helped LWF support creating a post-graduate fellowship at the Tulane Center for Environmental Law to collaboratively work on emerging policy issues and provide more research and analysis.

Marian and her husband John Petry, Jr. were long-time members of LWF. They believed in LWF's earliest purpose to conserve our natural resources and the right to enjoy them, and their generosity helps LWF's members and leaders advance our mission in ways we only dreamed of before. ■

HONORARY AND MEMORIAL GIFTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2024)

- In Memory of Alvy Slatten, by Benjamin & Nancy Hillman
- In Memory of Joseph Barry Fontenot, by George Motygin
- In Honor of Anne Kate Thompson, by David Thompson
- In Memory of Barney Callahan, by Charles & Pam Caillouet
- In Memory of Barney Callahan, by Amanda Campbell



85TH ANNUAL CONVENTION PACKED WITH INFORMATION, DISCUSSIONS, AND SEVERAL KEY RESOLUTIONS

by Jimmy Frederick

LWF Communications Director

LWF's 85th Annual Convention was held in Lafayette, LA August 16-17. The convention began with a meeting of LWF's Board of Directors on Friday, followed by the 2024 General Assembly on Saturday.

The General Assembly was attended by more than 35 board members, affiliate leaders, members, and guests who worked through a jam-packed agenda that included passing the gavel to a new LWF president, swearing in the new executive committee, awarding the President's Cup, and debating four important resolutions.

Outgoing president Zac Burson gavelled the meeting to order and then promptly passed the gavel to our new president, Marty Floyd. Marty is a past president, long-time member, and is active with several of LWF's affiliates.

We can't thank Zac enough for his dedication and leadership during his term as president from 2021 to 2024. He was instrumental in guiding LWF successfully through, at times, uncharted waters. LWF has an updated strategic plan, new staff positions, and increased membership numbers. While Zac is no longer president, he will continue to serve on the executive committee and several other LWF committees.

With the gavel now firmly in the hands of Marty, he and the other officers and executive committee were sworn in by National Wildlife Federation Board Member Allyn Dukes. The members of the 2024 Executive Committee are President Marty Floyd, Vice President Charles Williams, Secretary Mark Shurtz, Treasurer John Miller, Zac Burson, Jonny Fryar, Charlie Pfeifer, Bob Stewart, and Larry Raymond.



The highlight of the day, as it always is at LWF's General Assembly, was the awarding of the President's Cup. The recipient of this prestigious award is chosen by the president in consultation with the executive director. This year's well-deserving recipient is Mark Shurtz. Mark has served as Secretary since 2016 and has been a selfless volunteer and advocate for LWF. This past year, Mark helped revitalize the Youth Hunter of the Year program. He is also an active participant on several LWF Committees.



Along with facilitating crucial governance activities, the General Assembly is the venue for debating resolutions that focus on issues facing Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources. Once passed, these resolutions serve as guideposts for LWF's advocacy, communications, and outreach efforts. This year the members and affiliate leaders in attendance voted to approve three important resolutions. The resolutions below can also be found on our website.

Resolution No. 3 – Protecting, Researching, and Expanding Louisiana's Mature and Old-Growth Forests.

Resolution No. 4 – Support for Continued Constitutional Protection for Conservation Fund, Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund, and Artificial Reef Development Fund.

Resolution No. 5 – Restrict Helium Balloon Releases to Prevent Wildlife Deaths, Litter.

We want to thank everyone who attended this year's Annual Convention meetings. Your voice for Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources is vital to ensuring Louisiana will continue to be the Sportsman's Paradise for generations to come. ■





MAUREPAS SWAMP RESTORATION PROJECT NOW IN CONSTRUCTION!

by Amy Wold
LWF Policy Director

Louisiana took a long-awaited step forward in coastal restoration and protection Tuesday with the official Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) groundbreaking for the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp.

Supporters, government officials, and many of the people who have worked tirelessly for more than 20 years to bring the project to fruition gathered at the future location of a structure that will bring freshwater from the Mississippi River back to the swamp. Cut off from the river since the early 1920s, the project will once again reconnect the Mississippi River to the western side of Maurepas Swamp to provide seasonal influxes of freshwater, nutrients, and likely some sediment to the area east of Garyville.

The project is a maximum 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) diversion that will benefit about 45,000 acres of cypress-tupelo swamp by helping push back saltwater intrusion, provide nutrients to the forested swamp, and restore hydrology that will help forest regeneration through better water management. Operated to mimic seasonal flooding and low water cycles, the diversion is expected to improve habitat quality and benefit fish and wildlife in the area.

“This project isn’t just about restoring a swamp, it’s about preserving our way of life,” said Pete Dufresne, St. James Parish President.

Multiple speakers during the groundbreaking ceremony agreed that reconnecting the river has multiple benefits, including providing more storm protection for nearby communities as well as advancing the state’s coastal restoration work.

“Projects like this are really the foundation of our coastal restoration efforts,” said Matthew Jewell, St. Charles Parish President and member of the CPRA board. “If you don’t have the foundation, the entire structure will collapse.”

At about 140,000 acres of cypress-tupelo swamp, Maurepas Swamp is the second largest area of forested wetland in Louisiana, and used to be fed through connections to the Mississippi River. However, after the 1927 flood, the Mississippi River was leveed which cut off the seasonal high water and low water cycles of the swamp. Without this river to swamp connection, many areas of forest have been unable to regenerate due to high water levels, saltwater intrusion has turned many areas into marsh or open water, and water quality has suffered as the hydrology stagnates.

The project is estimated to cost \$330 million and will be paid for through funding from the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council), Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) funds, and other State funding sources. The RESTORE Council approved \$14 million to support planning, engineering, and design, and another \$130 million for construction. The RESTORE Council administers a portion of the 2010 oil spill settlements for ecosystem restoration, economic recovery, and tourism promotion along the Gulf coast.

As an added benefit, in 2023 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that the project would be used as mitigation for the construction of the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain levee project. The levee will extend from the Bonnet Carré Spillway to Garyville, and protect more than 60,000 residents in St. Charles, St. John, and St. James parishes.

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation joins with supporters along with local, state, and federal government agencies and local community and stakeholder groups in celebrating this landmark project and the benefits it will provide to people, habitat, fish and wildlife, and a long culture of fishing and hunting in this beautiful part of Louisiana’s coast. ■

Support LWF when you shop at Walmart by choosing us as your charity for their online Round Up program





LWF, OTHERS FILE TO INTERVENE IN MID-BARATARIA SEDIMENT DIVERSION FEDERAL LAWSUIT

by Rebecca Triche
Executive Director

Louisiana Wildlife Federation supports and advocates for evidence-based decision-making using science in conservation of our wildlife and their habitats. The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion is a project that has been discussed for decades, studied for more than 10 years, discussed in numerous public venues, and included in the state's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast in at least two plans. These plans have been approved by legislators representing the people of Louisiana.

What we know about this project is based on numerous studies and research. The questions that have been asked recently can be and have been answered. We share the evidence that guides our decision to support this project. When we choose a sediment diversion, we are choosing not just land building but replenishing an estuary. This is how south Louisiana was built over time.

Restore the Mississippi River Delta recently released a new report authored by Dr. Loren Scott highlighting the incredible economic impact that is expected to occur with the completion of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, further showing the importance of this project to Plaquemines Parish and South Louisiana.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation, along with Environmental Defense Fund, Orleans Audubon Society, and Cajun Fishing Adventures, has filed a motion to intervene as defendants in *Jurisich Oysters, LLC v. USACE* to ensure the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion project moves forward to provide critical community protection and vital ecosystem benefits. The Mid-Barataria project will restore critical flood and sea level rise protections for the region while creating more than 3,000 new jobs regionally and over \$2.8B in new economic activity.

LWF has long advocated for and supported efforts to divert water from the Mississippi River to benefit its surrounding wetlands. This has been done via messages to LWF members, in press releases, letters to legislative delegations, and to state or federal agency representatives. Since the 1980s, LWF has consistently

engaged with National Wildlife Federation to draw attention and support for coastal restoration of Louisiana's eroding coastline at the national level.

Timeline of Support

On March 8, 1981, LWF adopted Resolution No. L: "Freshwater Diversion into Louisiana Wetlands." With this resolution, LWF took the position that the wetlands of coastal Louisiana were being lost and that the "most feasible means of solving this problem is to divert freshwater from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River", and urged "the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to seek every means at its disposal to implement freshwater diversion projects into the adjacent wetlands to reduce saltwater intrusion and create new wetlands." This message was sent to Louisiana's Congressional delegation and governor at that time.

On January 31, 1982, LWF adopted Resolution No. H: "Freshwater Diversion at Caernarvon, LA." This resolution supported the Freshwater Diversion proposed at Caernarvon, LA and acknowledged "the most promising solution to this problem (of coastal wetland loss) is to re-introduce fresh water from the Mississippi River into these marshes."

On March 6, 1983, LWF adopted Resolution No. 14 supporting the freshwater diversion from the Mississippi River into the Barataria Basin at the Davis Pond Site to preserve and protect wetlands in the basin.

On February 15, 1987, LWF urged the State of Louisiana to develop a "comprehensive plan for the control of coastal erosion and wetland loss" and "to support a long-term planning and research program to be coordinated with other State and Federal agencies" and "pursue as aggressive a coastal resource management plan as possible through increased funding ... to preserve these coastal wetlands for the enjoyment of future generations of Louisianans." This was done through the adoption of Resolution No. 19: "Louisiana Wetland Loss."

On February 21, 1988, LWF adopted Resolution No. 35: "Coastal Restoration" supporting "large-scale Mississippi River sediment diversion, wetland restoration and reduction of canal construction in the coastal wetlands."

On February 26, 1989, LWF acknowledged federal funding would be needed for "major federal restoration projects like freshwater and sediment diversions" and that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "should give the same priority to protection, restoration and enhancement of wetlands that the agency gives to providing flood control and maintaining navigation."

On February 21, 1999, LWF adopted Resolution "Implementation of the Coast 2050 Plan", giving support for the Coast 2050 Plan that promoted "long-term ecosystem-scale strategies" to preserve and protect the landscape of coastal Louisiana for future generations.

On March 16, 2008, with the adoption of Resolution No. 18E, 2008: "Returning the Mississippi River to its Delta," LWF reaffirmed support for the "state of Louisiana and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with haste to restore the deposition of sediment in the deltaic plain region, sediment that created coastal Louisiana and which is required for its survival, through the implementation of restoration projects ... and other restoration actions that enhance deltaic land

building processes.” LWF also affirmed that river sediment could be used to sustain the Mississippi River delta, which will be lost to the Gulf of Mexico more each year if nothing is done to restore the natural hydrology of the Mississippi River.

Regarding the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers’ use of sediment for habitat restoration benefits, on February 28, 2010 LWF adopted Resolution No. 3B, 2010, reaffirming support for “investigation and study of the maximum effective use of the water and sediment of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers for coastal restoration purposes consistent with flood control and navigation”, and that the plans and projects of the Atchafalaya Basin Master Plan be consistent with the state’s Master Plan for Coastal Protection and Restoration and contribute to the study of the use of water and sediment from the Atchafalaya River for coastal restoration purposes.

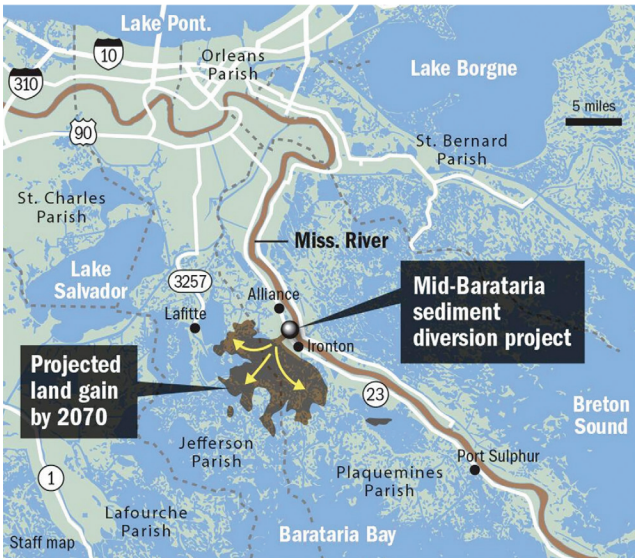
Since 2010, LWF has been a partner organization in the Mississippi River Delta Coalition that has promoted restoration of barrier islands and building large sediment diversions. In this effort, LWF has engaged sportsmen and women in education and advocacy about how sediment diversion projects and freshwater diversion projects connect the Mississippi River to its adjacent floodplain to sustain the estuaries built by the river.

LWF supported the 2017 and 2023 Louisiana Coastal Master Plans that incorporate the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion as an important restoration project for the Barataria Basin.

As recently as October 24, 2022, LWF submitted comments in support of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion Project.

LWF has visibly supported keeping open Mardi Gras Pass and Neptune Pass along the Mississippi River to create more wetlands, because the benefits and outcomes are obvious. LWF is pragmatic in understanding that this needs to balance with river management related to navigation and other uses of the river.

For decades, LWF has been an ardent proponent for freshwater and sediment diversions as vital tools in restoring Louisiana’s wetlands. ■



Map of the Mid-Barataria sediment diversion project.
STAFF GRAPHIC BY DAN SWENSON



IN MEMORY OF BARNEY CALLAHAN

With deep sadness, we mourn the loss of our dear colleague Barney Callahan. He was a past president, long-time board member since 2006, and leader for several of our committees over those years. He was willing and able to do everything from leading a board meeting to bringing the ice chest of drinks and water to an event. He enjoyed setting up LWF's Earth Day exhibit every year and interacting with people who came by to ask questions about wildlife, including the live critters he caught from a local bayou or his yard to add to the exhibit. He equally stepped up to tracking the many (often complex) issues LWF prioritized, attending public meetings for us, and identifying nominees for the annual Conservation Achievement Awards. He was a good writer and wrote award nominations, summaries of LWF positions on issues, and several resolutions we debated at our annual meetings.

Barney contributed his time, talent, and treasure. He was president of LWF in 2007-2009 and in 2014-2015. He was an active fundraiser, always seeking sponsorships or partnerships for LWF programs. He was kind and intelligent and so easy to get along with. What more can you ask for in a volunteer?

Barney was a member and leader for East Ascension Sportsman's League and ASAP. He belonged to several hunting and fishing clubs. He cared about mentoring young people, encouraging them to enjoy getting outdoors and to be engaged in conservation. We offer our condolences to Barney's family and thank them for supporting him in giving LWF so much of his time to his volunteer work.

View Barney's obituary by visiting this link:

www.chauvinfuneralhome.com/obituaries/barney-callahan ■

LWF MOURNS THE LOSS OF LONGTIME MEMBER, BOARD MEMBER - DR. PAUL WHITEHEAD

Dr. Paul Whitehead was a lifetime member and selfless contributor to LWF. He served on our Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and chaired the Fisheries Committee. Paul was also a longtime member of the Rapides Wildlife Association, where he held many leadership positions including president.

Paul held degrees in forestry, aquatic biology, and a Ph.D. in fisheries. An avid hunter and angler, he never missed a chance to experience all that the Sportsman's Paradise has to offer.

We will truly miss Paul's leadership, insights, and dedication to Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources.

Dr. Paul Whitehead passed away after a brief illness. He was 67. ■



Ready To Continue Your Legacy?

Leave a Legacy Gift for Louisiana's Wildlife and Natural Resources.

Ways You Can Leave a Legacy Gift:

Gifts in your will: You can leave a gift to LWF by bequest in your will or trust. Bequests are one of the most popular options for creating a legacy because they are so flexible.

Gifts by IRA Distribution: If you qualify for mandatory IRA distributions, donations to a nonprofit organization can be beneficial. Name LWF as your recipient for tax-free distribution option.

Gifts by Beneficiary Designation: Many assets transfer by beneficiary designation form you completed when you established your account, rather than through your will or trust. To name LWF as a beneficiary, please use our legal name, Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Inc. and our federal tax identification number (72-0445638).

Contact Rebecca Triche
225-344-6707
rebecca@lawildlifefed.org



Please let us know if you have already included LWF in your estate plans. We want to thank you for your gift.



DENR RELEASES LATEST DRAFT OF REORGANIZATION PROPOSAL – FEW DETAILS ABOUT CPRA

by Amy Wold
LWF Policy Director

The Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources (DENR) released the latest draft report outlining a reorganization for natural resource management in the state as directed by Governor Jeff Landry through his Executive Order JML 24-13, issued in February.

The Departmental Review for Innovative and Visionary Enhancement (DRIVE) was initiated through the executive order to review how natural resources, including coastal activities, were being managed, and suggests changes that might bring improvements. The ultimate goal, as stated in the executive order, “is to outline a roadmap for restructuring existing agencies and governmental bodies to enhance the management of Louisiana’s natural resource, energy, waters, and coastal restoration activities.”

The first draft that outlines a framework for changes was released in September and generated a number of comments, with concerns including the potential that the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), the organization in charge of the state’s massive coastal restoration program, would be subsumed by DENR. It was a confusing document that tended to lead to more questions than answers, but authors assured stakeholders that details would be provided in a subsequent report.

That report was released earlier this month with comments due Nov. 30, 2024, and there are a number of changes to what the public saw a couple months ago, including a suggested name change for the department to Department of Energy and Conservation.

While there are more details provided on some aspects of the suggested DENR reorganization, discussions of how CPRA and the suggested formation

of a non-coastal flood management organization called Upland Resources Management Authority (URMA) would be incorporated are scarce. There is an entire page dedicated to “Developing a Proactive Approach to an Innovative Culture,” but there is no equal emphasis on how some of the major changes, such as the development of URMA or the integration of CPRA, are expected to unfold. Louisiana Wildlife Federation sent in comments on the newest draft on Monday, Nov. 25, 2024.

Some other LWF concerns include:

The newly formed Natural Resources Commission (previously called the Steering Committee), which is expected to have some oversight of CPRA and URMA, includes seven members in the most recent draft (instead of five) but still would include no representation from CPRA or other coastal entity.

While the draft suggests expanding the Red River Waterways Commission to take over the administration of URMA, the non-coastal flood protection agency that would be formed, it is unclear how this would unfold.

The draft states URMA would be funded through \$20 million in general fund money. However, it's unclear if this money would come from another department or new money from the general fund.

While the document talks about nuclear energy, the only mention of wind, solar, or other renewables is one sentence talking about the need for the eventual decommissioning of power-generating infrastructure. Currently, there are billions being invested in Louisiana's renewable energy fields, and it is a growth of Louisiana's energy sector that has many in the state excited. This omission of renewable energy management appears to miss a large sector of current investment in the state.

There are a lot of admirable changes for DENR included in the report, such as streamlining operations, job descriptions that focus on duties rather than compliance, and restructuring the department's culture. However, there is little to no clarity on how the vital services of coastal restoration and protection as well as upland flood management will be operated.

Time after time, the organization and effectiveness of CPRA has been lauded by DENR and DRIVE initiative leadership. Louisiana deserves better details on how this celebrated and successful state authority will continue to provide millions and even billions in restoration and protection for our state. The work of CPRA benefits the entire state through protection of working communities, fishing interests, natural resource development, and of course the protection and restoration of Louisiana's coastal Sportsman's Paradise legacy. ■



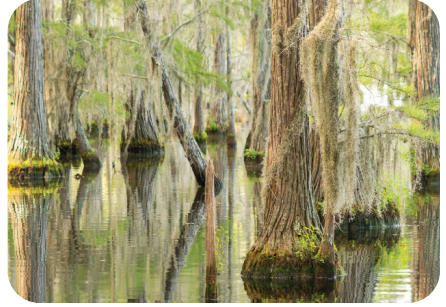
TAKE THE CONSERVATION PLEDGE

“I pledge to protect and conserve the natural resources of America. I promise to educate future generations so they may become caretakers of our water, air, land and wildlife.”

EXCITEMENT BUILDS FOR NEW ATCHAFALAYA BASIN MASTER PLAN

by Amy Wold
LWF Policy Director

A master plan development process to focus on the restoration and conservation of the Atchafalaya River basin got its public launch on Oct. 1 with a webinar hosted by the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA). It's been 26 years since the last Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System Louisiana Project State Master Plan was put in place in 1998, and a lot has changed.



The plan, much like the state's Coastal Master Plan, will provide the vision for the Atchafalaya River basin and guide project prioritization and funding towards larger goals of restoring natural process, ensuring management of habitats for the basin's health, protecting cultural heritage, and supporting the Atchafalaya River as a working river system. While the plan won't address flood risk, how water moves through the system is a big concern. Years of canal dredging and other work has led to impounding of water in certain areas, increase in sediment deposits, and lack of water in other areas.

Considerations for the new plan will include how to improve hydrology, address increasing sedimentation, improve water quality, ensure navigation, as well as address stakeholder priorities, interests, and the many public and commercial uses of the river basin.

A diverse group of team members are working on the plan, led by CPRA, including universities, private engineering companies, researchers, and others who are being informed through stakeholder groups representing government, fishermen, recreational users, and more.

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation's (LWF) several affiliates located in and around the Atchafalaya River Basin have been working for years to help improve fish, wildlife, and natural habitats that make up this amazing and diverse basin. The Atchafalaya River Basin has been impacted by a long history of navigation, flood control, oil and gas development, and other projects that have altered the water movement through the basin in various ways, including obstruction of flow by canal spoil banks. These changes in hydrology have in turn negatively impacted wildlife, fisheries, and forest health, and were discussed within the 1998 Master Plan and through subsequent annual plans that laid out priorities such as the restoration project in East Grand Lake.

LWF and its members have continued to voice support for efforts to implement water management plans within the floodway system. With the launch of a new master plan process, it is a perfect time to step back and take a comprehensive look at the current state of the basin and envision a future with sustainable wildlife, fisheries, and forestry, as well as the use and appreciation of this 600,000-acre gem in the heart of Louisiana's coast. ■



LWF WEIGHS IN ON PROPOSED CORPS' PLAN TO CONTROL NEPTUNE PASS

by Amy Wold
LWF Policy Director

A new proposal to control flow through Neptune Pass, an active crevasse on the Mississippi River east bank, would continue to allow land building while addressing navigation concerns along this vital transportation route.

On September 5, 2024, Louisiana Wildlife Federation submitted comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) on Environmental Assessment (EA) #589 Finding of No Significant Impact that praised the Corps for their innovative solution that benefits multiple stakeholders.

The plan, as outlined in EA #589 Finding of No Significant Impact, includes the construction of a control structure that would allow 80,000 cfs through the structure during a Mississippi River flow of 1 million cfs. In addition, the plan places Sediment Retention Enhancement Devices (SREDs) at the outfall of the pass in Quarantine Bay to not only provide stability for the river-side structure, but also provide for more efficient capture of sediment.

SREDs are essentially speed bumps of various shapes made of dirt, rock, or other materials designed to slow down water flow, and as the name suggests, enhance the ability of an area to retain sediment. The idea here is that as the sediment builds up on the eastern side of the river, this new land will naturally slow down the crevasse flow over time for a more sustainable project long term.

This is a drastic improvement from the 2022 proposal, which presented a full closure of the crevasse which later Corps modeling showed would fail as the river simply went around it during high water events. Reconnecting the Mississippi River with surrounding marsh is how south Louisiana was built, and it has been a recommended part of coastal restoration and protection plans for decades.

This new proposal from the Corps incorporates constructed elements – the sill and SREDs – as well as incorporating nature-based solutions that rely on the river's ability to deliver sediment and land building to Louisiana's marshes. ■



LWF URGES PLANNING FOR WILDLIFE AS MORE SOLAR SITES ARE PLANNED FOR LOUISIANA

by Amy Wold
LWF Policy Director

Solar power generation facilities are becoming a vital part of our country's work to expand our energy options. Louisiana, with its legacy as a power generating state, is already working to take advantage of technological advances and legislative changes to continue to grow our power generating position.

However, the development of these large power generating facilities is outpacing Louisiana's land use guidelines, leaving most guidelines up to parishes who have limited resources to put together requirements such as property line setbacks or considerations for wildlife and fisheries in site development.

The state legislature is working on the challenge, and held a full-day hearing on Aug. 22, 2024 through the Joint House committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, and the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment, to gather concerns, challenges, benefits, and best practices for large scale solar development.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation applauds the legislative action taken so far, much of which has been brought forward by members of these committees, to ensure that future solar development is done in ways that protect our valuable wildlife and fisheries legacy.

Rebecca Triche, executive director of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, testified before the committee, highlighting the importance of having stakeholders involved in the early stages of facility planning and the need for co-beneficial

use of these sometimes very large sites to include native plantings, agriculture, pollinators, wildlife, and fisheries.

As with any large-scale development, each project will include localized concerns that can best be outlined by local people, since it is impossible to have a one-size-fits-all design for our varied landscapes across the state.

Best practices around development, planning, and siting for these facilities continue to evolve, but some general themes are emerging.

Community and stakeholder buy-in is vital. The Louisiana Wildlife Federation's more than 11,000 members represent a large stakeholder group with varied interests, from hunting and fishing to hiking and bird watching. As pointed out in the report earlier this year in the solar toolkit produced in a partnership between the Center for Planning Excellence and the Louisiana Department of Energy and Natural Resources as well as last month's white paper from LSU's Institute for Energy Innovation, leaving stakeholders out of the planning process can cause pushback and conflict.

Siting, operation, and management of solar facilities are vital considerations when examining impacts on wildlife and fisheries in the state. In some areas, it might be appropriate to follow a more integrated approach that combines certain farming practices and/or land management that brings together diverse plant life, pollinator habitat, and wildlife considerations. In other situations, siting might be most appropriate on unused land, such as one being planned in New Orleans on a former superfund site, or as shade cover for expansive parking lot areas.

Wildlife and fisheries considerations will also be on a case-by-case basis through the consideration of numerous aspects, including:

- Minimizing habitat fragmentation
- Avoiding sensitive habitat areas or areas with species of concern
- Avoiding impacts to streams and wetlands
- Prioritizing locations of degraded lands and avoid productive farmland
- Reducing barriers to wildlife movement through unfenced passageways or wildlife-friendly fencing practices
- Providing habitat on site through vegetation diversity, the use of native vegetation, and avoiding unnecessary vegetation clearing
- Avoiding or minimizing impacts in Important Bird Areas
- Identifying any species of concern in the area and developing a plan to avoid impact
- Reducing potential impact to migratory birds through burying lines where possible, or co-locating collector and generation tie lines using avian-safe pole designs
- Lighting around and in facilities should be limited to safe operation and be shielded or pointed downward to avoid attracting birds and bats
- Developing a vegetation management plan

- Encouraging the development of multi-use operation for facilities whenever possible, including agrivoltaics (agriculture + solar), providing pollinator habitat with reduced mowing and herbicide application, and considering wildlife in the area with application of wildlife friendly fences or other measures

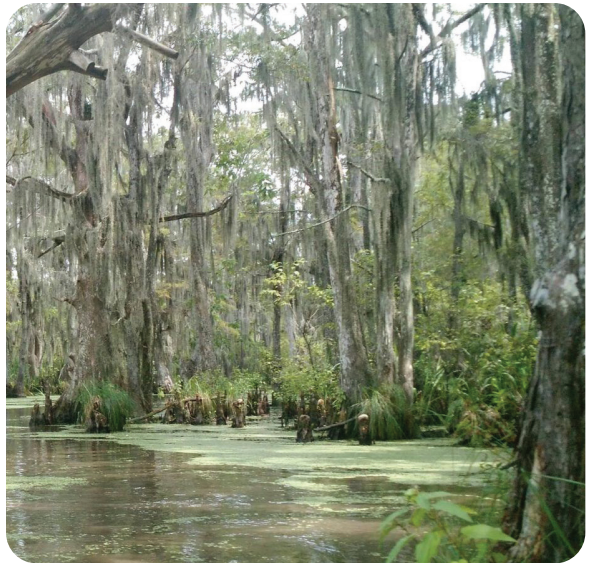
Proactive planning and partnerships between project developers, federal and state agencies, and communities will ensure that solar developments into the future not only helps diversify Louisiana’s energy producing culture, but also meets the needs of resource users, such as the more than 11,000 Louisiana Wildlife Federation members who hunt, fish, bird watch, or enjoy our sportsman’s paradise.

We look forward to continuing to work with this committee and regulating agencies as more detailed regulations for solar development in the state move forward. ■

LWF REMAINS STAUNCHLY OPPOSED TO PEARL RIVER “ONE LAKE” PROJECT

by Jimmy Frederick
LWF Communications Director

LWF has consistently opposed the Pearl River “One Lake” Project since it was first announced in 2018, and our opposition continues. LWF recently submitted comments to United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in response to the release of the Pearl River Basin, Mississippi, Federal Flood Risk Management Project Commander’s Report and Environmental Impact



Statement voicing our unwavering rejection of Alternatives C, D, and E as set out by the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Alternative C, along with D, and E, proposes damming and/or dredging a 10-mile section of the Pearl River near Jackson, Mississippi. It is LWF’s position that if these Alternatives are allowed to move forward, it will reduce the downstream flow of freshwater through the Pearl River, which would jeopardize water quality, the productivity of seafood, hundreds of millions of dollars of coastal restoration projects, and degrade or destroy critical habitat for countless birds, fish, reptiles and mammals.

Alternative A1, however, is an action LWF can support to achieve the goals of flood prevention and mitigation. LWF’s comments to USACE urge the Corps to pursue effective flood relief through Alternative A1’s home elevations and flood-proofing buildings and expand this plan to benefit more homes and structures, restore floodplains, raise roads, and include levee setbacks and protections for vulnerable Jackson neighborhoods. ■

INSIGHTS FROM THE CONFLUENCE OF YOUNG CONSERVATION LEADERS

In October 2024, LWF sent three university students – Kaitlyn Thomas, Ariel Mallory, and Zach Haydell – all former participants in our 2024 Edgar Veillon Conservation Leadership Corps, to the Confluence of Young Conservation Leaders Conference



(CYCL) in San Antonio. CYCL is held every two years with the express purpose of developing leadership skills in conservation-minded youth on a national level.

The theme of the 2024 conference was Urban Land Stewardship. Participants toured multiple sites in the San Antonio area to learn about the challenges, opportunities, and successes from private businesses and non-profit and government entities.

Kaitlyn Thomas recounts her experience at the conference:

From my pickup at the airport until the last second of the conference, I knew that I would leave this event changed. The Confluence of Young Conservation Leaders (CYCL) is an opportunity to meet and network with other enthusiastic conservationists, renew your fire for the environment, and learn invaluable lessons about a life in conservation.

I always love to see the different opportunities and careers that are available in conservation. From education to research, there is no end. Sometimes, the fact that there are so many possibilities scares me as I stress over picking the “best” path for my life. During the conference, we heard from many talented and inspiring speakers. The lecture from Michael Eason stuck with me the most. He has had nearly every job in conservation and his experiences spoke to me as someone who knows that they want to help but are unsure of which path I should take. He reinforced the idea that conservation is not just a career, it’s a commitment to making the world a better place because we care. I left CYCL knowing that in any path I take, I will make a difference to fulfill my purpose of conserving our environment and protecting natural resources.

CYCL acted as a platform that allowed us to connect with each other on a more personal level and to seek discussions that would improve us professionally and personally. I now have connections across states that I never would have had prior to this experience. The connections I made over the weekend will last through my career as we each go on to fight for what we believe in and make lasting changes in our communities.

There are many things that we can do to make our world better for ourselves and the ones we share it with, and not all changes are difficult. From the people we received the opportunity to speak with to the pouring of resources into our personal skills, this conference enabled us to bring home effective ways to integrate sustainability and conservation methods into how we live, how we act, and how we educate others. ■

FALL MEANS FLEDGLING BIRDS FLYING SOUTH FOR THE FIRST TIME; LIGHTS OUT LOUISIANA EVEN MORE CRITICAL

by Jimmy Frederick

LWF Communications Director

It's time to turn out your lights, Louisiana, because the fall bird migration is in full swing.

Thousands of Louisiana residents, business owners, and building managers participated in Louisiana Wildlife Federation's Lights Out Louisiana program during the spring migration. Their simple act of turning off external and internal lights helped more than 450 million birds successfully navigate Louisiana's tall buildings and homes to reach their nesting grounds elsewhere in the United States and Canada. Now it's time for the return trip south. But the fall migration has an added twist. As with all fall migrations, this one includes new fledglings — approximately 50 million of them — making their very first trip.

According to Dr. Erik Johnson, Director of Conservation Science of the National Audubon Society's Louisiana office, we're off to a good start with many warblers appearing earlier than expected.

"From August 1st to September 17th, Cornell University's BirdCast has estimated that an above-average 179.2 million birds have migrated through or over Louisiana, mostly on their way to Central and South America," said Johnson. "But, sadly, many of these birds — estimated at more than a billion a year in North America alone — will die in collisions with buildings."

This is why The Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) is calling on residents and businesses throughout the state to join others in turning off bright or excess lighting from 11 p.m. until 6 a.m. each day from now until November 1st to help protect the billions of migratory birds that fly through Louisiana at night during this period.

Examples of Migratory Birds Flying over Louisiana this Fall:



Louisiana sits within the Mississippi Flyway migratory path, with the state's vast wetlands, forests, and coastline serving as critical stops along the birds' migration routes. Twice a year, 325 bird species travel the Mississippi Flyway, including 40% of shorebirds. During the 2023 fall migration, an estimated 500 million birds migrated through the state of Louisiana. The majority of those birds migrate at night and typically start their nightly migration about 30 to 45 minutes post-sunset, with peak flights between 10 and 11 p.m.

While the dark skies allow the migratory birds to avoid predators, take advantage of calmer air, and utilize the moon and stars for navigation, it also brings with it other dangers, such as bright artificial lights and the skyglow from larger cities that can confuse the birds, often causing them to fatally collide into buildings or windows.

“Our city lights can misguide birds, diverting them off course with often dire consequences. This initiative is an easy yet impactful step in helping these birds continue their incredible journey,” said Rebecca Triche, executive director of LWF. “Louisiana is well-known for the populations of migratory birds we see here at different times of the year, and people care about keeping wildlife sustainable. By supporting the Lights Out initiative, businesses and individuals can take a practical step to protect the birds that briefly call Louisiana home.”

According to news reports, one building in Chicago was responsible for as many as 1,000 bird collision deaths in one night last October. These deaths can easily be avoided by simply turning out or turning down exterior lighting.

At LWF’s February 2023 Board of Directors meeting, the organization passed Resolution #2, 2023 Lights Out to Save Migrating Birds, requesting that “all public buildings observe ‘lights out’ as official policy of the State of Louisiana, City of Baton Rouge, and other governmental entities.” ■

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- nwf.org

Learn about native plants at

- lnps.org

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Get creative with your garden or backyard, and incorporate native plants into designs! As long as your garden meets the five qualifications (food, water, cover, places to raise young, and sustainability), the sky is the limit!

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