

# COASTAL WETLANDS PLANNING, PROTECTION, AND RESTORATION ACT (CWPPRA)

## STRATEGY AND CRITERIA FOR PROJECT SELECTION

This document provides guidance for the CWPPRA Program in selecting projects for Priority Project List 33 and construction. It shall be reviewed annually by the CWPPRA Program, including the Academic Advisory Group, and will reflect the consensus of the CWPPRA agencies. This document shall be made available to the public.

In prioritizing selection of coastal restoration projects, several criteria should be considered. Criteria such as cost effectiveness, synergy, critical area of need, critical landscape features, and critical infrastructure protection are significant in the effort to effectively restore and protect Louisiana's wetlands. Other considerations are also important in selecting projects including but not limited to the considerations as referenced on page 6 of this document.

Project selection and approval occurs annually during the Winter Technical Committee and Task Force meetings. Prior to these meetings, projects requesting Phase 1 (design) and Phase 2 (construction) authorization are developed and finalized for evaluation. Before Phase 1 and Phase 2 project selection, details pertaining to the aforementioned factors are provided to the Technical Committee to facilitate their review. Ranking of projects occurs as a result of criteria scoring, outlined in this document, as well as discussions of any other relevant considerations that will inform project prioritization and selection.

If there is no unanimous agreement on the final prioritization of projects, a majority Technical Committee vote will determine the recommended selection of projects to the Task Force. The results of the ranking and any votes that occur will be presented to the public at the December Technical Committee meeting. The decision for final approval and authorization of project selection is made by the CWPPRA Task Force in January of the following year.

Public comments on projects requesting Phase 1 and Phase 2 authorization will be solicited through the CWPPRA newsflash at least one month before the Technical Committee prioritizes projects for selection. These comments will be made available to the Technical Committee ahead of project deliberation in order to incorporate them into the decision-making process. To subscribe to the newsflash, please send a request to [LCoast@nwrccom.cr.usgs.gov](mailto:LCoast@nwrccom.cr.usgs.gov).

The Technical Committee will use the following as a guide to determine the most effective projects for authorization and funding:

I. State Master Plan Consistency

Projects must be consistent with the Louisiana’s Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast (State Master Plan). For more information on the State Master Plan, please visit [coastal.la.gov](http://coastal.la.gov).

II. Selection Criteria

a. **Cost Effectiveness**

Cost effectiveness is defined as the fully funded cost (FFC) per net acre restored/or protected.

Classes and point ranges have been defined by identifying natural breaks using FFC per net acre for projects considered for Phase 2 Construction funding over the last two years.

Classes:

*High:*

- 9: *less than \$50,000*
- 8: *\$50,000-\$75,000*
- 7: *\$75,000-\$100,000*

*Medium:*

- 6: *\$100,000-\$125,000*
- 5: *\$125,000-\$150,000*
- 4: *\$150,000-\$175,000*

*Low:*

- 3: *\$175,000-\$200,000*
- 2: *\$200,000-\$225,000*
- 1: *greater than \$225,000*

b. **Synergy**

Synergy refers to collective contribution resulting in restoration benefits greater than the footprints of individual projects. Synergy implies more than projects located in close proximity to one another. Projects should work together to provide benefits greater than the sum of the parts.

The potential for synergy should be considered with other restoration projects (CWPPRA and non-CWPPRA) in the *immediate proximity* of the

project, with immediate proximity defined as adjacent but not necessarily contiguous.

Projects should be considered that have construction funds but have not started construction and for which construction is in progress or is complete. Projects can include CWPPRA, Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), Resources and Ecosystem Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States (RESTORE) Act, North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP), state only, mitigation, beneficial use, etc. Private sector (e.g., LNGs, Ports) projects can also be considered when the relative surety of implementation is identified to the extent possible.

Classes:

*High: Project in immediate proximity to multiple projects and those projects would collectively contribute to an impact greater than their footprints.*

*Medium: Project in immediate proximity to one other project and the two projects would collectively contribute to an impact greater than their “footprints”.*

*Low: Project in immediate proximity to one or more projects, but it is questionable whether the combined impact of those projects would be greater than their “footprints”.*

*None: No other projects in its immediate proximity.*

**c. Critical Area of Need**

The project addresses an area of high loss and degradation.

*Notes: Based on the best available data (e.g., USGS 1984 – 2021 land change analysis) from USGS for projects, the Technical Committee determined thresholds to distinguish between classes.*

Classes:

*High:*

*Interior Loss Rate: 1) Extended project boundary => -1.22 % loss per year (loss rate per most recent extended boundary land change analysis), or 2) the project area has suffered a distinct instantaneous loss due to tropical weather or specific event(s) in the last 10 years, or 3) the project area has*

*undergone a substantial amount of pre-1984 wetland loss and loss continues within the project area. The most recent USGS extended boundary land change analysis should be provided. In cases of #2 or #3 above, evidence (e.g., satellite imagery or aerial photography) of wetland loss should also be provided.*

*Shoreline Loss Rate:  $\geq$  25 ft/yr*

*Medium:*

*Interior Loss Rate: 1) Extended project boundary  $\geq -0.64\%$  –  $-1.21\%$  loss per year (loss rate per most recent extended boundary land change analysis) or 2) the project area has undergone a moderate amount of pre-1984 wetland loss and loss continues within the project area. The most recent USGS extended boundary land change analysis should be provided. In cases of #2 above, evidence (e.g., satellite imagery or aerial photography) of wetland loss should also be provided.*

*Shoreline Loss Rate:  $\geq$  10 to  $<$  25 ft/yr*

*Low:*

*Interior Loss Rate: Extended project boundary  $< -0.64\%$  loss per year (loss rate per most recent extended boundary land change analysis). The most recent USGS extended boundary land change analysis should be provided.*

*Shoreline Loss Rate: 0 to  $<$  10 ft/yr*

**d. Critical Landscape Feature**

Does the project maintain or restore structural components of the coastal ecosystem, such as barrier islands, natural or artificial levee ridges (where ecologically appropriate, e.g., where the artificial ridge has essentially replaced a natural feature), a landbridge, beach and lake rims, cheniers, forested swamp, etc., where necessary to sustain vegetated wetlands? Vegetative planting and marsh creation are not considered structural framework components unless they maintain or protect the integrity of the feature.

*Classes:*

*High: Project directly acts to restore or maintain a critical landscape feature (ideally in coordination with other projects.)*

*Medium: Project indirectly acts to restore or maintain a critical landscape feature or serves as an initial start in plans to do so.*

*Low: Project may contribute to restoring or maintaining a critical landscape feature.*

*None: Project does not contribute to a critical landscape feature.*

**e. Critical Infrastructure Protection**

Does the project result in net positive and direct benefits on critical infrastructure?

Critical infrastructure includes any structures related to communities (cities, town, or unincorporated villages), especially those which are underserved; major oil and gas facilities (where people go to work every day); local and Federal flood protection/hurricane protection levees; hurricane protection routes; major roads/highways; major navigation channels (Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Calcasieu-Sabine Ship Channel, Freshwater Bayou Canal, Houma Navigation Canal, Barataria Bay Waterway, Mississippi River to the Gulf Outlet, etc.); and ports.

Non-critical infrastructure is not included. Non-critical infrastructure may consist of secondary roads, minor roads, minor navigation channels/canals, minor oil and gas facilities (small wellheads, tank batteries, compressor stations, and pipelines), and camps.

Classes:

*High: Project would have a substantial net benefit on critical infrastructure. Does not need to be contiguous to be direct.*

*Medium: Project would have a moderate net positive impact on critical infrastructure.*

*Low: Project would have minimal net positive impacts on infrastructure.*

*None: Project would not have any impact on critical infrastructure.*

### III. Criteria Weighting and Point Ranges

Point ranges for classes and weighting for the criteria are provided below. Relative importance amongst the five criteria determines the weight, with critical area of need given the highest weight when scoring projects. Ranges are included to enable distinguishing projects by allowing for separation in scores.

Factor	% (adjusted)	Point Range - High	Point Range - Medium	Point Range - Low	If None
Cost Effectiveness	20	7-9	4-6	1-3	N/A
Synergy	20	7-9	4-6	1-3	0
Critical Area of Need	25	7-9	4-6	1-3	N/A
Critical Landscape Feature	15	7-9	4-6	1-3	0
Critical Infrastructure Protection	20	7-9	4-6	1-3	0
<b>Total/Maximum</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>45</b>			

### IV. Other considerations

The project rankings as a result of the criteria scoring are used in conjunction with other considerations to determine project selection. These considerations will be via a qualitative approach for the top-ranked projects. The ranked list of projects may be adjusted through consensus or voting, if needed. Considerations include but are not limited to:

- Sustainable Borrow Source
- Sustainability of Specific Project Site
- Water Quality
- Excessive Maintenance
- Liability
- Ease of Construction
- Geography - Basin, Political Boundary, Distribution
- Willing Landowners and Stakeholder Support
- Partnerships
- Oysters
- Pipelines/Utilities
- Operations and Maintenance
- Number of Previous Phase 2 Requests