

14 December 23

SUBJECT: Minutes from the 14 December 2023 CWPPRA Technical Committee Meeting

1. Mr. Mark Wingate opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. The following Technical Committee members were in attendance:

Ms. Karen McCormick, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Mr. Patrick Williams, National Marine and Fisheries Service (NMFS)
Mr. Mark Wingate, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Chairman
Mr. Brian Lezina, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)
Mr. Britt Paul, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Mr. Kevin Roy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

A copy of the agenda is included as **Encl 1**. A copy of the attendance sheet is included as **Encl 2**.

2. Agenda Item 1. Meeting Initiation

The meeting was conducted via WebEx virtual meeting platform, and in person at the USACE Office building in New Orleans, LA. Mr. Wingate introduced himself and welcomed those in attendance. He then iterated safety/ emergency exit procedures and described restroom locations. He announced his upcoming retirement and reflected upon his time as Chairman of the Technical Committee. He praised the success of the Breaux Act projects and importance of the partnerships and relationships established to accomplish those successes. Mr. Wingate then introduced Mr. Durund Elzey as the new Chairman, highlighting Mr. Elzey's two decades of Corps experience across coastal Louisiana. Mr. Elzey then expressed his gratitude for the opportunity and excitement to work with those involved with the CWPPRA program. Mr. Wingate then proceeded to introduce Ms. Jennifer Vititoe, the new Planning and Evaluation committee member for the Corps, following the upcoming retirement of Mr. Brad Inman. Ms. Vititoe was then invited to introduce herself. She echoed Mr. Elzey's experience working across coastal Louisiana and excitement to be working with the CWPPRA program. Mr. Wingate asked the Technical Committee members to introduce themselves, which they did. The Technical Committee members proceeded to congratulate Mr. Wingate and Mr. Inman on their upcoming retirements and welcomed Mr. Elzey and Ms. Vititoe into their new roles with CWPPRA. Mr. Inman proceeded to highlight the respect Mr. Wingate earned during his tenure citing the two previous Colonels were in attendance at his retirement celebration. He went on to commend Mr. Wingate on his receiving the highest civilian honor that the Army Corps awards, the Fleur-De-Lis Award, as well as being the inaugural recipient of the King Milling Award from the CPRA board.

Mr. Wingate opened the floor to discussion from the Technical Committee regarding the agenda; no additions or changes were proffered.

Mr. Wingate called upon Mr. Brad Inman (USACE) who reviewed the appropriate process for recording attendance and making public comment both virtually and in person.

Mr. Wingate called for a motion to adopt the agenda.

Mr. Williams made the motion, which Ms. McCormick seconded; the motion carried without dissent.

3. Agenda Item 2. Report: *Status of CWPPRA Program Funds and Projects*

Ms. Baylissa Walter, USACE, presented an overview of CWPPRA funds. The fully funded total Program Estimate since its inception to the present (authorized projects from PPLs 1 – 32) is \$3.345 billion. The total funded estimate (received since inception through FY23 and anticipated through FY2026) is \$2.621 billion, leaving a potential gap of \$724 million if the Program were to construct, operate and maintain all projects to date. This gap will be altered as future federal funding is appropriated for CWPPRA beyond 2026. Current Task Force-approved funding for projects in Phase I, Phase II, and O&M and Monitoring totals \$2.588 billion. The estimate of authorized funding for each agency as requested currently totals \$2.269 billion (which does not exceed the Total Program Estimate). The Task Force approved funding Requests from the October meeting the Total Program Estimate would increase by \$13,068,596.17, rendering a new Total Program Estimate of \$3,344,711,210.28.

The CWPPRA Construction Program has \$82,068,130.00 of funding carried forth from the May Task Force meeting. The FY24 DOI funding in the amount of \$97,008,058 is estimated. The FY 24 Planning Funds are \$5 million, which are deducted. Thus, the total Construction Program funding available for today's proceedings is \$161,007,591.83. The Technical Committee recommendations total \$107M, with the Federal portion of \$91M, potentially leaving \$69M available in Construction funds. (This total may be updated as project selections are obtained.)

CWPPRA has authorized 236 projects. The 131 active projects include 25 in Phase 1 Engineering and Design, and 26 in Phase II Construction. There are 74 projects which have been constructed and are now in O&M and Monitoring phase, and 6 support programs – Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS), monitoring contingency, storm recovery, Construction Program technical support, the Navigational Aid and Signage program, and the wetland conservation plan. Forty (40) projects have been completed and closed financially. Additionally, CWPPRA has deauthorized 49 projects, transferred 10 projects, and placed 6 in the inactive category.

Mr. Wingate opened the floor to discussion from the Technical Committee and the public; none were proffered.

4. Agenda Item 3. Report: *Electronic Votes and Approvals*

Brad Inman, USACE, reported on recent electronic voting results. Due to the cancellation of the October 12, 2023 Task Force meeting, an electronic vote was conducted on all agenda items requiring approval at the meeting, such as the incremental funding request for O&M and monitoring. All decision items passed.

Three electronic votes were conducted since the scheduled October Task Force meeting, two of which involved scope change requests necessitated by CWPPRA SOP, and one for a scope change request and name change. The Technical Committee voted to recommend Task Force approval of the scope changes for the following on the indicated dates:

- No Name Bayou Marsh Creation and Nourishment (CS-78), October 20, 2023
- South Grand Chenier Baker Tract Marsh Creation (ME-32), November 20, 2023

The Technical Committee voted to recommend Task Force approval of the scope change and name change for the following:

- Reggio Marsh Creation (BS-43), November 14, 2023.

The CWPPRA Task Force approved those recommendations on the following dates:

- No Name Bayou Marsh Creation and Nourishment (CS-78), October 20, 2023
- South Grand Chenier Baker Tract Marsh Creation (ME-32), November 28, 2023
- Reggio Marsh Creation (BS-43), November 22, 2023.

Mr. Wingate opened the floor to comments from the Technical Committee and the public; none were proffered.

5. Agenda Item 4. Report/Decision: Request for Phase II Authorization and Approval of Phase II Increment 1 Funding

Representatives from the sponsoring agencies provided a detailed overview of project location, planned features, goals/ benefits, synergies, and costs for each project listed in the following table:

Agency	Project No.	PPL	Project Name	Phase II, Increment 1 Request	Fully-Funded Phase 1 Cost	Fully-Funded Phase II Cost incl O&M	Total Fully Funded Cost Est.	Net Benefit Acres	Total Cost per Acre
FW S	TE-156	29	Bay Raccourci Marsh Creation and Ridge Restoration	\$35,330,357	\$3,447,902	\$38,558,792	\$42,006,694	363	\$115,721
FWS	PO-179	26	St. Catherine Island Marsh Creation and Shoreline Protection	\$27,931,521	\$2,389,308	\$30,241,014	\$32,630,322	169	\$193,079
FWS	BS-42	29	Phoenix Marsh Creation-East Increment	\$51,014,219	\$3,393,064	\$52,713,015	\$56,106,079	268	\$209,351
EPA	BS-43	30	Reggio Marsh Creation	\$41,922,882	\$3,678,761	\$43,028,871	\$46,707,631	324	\$144,159
NRCS	ME-32	23	South Grand Chenier Baker Tract Marsh Creation	\$30,879,285	\$2,653,242	\$32,182,582	\$34,835,824	346	\$100,682
NRCS	ME-31	19	Freshwater Bayou Marsh Creation	\$30,571,307	\$2,425,997	\$31,918,327	\$34,344,324	282	\$121,788

Mr. Wingate called for questions or comments from the Technical Committee and the public between each presentation; the following comments were proffered as the presentations were given:

Jason Bergeron, Terrebonne Parish, President-Elect, spoke in favor of TE-156 as it will provide a significant benefit to the northern rim of Bay Raccourci.

John Lane, St. Bernard Parish spoke in support of BS-43, praising the project team and its ability to involve the community of Reggio to put forth a beneficial project. Blaise Pezold, spoke on behalf of the Meraux Foundation and as a private citizen in support of BS-43, citing the importance of safeguarding cultural and historical sites in the area. Guy McInnis, St. Bernard Parish President, spoke with full agreement of the previous comments and reiterated the importance of the landbridge concept for full protection. Louis Pomes, St. Bernard President-Elect also spoke in favor of BS-43 and its ability to protect infrastructure as well as residents that live in the Delacroix, Reggio, Yscloskey and Florissant areas.

Kay Barnett, President of the Chenier Plains Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority, which represents in region four the three parishes of Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion highlighted the protection of Highway 82, a critical evacuation route, with the ME-32 project. The expansion of emergent marsh and submerged aquatic vegetation would be promoted by this project. M.O. Miller, one of the landowners of ME-32 spoke of the synergy of the project with the ME-20 project and how the project will benefit the levees that the private landowners have just shored up. Scooter Trosclair, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries also spoke in favor of ME-32 citing it will provide tremendous benefits. Margie Miller, who works with the Miller Five, thanked the project team for keeping all informed. She then explained that ME-32 would offer great protection to Highway 82, as well as the community at large. Kara Bonsall, Cameron Parish Police Jury referring to the high rate of land loss in the area, commented ME-32 would benefit the coastline and the evacuation route.

Kay Barnett, President of the Chenier Plains Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority commented on the sustainability of the Gulf borrow source for the ME-31 as well as the synergy it creates with other projects in the area. She then highlighted the long-term return on the investment by restoring the degrading marsh and helping reduce the wave erosion and creating new wetland habitat in areas as well as protection for Highway 82.

Mr. Wingate called for questions or comments from the public; none were forthcoming.

With no further public comment, Mr. Wingate called Mr. Inman to review the selection criteria. He reminded all in attendance that CWPPRA has a limited budget and the importance of maintaining a reserve to handle project cost increases and change orders. Mr. Inman then requested Ms. Kaitlyn Richard review the collaborative approach to project selection. Ms. Richard explained that the objective is to select the most impactful coastal restoration projects for both engineering and design phase and construction phase. In order to accomplish this, a set of five criteria, cost effectiveness, synergy, critical landscape feature, critical area of need, as well as critical infrastructure protection, were established. Additional considerations such as stakeholder support, landowner support, sustainability, as well as operations and maintenance are also taken into account when agencies collaboratively select projects. Ms. Richard then mentioned the process and strategy for selection criteria is available online.

Mr. Wingate called for questions or comments from the Technical Committee.

Mr. Williams commented upon the importance of participation, and thanked those in attendance for their participation, local, state, and federal. He continued that landowner support is vital to

restoration. Lastly, he thanked the project teams for all of the effort to get to a Phase II construction request. Mr. Williams concluded that he is looking forward to working with all in the future.

Mr. Wingate called for questions or comments from the public; none were forthcoming.

Mr. Wingate then called for a ten minute breakout session for Technical Committee members to come to a consensus on Phase II projects using the selection criteria.

Mr. Wingate reconvened the meeting, and the following results/ approvals were presented:

**CWPPRA Technical Committee Ranked list for Phase II
Approval, Dec 2023**

	Adjusted total score (with weights)	RANK
Reggio Marsh Creation (BS-43)	7.03	1
St. Catherine Island Marsh Creation and Shoreline Protection (PO-179)	5.48	2
South Grand Chenier Baker Tract Marsh Creation (ME-32)	5.23	3

NOTES:

Projects were ranked collaboratively by the agencies

Ms. Richard announced the three top-ranked projects, which are highlighted in the table above.

Mr. Wingate called for a motion to recommend the selected projects to the Task Force for Phase II Authorization and Phase II Increment I Funding.

DECISION: Mr. Williams made the motion, which Ms. McCormick seconded; the motion carried without dissent.

12. Agenda Item 11. *Report/Decision: 33rd Priority Project List*

Kristen Ramsey, FWS, presented a brief overview of the ten PPL 33 candidate projects, which have been evaluated, and are being considered for Phase I Engineering and Design. She summarized the location, scope, goals, and anticipated costs of each project, as they are oriented geographically east to west across the coast.

Region	Basin	PPL 33 Candidates	Agency
1	Pontchartrain	Biloxi Marsh Shoreline Protection	NRCS
1	Pontchartrain	Bayou Ducros Marsh Creation	FWS
2	Breton Sound	Bayou Terre aux Boeufs Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation	NMFS

2	Breton Sound	South Delacroix Marsh Creation	NRCS
2	Barataria	West Dupre Cut Marsh Creation	NRCS
2	Barataria	Northwest Little Lake Marsh Creation	FWS
2	Barataria	Southeast Golden Meadow Marsh Creation	FWS
3	Terrebonne	East Terrebonne Landbridge Marsh Creation, Increment 1	FWS
3	Terrebonne	Carencro Bayou Diversion	NRCS
4	Calcasieu-Sabine	Gulf Shoreline Protection West	FWS

Ms. Ramsey concluded by presenting and explaining the Project Evaluation Matrix table which will aid in the project selection process. Mr. Wingate commended Ms. Ramsey for her presentation, and acknowledged the work groups and experts at the local, state and federal levels, who have worked extensively and gathered information necessary to develop these projects.

Mr. Wingate called for questions or comments from the Technical Committee; none were proffered.

Mr. Wingate called for comments from the public. the following comments were proffered.

Dr. Elizabeth McDade, Biloxi Marshlands Corporation, advocated for the Biloxi Marsh Shoreline Protection project. She stated the expected retreat of up to 600 feet in the next 20 years can be halted with the project. Shoreline protection projects have proved very successful in this area.

Scooter Trosclair, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries, spoke on behalf of the Gulf Shoreline Project to help protect a nine mile stretch of interior marsh and has synergy with under construction ME-35 and the recently completed ME-20. This project fills the gap. The area has been hit by four major hurricanes, that have adversely impacted infrastructure in the area. Another factor that should be considered is the native people, their culture, heritage, and livelihood that is threatened by a Gulf breach. Kay Barnett echoed Mr. Trosclair's enthusiasm for the Gulf Shoreline project highlighting the bio-diversity of Avery Island wildlife sanctuary area that would be protected by the project, as well as protection of Highway 82.

John Lane, St. Bernard Parish, was in favor of Bayou Ducros and Biloxi Marsh, drawing attention to many letters of broad-based support provided in the Technical Committee packets. He also was in favor of Bayou Terre aux Boeufs and South Delacroix, as they provide protection to St. Bernard Parish.

Jason Bergeron, President-Elect Terrebonne Parish pleaded for a Terrebonne landbridge to be developed to protect communities from storm surge. He was also in support of the Carencro Bayou Diversion, highlighting the project's cost-effectiveness and assistance with reducing saltwater intrusion and marsh loss in that region of the Parish.

Megan Dufrene, Lafourche Parish Government emphasized the devastation of Hurricane Ida converting marsh to open water, leaving the levee exposed. She was in favor of the Northwest Little Lake and Southeast Golden Meadow projects. She called attention to the the Terrebonne Landbridge project as a benefitting Lafourche Parish.

Blaise Pezold, Meraux Foundation, encouraged consideration of the Bayou Terre aux Boeufs Ridge Restoration Project for the habitat for migrating birds, and as a critical landscape feature for storm surge. He continued the project would provide a critical piece of land infrastructure, a critical landscape that is constructible. He also advocated for Bayou Ducros as protection for critical infrastructure, such as NASA and US Coast Guard and under-served communities.

Guy McInnis, St. Bernard Parish President, spoke in favor of the Bayou Ducros Marsh Creation and Bayou Terre aux Boeufs Ridge projects emphasizing protection of infrastructure. He acknowledged the value of all candidate projects and commended the work of CWPPRA.

Kara Bonsall, Cameron Parish Police Jury, stated the Gulf Shoreline Protection project as a priority for the parish as it protects the restoration investments in the interior marshes.

With no further public comment, Mr. Wingate called for a ten minute breakout session for Technical Committee members to discuss.

When he reconvened the meeting, Mr. Wingate reiterated project selection utilized the selection criteria and other considerations. He then called for a presentation of the consensus results.

Ms. Richard then recapped the process of utilizing the selection criteria and other considerations, such as public comment, to determine the projects of PPL 33. She then stated the Technical Committee ranks projects by priority, and that is according to cost effectiveness, synergy, critical area of need, critical landscape feature, and critical infrastructure protection. There are a number of items listed under other considerations, including stakeholder input and landowner support, as well as other items such as sustainability and operations and maintenance.

Ms. Richard displayed the following table. The Technical Committee employed the selection criteria to evaluate the projects. She further explained that only two projects were chosen due to the funding limitations mentioned earlier. Those projects are highlighted in the table below:

CWPPRA PPL 33 Technical Committee Project Selection

Project Selection, Phase 1

	Adjusted total score (with weights)	RANK
South Delacroix Marsh Creation	7.25	1
Northwest Little Lake Marsh Creation Extension	6.84	2

Mr. Wingate called for a motion to recommend the selected PPL 33 projects to the Task Force for Phase I Engineering and Design approval.

DECISION: Mr. Roy made the motion which Mr. Paul seconded the motion; the motion carried without opposition.

7. Agenda Item 6. *Additional Agenda Items*

No items were added to the agenda.

8. Agenda Item 7. *Request for Public Comments*

Mr. Wingate called for final public comment; no additional comments were proffered.

9. Agenda Item 8. *Announcement: Priority Project List 34 Regional Planning Team Meetings*

Ms. Richard presented the following RPT meeting schedule:

January 30, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Region IV Planning Team Meeting	Lake Charles
January 31, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Region III Planning Team Meeting	Morgan City
February 1, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Region I & II Planning Team Meeting	Lacombe
February 23, 2024	10:30 a.m.	Coastwide Electronic Voting	(via email, no meeting)

10. Agenda Item 9. *Announcement: Date of Upcoming CWPPRA Program Meeting*

Ms. Richard announced that the next Task Force meeting would be held Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. in the USACE office building.

11. Agenda Item 10. *Announcement: Scheduled Dates of Future Program Meetings**

Ms. Richard imparted the following CWPPRA meeting schedule:

January 25, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Task Force	New Orleans
January 30, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Region IV Planning Team Meeting	Lake Charles
January 31, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Region III Planning Team Meeting	Morgan City
February 1, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Region I & II Planning Team Meeting	Lacombe
April 4, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee Meeting	Baton Rouge
May 2, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Task Force	Lafayette
September 5, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee Meeting	New Orleans
October 3, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Task Force	New Orleans
December 5, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee Meeting	New Orleans

*subject to change

12. Agenda Item 11. *Decision: Adjourn*

Mr. Wingate called for a motion to adjourn the proceedings.

Mr. Williams made the motion, which Mr. Lezina seconded; the motion carried without dissent. The meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.