



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The voice of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources since 1940.

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September 16, 2022

Ms. Stephanie Zumo
Department of Natural Resources
Office of Coastal Management
P. O. Box 44487
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4487
Via Email: stephanie.zumo@la.gov

Re: CUP# P20131098 - Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CRPA) Mid Barataria Sediment Diversion (BA-153), Plaquemines Parish

Ms. Zumo,

Louisiana Wildlife Federation appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD) Coastal Use Permit #P20131098 and offer the following comments in support of the issuance of this permit.

Louisiana's coast is critical to not only the people who live, work, and recreate here, but to the entire nation. World-class fishing attracts people from all over the world. Our ports are a major player in international trade. The nation's energy needs are largely supported by the oil and natural gas industry located along our coast.

Our coast is disappearing. It is vital that bold action is taken to help protect communities, businesses, and natural resources from the devastating effects of hurricanes, storm surge, and sea level rise. The single biggest thing that can be done to help mitigate some of this loss – and address this crisis – is to allow the Mississippi River to do what it's done for thousands of years: build land with its sediment and nutrient-rich water.

Construction of the MBSD would improve the health of Barataria Basin – a critical wetland buffer that protects Lafitte, New Orleans, Gretna and other communities from the ravages of hurricanes and tropical storms. Without this diversion, the basin is projected to lose over 400 square miles of land over the next 50 years – after already having lost that much land since 1932.

The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion is the cornerstone of Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan – which LWF has always supported – and will help support and enhance the lifespan of other coastal restoration and protection projects. Combined with other proposed restoration projects, the MBSD would build and preserve more than 17,000 acres of wetlands over the next 30 years. Using diversions as a method of coastal restoration has been studied for over 35 years; the results of these studies over the last few decades has made it clear that reconnecting the river to the delta is the most viable option to combat coastal land loss. We don't have decades more to waste.

While dredging has played an important role in Louisiana's coastal restoration efforts, it has not been deemed a viable alternative for restoration of this region. The MBSD will deliver a continuous flow of water and sediment, allowing the system to restore its ecological functions over time.

The MBSD will be a game-changer for the long-term health of communities and wildlife habitat in the Mississippi River Delta, including places where alligators, crawfish, red drum and largemouth bass abound. Leveeing of the Mississippi River resulted in a saltier Barataria Basin, causing saltwater species to make a northward shift; without restoration, these changes will continue, resulting in a loss of species that rely on productive freshwater and intermediate wetland habitats. Reconnecting the river to the basin will maintain vital wetlands and restore the health and vitality of the entire ecosystem.

Our Sportsman's Paradise attracts people from all over the world with its fisheries, wildlife, and abundant natural resources. That paradise is in serious peril and needs large-scale restoration projects like the MBSD. This project is critical to turning the tide on the state's land loss crisis and protecting vulnerable communities from hurricanes and sea level rise, while also ensuring the long-term health of the ecosystem and wildlife in the face of a changing climate and coast. Simply put, the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion is our best hope for a sustainable future.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a statewide conservation organization representing nearly 8,000 members and 19 affiliate organizations supported by hunters, anglers, hikers, paddlers, birders, campers and other outdoor enthusiasts. Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Triche". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Triche
Executive Director