



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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

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March 24, 2023

Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority
150 Terrace Avenue
Baton Rouge LA 70802
via: coastal@la.gov

***RE: Draft Integrated Ecosystem Restoration & Hurricane Protection in Coastal Louisiana:
Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Plan (FY24 Annual Plan)***

Dear CPRA,

Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) is thrilled to see major projects moving forward in the coming fiscal year. It is especially encouraging to see CPRA planning to spend over \$1 billion per year in the next few years with the great majority of funds allocated towards the construction of projects. It's great to see the projected expenditures for FY24 and FY25 increase from the amounts projected in last year's annual plan. This is the kind of implementation our state needs to fulfill the goals of the Coastal Master Plan.

The annual plan website (<https://ap24.coastal.la.gov/>) is a great resource for stakeholders and LWF commends CPRA for their continued efforts to provide this information in an engaging way. However, on the main CPRA website for the annual plan (<https://coastal.la.gov/our-plan/annual-plan/>), there is no link to the "ap24" page, which includes the interactive map. Additionally, the annual plan document does not highlight this feature enough. It is a great outreach tool that should be called out specifically in the plan.

The interactive map could be made more informative by offering a little more information besides the highlighted projects. When selecting the "Show All Projects" feature, you can only see the spot on the map where there is a project but there is no ability to see what the name of the projects are for each dot on the map. This information should be added to show up when the user clicks on a project location – and would be helpful to have some basic project information available as well.

Additionally, on the interactive map, there is no scroll bar to continue down the page on a desktop computer. This should be looked at to see if there is a way to make this more user-friendly for desktop users that may not be utilizing a touchscreen when looking through the list of projects. The projects table is useful, but it could be improved by having the projects denoted for each dot on the map. It could also be helpful for project names to be linked to a project page/fact sheet to get more information.

Furthermore, the annual plan page on the main CPRA website (<https://coastal.la.gov/our-plan/annual-plan/>) could provide a little more background information on the plan rather than have all of the past fiscal year plans listed on the same page. Past plans could be listed in a drop

down menu on the annual plan website so that the page could be utilized more effectively by providing a summary of information for the updated fiscal year's plan.

To increase outreach and engagement efforts, it would be helpful to offer a virtual meeting option, as we also suggest in our Coastal Master Plan comments. A standalone virtual meeting, conducted strictly for an online audience, should give an overview of the entire plan as well as some specifics on each region. This could be a slightly longer meeting than typical 30-minute max in-person presentations in order to serve as a useful resource during the open comment period. In-person meetings could take a deeper dive into the benefits to the areas in which the meeting is held; these meetings could also be live-streamed. While live-streaming in-person meetings can be helpful for those unable to attend in their region on the meeting date, these should be offered in addition to (not in the place of) an online-only version of the presentation.

It is also important to consider the fact that not everyone has reliable broadband internet access. There needs to be more efforts in the future to communicate with communities in addition to digital communications via social media and email. Other methods to reach out to communities could be more direct by posting flyers about upcoming meetings (Community Conversations, calls for project ideas, official public hearings, etc.) in parish government offices, community centers, recreation centers, etc. CPRA could collaborate with local officials to determine other ways to expand communication efforts to ensure residents have the opportunity to engage.

At the beginning of the plan, there are maps depicting locations and types of projects for each region, but it is difficult to read the maps. These maps should be larger for them to be useful to see where projects are. The icons and numbers are very hard to decipher.

It would be helpful for the maps to correlate with the Coastal Master Plan. There have been some updates to the project type icons as well as updates to the regions in which projects are listed. Once the master plan is finalized, the annual plan should be updated to match.

The page on funding would be more helpful if it included a bit more information. Some of the tables show WRDA, CDBG, CPRA Trust Fund; having more descriptions under the funding section would help describe these sources. This should be described in similar detail as the master plan or direct the reader to more information on the website where more detail can be provided.

Under the "Past Present, and Future" (page 17) section, there is a miscellaneous category that denotes 16 projects totaling \$421 million have been completed since 2007. It would be helpful to denote what is considered miscellaneous. It would also be helpful in this section to note where the reader could find a list of the projects these numbers reference.

The FY23 Annual Plan listed projects that would utilize Disaster Supplemental Relief funds and the Infrastructure Investment in Jobs Act (IIJA) funds. However, this is not included in the FY24 Annual Plan. It would be helpful to include these details in the plan and provide updates each fiscal year on how those funds were allocated and how remaining funds will be spent.

The FY23 Annual Plan highlighted recreation projects as well. It would be useful to include some of these highlights in each annual plan to show the wide variety of projects and benefits to people, wildlife, and culture – recreational benefits are important to Sportsman’s Paradise and should continue to be highlighted.

LWF urges CPRA to include timelines for active construction tracking. Although timelines can get delayed, having a tentative layout of expected timeframes for project phases are helpful for stakeholders that are interested in this kind of information. This has been included in previous annual plans and should continue to be included.

Since the Coastal Master Plan has moved the Union Diversion into the more programmatic Upper Diversion Program, it would be helpful if the annual plan would give some insight into what this means for the project moving forward. Changes such as these should be highlighted and given more explanation for clarity.

Overall, LWF is very pleased with the progress the state is making on coastal projects and moving so many significant projects to construction, particularly projects reconnecting the Mississippi River to the landscape like the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp and the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion projects. We are excited to see the significant increase in expenditures going towards these projects in the next fiscal year.

LWF is pleased to see a continued commitment by CPRA to develop a comprehensive plan that takes all the stakeholders into account. We offer these additional suggestions for further clarity and accessibility of information and look forward to seeing this progress continue.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a statewide, nonprofit organization that represents 19 affiliate organizations and more than 8,000 members dedicated to the conservation of Louisiana’s wildlife and natural resources. Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacy Ortego".

Stacy Ortego
Coastal Policy Manager