

Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act

TASK FORCE MEETING

June 26, 1996

MINUTES

I INTRODUCTION

Colonel Kenneth Clow, representing the Secretary of the Army, convened the twenty third meeting of the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force at 9:30 a.m. on June 26, 1996, in the District Assembly Room of the Corps headquarters building in New Orleans. The agenda is attached as enclosure 1. The Task Force was created by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA), which was signed into law (PL 101-646, Title III) by President Bush on November 29, 1990.

II ATTENDEES

The Attendance Record for the Task Force meeting is attached as enclosure 2. Listed below are the six Task Force members. All members were in attendance, with the exception of Mr. Hathaway, who was represented by Mr. Norm Thomas.

Dr. Len Bahr, State of Louisiana  
Mr. William Hathaway, Environmental Protection Agency  
Mr. David Frugé, U.S. Department of the Interior  
Mr. Donald Gohmert, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Mr. Thomas Bigford, U.S. Department of Commerce  
Colonel Kenneth Clow, U.S. Department of the Army, Chairman

III APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Task Force meeting held on April 18, 1996 (enclosure 3), were approved unanimously with no discussion. Mr. Thomas made the motion to approve the minutes, and Dr. Bahr seconded it.<sup>1</sup>

IV. TASK FORCE DECISIONS

A. Development of a CWPPRA Status Report

Mr. Robert Schroeder, chairman of the Technical Committee, presented the committee's recommendation that the Task Force amend the fiscal year 1996 budget

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<sup>1</sup> The Task Force meeting was recorded on audio tape. The bracketed figures represent the tape no./counter no. for the discussion of this item. Multiple tape/counter numbers are used when an item is discussed more than once during the meeting.

to provide \$78,700 to the National Biological Service for the preparation of a report on the purpose and status of the CWPPRA program. [1/191]

Motion by Mr. Frugé: That the Task Force amend the fiscal year 1996 budget to provide \$78,700 to the National Biological Service for the preparation of a report on the purpose and status of the CWPPRA program.

Second: Mr. Thomas.

Passed unanimously. [1/223]

#### B. Louisiana Barrier Shoreline Study Budget

Mr. Podany gave a brief overview of the activities of the Feasibility Study Steering Committee. He noted that a funding shortfall exists in the Louisiana Barrier Shoreline study, to be dealt with under the study manager's report. [1/290-450]

Mr. Steve Gammill of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, study manager for the Barrier Shoreline study, gave a status report, noting that the study is essentially on schedule. He advised the Task Force that there were three problems with funding for the study: the original cost estimate did not include funding for the environmental impact statement for phase 1 (which covers from the Mississippi River to the Atchafalaya River) (\$500,000 required); the scope of services contract for phase 1 was awarded by LDNR for \$1,356,700 rather than the \$750,00 approved by the Task Force on 15 Mar 96 (an additional \$606,700 required); and the original estimate had not included an economic analysis of the no-action alternative (\$48,000 required). At its 21 Sep 95 meeting, the Task Force approved an additional \$500,000 for the phase 1 EIS; however, this amount has not been reported by LDNR as part of the total study cost estimate. [1/452-3/23]

Mr. Tom Podany, chairman of the Feasibility Study Steering Committee, reported that the committee recommended the following: delaying the start of phase 2 (which covers the shoreline from the Atchafalaya River to the Sabine) from July 1996 to December 1996, and using the results of the phase 1 study to determine whether the scope of phase 2 can be reduced; transferring \$62,600 from the Mississippi River study to the Barrier Shoreline study, to be returned in fiscal year 1997; using \$247,800 of phase 1 EIS funds, \$204,000 of phase 2 funds, and \$60,000 of funds programmed for LDNR's study management to cover anticipated fiscal year 1996 billings against the phase 1 scope of services contract. [6/ -426]

Motion by Mr. Thomas: That the Task Force delay the start of phase 2 from July 1996 to December 1996 and use the results of the phase 1 study to determine whether the scope of phase 2 can be reduced; transfer \$62,600 from the Mississippi River study to the Barrier Shoreline study, to be returned in fiscal year 1997; and use \$247,800 of phase 1 EIS funds, \$204,000 of phase 2 funds, and \$60,000 of funds programmed for LDNR's study management to cover anticipated fiscal year 1996 billings against the phase 1 scope of services contract. [6/420]

Second: Mr. Gohmert.

Passed unanimously. [6/426]

C. Approval of the Monitoring Plan for the Freshwater Bayou Wetland Project  
Mr. Schroeder presented the Technical Committee's recommendation for approval of the monitoring plan for the Freshwater Bayou Wetlands project. [5/135-140]

Motion by Mr. Thomas: That the Task Force approve the monitoring plan for the Freshwater Bayou Wetlands project.

Second: Mr. Frugé

Passed unanimously. [5/140]

D. Approval of the Falgout Canal Vegetative Plantings Demonstration Project  
Mr. Schroeder presented the Technical Committee's recommendation for final approval for the construction of the Falgout Canal Vegetative Plantings demonstrative project. Enclosure 4 is a copy of the lead agency's letter requesting Task Force approval for the project. [5/145-153]

Motion by Mr. Thomas: That the Task Force approve the construction of the Falgout Canal Vegetative Plantings demonstrative project.

Second: Mr. Gohmert

Passed unanimously. [5/153]

E. Approval of the Clear Marais Bank Protection Project

Mr. Schroeder presented the Technical Committee's recommendation for final approval for construction of the Clear Marais Bank Protection project. Enclosure 5 is a copy of the lead agency's letter requesting Task Force approval for the project. [5/145-153]

Motion by Mr. Thomas: That the Task Force approve construction of the Clear Marais Bank Protection Project.

Second: Mr. Gohmert

Passed unanimously. [5/153]

## V. INFORMATIONAL AGENDA ITEMS

A. Status of Development of the State Conservation Plan

Ms. Beverly Ethridge of the EPA briefed the Task Force on the status of the the Conservation Plan authorized by section 304 of the CWPPRA. The plan is scheduled to be presented to the approving agencies in January 1997 (no change since the last Task Force meeting). [1/230-285]

B. Status of Feasibility Studies

Mr. Podany gave a brief overview of the activities of the Feasibility Study Steering Committee. He noted that a funding shortfall exists in the Louisiana Barrier Shoreline study, to be dealt with under the study manager's report. [1/290-450]

As discussed in item IV.B. above, Mr. Gammill reported on the status of the Louisiana Barrier Shoreline study. [1/452-3/23]

Dr. Joseph Suhayda of LSU presented a geographical information system depicting projections of the future without-project condition in the Barataria and Terrebonne basins. These results will be used for both of the CWPPRA feasibility studies. [3/255-4/156]

Mr. Tim Axtman of the Corps of Engineers, study manager for the Mississippi River diversion study, advised the Task Force that scoping meetings are scheduled to be held next month. He reported that the draft report will be ready in February 1998 and the final in December 1998. [4/161-425]

#### C. Status of Approved Priority List Projects

Mr. Dom Elguezabal of the Corps of Engineers provided an update on the status of approved priority list projects. He noted that 14 projects have been completed or are presently under construction. Another 14 projects are scheduled for construction during this calendar year. Mr. Frugé gave details on a number of CWPPRA projects for which the Department of the Interior is the lead agency, and Mr. Gohmert reported on Department of Agriculture projects. Mr. Thomas briefed the Task Force on the engineering and design effort for the Bayou Lafourche Siphons project, and Mr. Tim Osborn (NMFS) reported on a number of Department of Commerce projects. [4/452-5/130]

#### D. Request Concerning the Oaks/Avery Canals Hydrologic Restoration Projects

Dr. Bill Good presented the revised Oaks/Avery Canals Hydrologic Restoration project; the original project was a candidate for the 5th Priority Project List. He noted that the revised project's benefits represented a significant improvement and asked that the agencies consider nominating the project for the 6th Priority Project List. Mr. Gohmert assured the State that NRCS is interested in sponsoring the revised project. [5/178-280]

#### E. Report on the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Restoration Plan Evaluation Report

Mr. Doug Meffert of LDNR reported on the status of evaluation report required by section 303(b)(7) of CWPPRA. He noted that agency review of the report will be through an ad hoc committee recently established by the Technical Committee and scheduled to meet 1 July 1996. Mr. Meffert said that the report is scheduled to be completed in November 1996. [5/186-402]

#### F. Report on the State's Outreach Proposal

Secretary Jack Caldwell of LDNR introduced Mr. George Foster of Foster Marketing Communications, who presented a proposal for a nationwide outreach campaign designed to call attention to the serious problem facing Louisiana's coastal wetlands. Mr. Foster said that the overall cost of the campaign was estimated to be \$194,500. Secretary Caldwell advised the Task Force that the State intended to undertake the campaign, but that assistance from the Task Force would be appreciated. [5/286-402]

## **VI. ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS**

### **A. Duration of CWPPRA Funding**

Mr. Frugé informed the Task force that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Federal Aid had determined that fiscal year 1998 would be the last year of funding under CWPPRA (based on deposits into the Sport Fish Restoration Account through fiscal year 1997). [6/457-670]

### **B. Oyster Lease Data Base Development**

Dr. Good advised the Task Force that the State is developing a GIS data base, a critical component of which is oyster lease information. He noted that such information is of great importance in design and implementation of restoration projects and asked that the Task Force consider paying a proportionate share of the cost. Col. Clow asked Dr. Good to provide an estimate of the cost. [6/674-528]

### **C. Coastal Restoration Coalition and Oyster Lease Impacts**

Dr. Bahr reported that the State has put together a coalition involving the major entities in coastal restoration and representatives of those affected by impacts to oyster grounds. This coalition will be a major factor in developing a process for mitigating impacts to oyster leases. [6/530-7/95]

### **D. CWPPRA Cost Sharing in WRDA '96**

Col. Clow advised the Task Force that current language in the proposed Water Resources Development Act of 1996 would change cost sharing on CWPPRA projects from 75 percent Federal/25 percent State to 90/10 for calendar years 1996 and '97. He noted that it will be important for the Task Force to interpret the law correctly ( i.e., to determine whether the new cost sharing applies to funds allocated in those years or to funds expended on project construction in those years).

Dr. Good noted that the State would continue development of the Conservation Plan (which provides for a reduction in the State's share to 15 percent) should the proposed legislation be enacted. [7/98-210]

## **VII. DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING**

The next Task Force meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 18, 1996, at the Corps headquarters building in New Orleans. Task Force members will be contacted to confirm the date. [7/270]

## **VII. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No written questions or comments were received from the public. [7-214]

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Frugé moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:40 p.m. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.