



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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

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Resolution No. 4, 2024

SUBJECT: Support for Continued Constitutional Protection for Conservation Fund, Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund, and Artificial Reef Development Fund

WHEREAS, the Conservation Fund is used to collect the hunting, fishing, trapping, and other commercial usage fees, licenses, permits, royalties, or other public land use revenues paid to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) for the use of or access to wildlife and public lands; and

WHEREAS, the money in the Conservation Fund is used to support the annual budget of LDWF, which does not typically receive funding for its operating budget from the state's general fund and has been self-supporting to fulfill LDWF's mission to conserve and manage Louisiana's native wildlife and natural habitats; and

WHEREAS, the funds collected from hunting and fishing licenses, fees, and permits are used to match greater federal funding that requires the matching funds be used for the benefits of wildlife sustainability management, and the constitutionally protected Conservation Fund provides that assurance; and

WHEREAS, the Conservation Fund was added to Louisiana's constitution, as approved by the voters in 1987, to "provide for protection of these funds from being diverted away from the programs and purposes of conservation, protection, preservation, management, and replenishment of the state's natural resources and wildlife, including use for land acquisition or for federal matching fund programs which promote such purposes, and for the operation and administration of LDWF and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission;" and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's ongoing coastal land loss threatens the sustainability of Louisiana's abundant natural resources and economic future and has received the attention of state and national interests since the early 1980s; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund, also known as the Coastal Trust Fund, was added to Louisiana's constitution, as approved by the voters in 1989, and receives money from state mineral revenues, the federal government, Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas activity revenue, various payments related to the BP oil spill, and state surplus when available; and

WHEREAS, these funds are made available to the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) for "the purposes of integrated coastal protection, including but not limited to, coastal wetlands conservation, coastal restoration, hurricane protection, or for infrastructure directly impacted by coastal wetlands losses;" and

WHEREAS, the commitment shown by the people of the state to dedicate this funding to address coastal restoration and protection has helped Louisiana attract funding and partnerships to advance its Coastal Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the state of Louisiana has utilized these resources to benefit 67,200 acres of coastal land, improve 383 miles of levees, and construct 71.6 miles of barrier islands and berms through the work and collaboration of various state agencies with local and federal partnerships; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program was established in 1986 to accept obsolete oil and gas platforms that were recognized for providing habitat important to Louisiana's coastal fisheries, and many companies have participated in the program by donating oil and gas structures for the establishment of artificial reefs; and

WHEREAS, in addition to donating the materials, the oil and gas companies are allowed to donate one half of their cost for traditional removal into Louisiana's Artificial Reef Trust Fund, thereby saving money but also providing funds for the long-term maintenance of these scrapped materials to the state and research and monitoring; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Artificial Reef Trust Fund's deposits were being depleted to balance the budgets of other departments for purposes unrelated to the Artificial Reef Program or wildlife and fishery conservation in general; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Artificial Reef Trust Fund was added to Louisiana's constitution, as approved by voters in 2014, to assure donated funds will be used for the development, enhancement, and maintenance of artificial reefs on Louisiana's coast; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Louisiana, when asked, have voted to protect these three funds, and Louisiana Wildlife Federation has been a leader in advocating for their constitutional protection to provide for long-term, sustainable funding that remains insulated from changing political priorities and fiscal circumstances.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Louisiana Wildlife Federation opposes any effort to remove the Conservation Fund, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund, and the Artificial Reef Development Fund from the Louisiana Constitution.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in Convention Assembled on August 17, 2024 in Lafayette, Louisiana.