



## 9<sup>th</sup> PRIORITY PROJECT LIST REPORT

PREPARED BY:

LOUISIANA COASTAL WETLANDS CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION  
TASK FORCE

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**Breaux Act  
(Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act)**

**9<sup>th</sup> Priority Project List Report**

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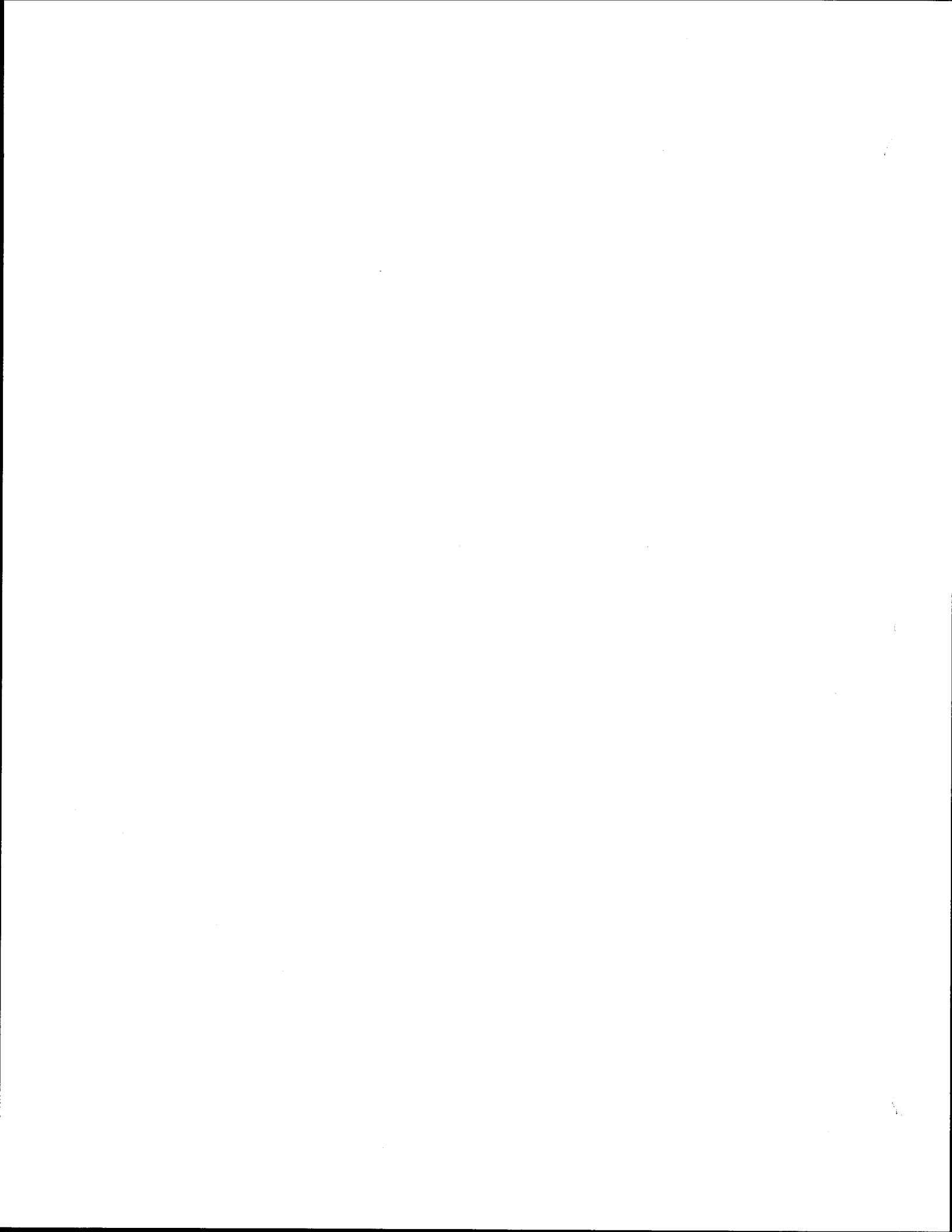
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**(Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act)**

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**Main Report – Volume 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

Approximately 80 percent of the total coastal marsh loss within the lower 48 states occurs in the State of Louisiana. These losses are due to a combination of human and natural factors, including subsidence, shoreline erosion, freshwater and sediment deprivation, saltwater intrusion, oil and gas canals, navigation channels, and herbivory. While Louisiana still contains 40 percent of all the coastal marshes in the lower 48 states, dramatic annual losses of 25-35 square miles per year in the state continue to threaten the resource. Concern over this loss exists because of the living resources and national economies dependent on Louisiana's coastal wetlands. Louisiana's coastal wetlands provide habitat for fisheries, waterfowl, neotropical birds and furbearers, protection for oil and gas exploration and production, and water-borne commerce; amenities for recreation, tourism, flood protection; and the context for a culture unique to the world. Benefits go well beyond the local and state levels by providing positive economic impacts to the entire nation.

The coastal wetland loss problem in Louisiana is extensive and complex. Agencies of diverse purpose and mission that are involved with addressing the problem have proposed many alternative solutions. These proposals have had a wide spectrum of approaches for diminishing, neutralizing, or reversing these losses. A global observation of these efforts by Federal, state and local governments and the public has led to the conclusion that a comprehensive approach is needed to address this significant environmental problem. In response to this, the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (Public Law 101-646) -- also known as the Breaux Act -- was signed into law by President Bush on November 29, 1990. This report documents the implementation of Section 303(a) of the cited legislation.

**STUDY AUTHORITY**

Section 303(a) of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA, or the Breaux Act), displayed in Appendix A, directs the Secretary of the Army to convene the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force to:

... initiate a process to identify and prepare a list of coastal wetlands restoration projects in Louisiana to provide for the long-term conservation of such wetlands and dependent fish and wildlife populations in order of priority,

based upon the cost-effectiveness of such projects in creating, restoring, protecting, or enhancing coastal wetlands, taking into account the quality of such coastal wetlands, with due allowance for small-scale projects necessary to demonstrate the use of new techniques or materials for coastal wetlands restoration.

## STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study effort was to prepare the 9<sup>th</sup> Priority Project List (PPL) and transmit the list to Congress, as specified in Section 303(a)(3) of the CWPPRA. Section 303(b) of the act calls for preparation of a comprehensive restoration plan for coastal Louisiana. In November 1993, the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Restoration Plan was submitted. In December 1998, *Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana* was signed by all Federal and state Task Force members. This plan consisted of several regional ecosystem strategies, that if all implemented would achieve no net loss of coastal marsh in Louisiana by the year 2050. A broad coalition of Federal, state, and local entities, landowners, environmentalists, and wetland scientists developed the plan. In addition, all 20 coastal parishes approved the Coast 2050 plan.

## PROJECT AREA

A map of the Louisiana coastal zone is presented in Plate 1, indicating project locations by number of Priority Project Lists 1 through 9. Plate 2 contains a listing of these project names, referenced by number and grouped by sponsoring agency, for each PPL. The entire coastal area, which comprises all or part of 20 Louisiana parishes, is considered to be the CWPPRA project area. To facilitate the study process, the coastal zone was divided into nine hydrologic basins (refer to Plate 1).

## STUDY PROCESS

The Interagency Planning Groups. Section 303(a)(1) of the CWPPRA directs the Secretary of the Army to convene the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force, to consist of the following members:

- The Secretary of the Army (Chairman)
- The Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
- The Governor, State of Louisiana
- The Secretary of the Interior
- The Secretary of Agriculture
- The Secretary of Commerce.

The State of Louisiana is a full voting member of the Task Force, with the exception of budget matters, as stipulated in President Bush's November 29, 1990,

signing statement, displayed on the last page of Appendix A. In addition, the State of Louisiana may not serve as a "lead" Task Force member for design and construction of wetlands projects of the priority project list.

In practice, the Task Force members named by the law have delegated their responsibilities to other members of their organizations. For instance, the Secretary of the Army authorized the commander of the Corps of Engineers New Orleans District to act in his place as chairman of the Task Force.

The Task Force established the Technical Committee and the Planning and Evaluation Subcommittee, to assist it in putting the CWPPRA into action. Each of these bodies contains the same representation as the Task Force -- one member from each of the five Federal agencies and one from the State. The Planning and Evaluation Subcommittee is responsible for the actual planning of projects, as well as the other details involved in the CWPPRA process (such as development of schedules, budgets, etc.). This subcommittee makes recommendations to the Technical Committee and lays the groundwork for decisions that will ultimately be made by the Task Force. The Technical Committee reviews all materials prepared by the subcommittee, make appropriate revisions, and provide recommendations to the Task Force. The Technical Committee operates at an intermediate level between the planning details considered by the subcommittee and the policy matters dealt with by the Task Force, and often formalizes procedures and formulates policy for the Task Force.

The Planning and Evaluation Subcommittee established several working groups to evaluate projects for priority project lists. The Environmental Work Group was charged with estimating the benefits (in terms of wetlands created, protected, enhanced, or restored) associated with various projects. The Engineering Work Group reviewed project cost estimates for consistency. The Economic Work Group performed the economic analysis, which permitted comparison of projects on the basis of their cost effectiveness. The Monitoring Work Group established a standard procedure for monitoring of CWPPRA projects, developed a monitoring cost estimating procedure based on project type, and a review of all monitoring plans.

The Task Force also established a Citizen Participation Group to provide general input from the diverse interests across the coastal zone: local officials, landowners, farmers, sportsmen, commercial fishermen, oil and gas developers, navigation interests, and environmental organizations. The Citizen Participation Group was formed to promote citizen participation and involvement in formulating priority project lists and the restoration plan. The group meets at its own discretion, but may at times meet in conjunction with other CWPPRA elements, such as the Technical Committee. The purpose of the Citizen Participation Group is to maintain consistent public review and input into the plans and projects being considered by the Task Force and to assist and participate in the public involvement program.

Involvement of the Academic Community. While the agencies sitting on the Task Force possess considerable expertise regarding Louisiana's coastal wetlands problems, the Task Force recognized the need to incorporate another invaluable resource: the state's academic community. The Task Force therefore retained the services of the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) to provide scientific advisors to aid the Environmental Work Group in performing Wetland Value Assessments.

Public Involvement. Even with its widespread membership, the Citizen Participation Group cannot represent all of the diverse interests concerned about by Louisiana's coastal wetlands. The CWPPRA public involvement program provides an opportunity for all interested parties to express their concerns and opinions and to submit their ideas concerning the problems facing Louisiana's wetlands. The Task Force has held at least eight public meetings each of the last eight years to obtain input from the public. In addition, the Task Force distributes a quarterly newsletter ("Watermarks") with information on the CWPPRA program and on individual projects.

## PLAN FORMULATION PROCESS FOR THE 9<sup>th</sup> PRIORITY PROJECT LIST

### IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION OF CANDIDATE PROJECTS

Four regional nomination workshops were conducted by the Planning and Evaluation (P&E) in order to receive project nominations from interested parties. The meetings were held according to the schedule shown in Table 1. In these workshops, participants were invited to nominate projects for consideration as candidate and demonstration projects for the 9<sup>th</sup> PPL. Each project had to support one or more Coast 2050 regional strategies in order to qualify for consideration in the process. Coast 2050 regional strategies were recognized as being among the most important to coastal restoration.

**Table 1: Meetings for Project Nominations and Selection of Candidate Projects**

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Grand Cheniere, Louisiana	January 25, 1999
Morgan City, Louisiana	January 26, 1999
New Orleans, Louisiana	January 27, 1999
New Orleans, Louisiana	January 28, 1999

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Invitees for these meetings included the public, State and local government representatives, Federal Agencies, the State, CWPPRA Workgroups, and the Regional Planning Teams (RPT) of Coast 2050.

The first task in each meeting was for the group to pick the first and second five highest priority regional strategies in their region. The goal of each regional meeting was to identify up to 15 of the total number of nominee projects that exhibit the highest potential for addressing Coast 2050 strategies. At the conclusion of each meeting, a group approval, which is based on a consensus, is made for up to 15 projects for the region.

A meeting was conducted on February 2, 1999, to briefly review the list of projects nominated for the 9<sup>th</sup> PPL and to assign those projects to the CWPPRA agencies for compilation of existing background information.

Meetings were conducted March 2-4, 1999, to screen the nominated projects in order to identify technical concerns and any potential implementation problems, as well as, to discuss possible project modifications. Projects that successfully passed the screening process were preliminarily classified as complex or non-complex. Non-complex nominee projects underwent further evaluation and development as had been traditionally done in the CWPPRA program. They were evaluated and developed for selection and funding on the 9<sup>th</sup> PPL. Projects that were considered complex will be investigated to a greater level of detail to more accurately determine costs and benefits. Complex projects will generally require an extended period of investigation, which may