



# LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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

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February 25, 2022

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority  
150 Terrace Ave  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
via: coastal@la.gov

**RE: Draft *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration & Hurricane Protection in Coastal Louisiana: Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Plan***

Dear CPRA,

Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) is excited to see the current progress of Louisiana's coastal program and the number of projects moving to construction in the Draft *Integrated Ecosystem Restoration & Hurricane Protection in Coastal Louisiana: Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Plan* (draft Annual Plan). The 50-year, \$50 billion Master Plan needs this level of spending and we are pleased to see the next three fiscal years topping the \$1 billion mark – with the great majority going to construction of projects.

The addition of the interactive Annual Plan website is a great resource for the public and we hope to see this tool continue to be utilized and expanded in future years. While the addition of the interactive map with project highlights on the Annual Plan website is very helpful, there was a noticeable lack of background information in the draft plan itself. This information is important to provide the public with enough context to more easily understand the plan in order to give adequate feedback during the public comment period. There are a lot of acronyms like CWPPRA, WRDA, NFWF, NRDA, GOMESA, etc., and it would be helpful to have some background for people to understand who these entities are and how they fit into the State's coastal efforts. Someone new to being involved in this process might be very confused when trying to understand this plan in order to participate in the public feedback process. This and other contextual information – including history, major events, funding, objectives, project highlights, economic impact, etc. – could easily be updated each fiscal year and included in the draft version (while the public can comment) rather than only the final version of the Annual Plan.

We are encouraged by CPRA's continued work on improving and expanding outreach efforts and feel this would really help in doing that. This is a missed opportunity at a major milestone – when the Annual Plan surpasses \$1 billion in expenditures for the first time ever – to showcase past success and future progress of coastal efforts to the general public while they have the opportunity to provide comments.

Just as important to helping provide better understanding of the plan to the public, including more background information on CPRA's work to date and successes would help show the progress that has already been made. CPRA has done a great job with efforts like this on social media; including more of this in tools like the interactive map would be helpful (as not everyone uses social media). Mentioning the interactive map in the Annual Plan document itself would also be useful.

LWF has long supported the State's coastal efforts and is thrilled to see some long awaited progress on projects such as the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp finally moving to construction. We are also eagerly awaiting the construction of large-scale diversion projects like the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion. Southwest Louisiana has been hit hard over the last few years and we are pleased to see funding for the Southwest Coastal Study included in the Annual Plan.

While the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion is a crucial component of restoration in southeast Louisiana – and of the State's Coastal Master Plan – we're also encouraged to see the inclusion of additional opportunities to connect the river to surrounding areas with the Union Diversion.

Projects such as the Ama and Union diversions will be important for protecting surrounding communities. Recent research from Tulane University shows that the Ama and Union diversions, when operated along with the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp project, would reduce Bonnet Carré Spillway openings (and the environmental impacts associated with those openings). In fact, the first phase of the Tulane study found that these diversions, when operated jointly, reduced the volume coming through Bonnet Carré between 57-61% while reducing the duration of opening by 47 days; this is very promising news for additional benefits of operating the Ama and Union diversions! LWF is glad to see funding for feasibility and planning of the Union Diversion included in the Annual Plan. We hope CPRA will also move the Ama Diversion to the planning phase in the next fiscal year in order to utilize the benefits of jointly operating these diversions.

LWF is excited to see the progress of projects moving to construction and to see the level of expenditures surpassing the \$1 billion mark. We look forward to celebrating project milestones in the next year and hope to see the State secure this level of funding in the future. How the State will continue to adequately fund Louisiana's coastal protection and restoration efforts after *Deepwater Horizon* settlement dollars are spent remains uncertain but is ever more critical as each year passes. LWF looks forward to advocating for our coast and the funding of the State's coastal program to protect communities and wildlife for generations to come.

Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a statewide, nonprofit organization that represents 18 affiliate organizations and more than 6,400 members dedicated to the conservation of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources. Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments for consideration.

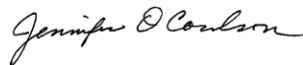
Sincerely,



Rebecca Triche  
Executive Director  
Louisiana Wildlife Federation



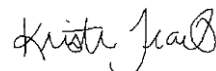
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