

BREAUX ACT
Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act
TASK FORCE MEETING
26 January 2023
Minutes

I. INTRODUCTION

Colonel Cullen Jones convened the 107th meeting of the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force. The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. on January 26, 2023. The meeting was conducted in the Board Room of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DARM, 7400 Leake Ave., New Orleans, LA., and via WebEx virtual meeting platform. The agenda is shown as Enclosure 1. The Task Force was created by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA, commonly known as the Breaux Act), which was signed into law (PL 101-646, Title III) by President George Bush on November 29, 1990.

II. ATTENDEES

The attendance record for the Task Force Meeting is presented as Enclosure 2. The Task Force members introduced themselves as follows:

Col. Cullen Jones (USACE), Chairperson
Mr. Troy Hill (EPA, Region 6) sitting for Charles Maguire
Mr. Chad Kacir (NRCS, for the U.S. Department of Agriculture)
Mr. Chris Doley (NOAA Fisheries Service, for the U.S. Department of Commerce)
Mr. Jeffrey Weller (USFWS, for the U.S. Department of Interior)
Mr. Bren Haase (CPRA, for the State of Louisiana)

III. OPENING REMARKS

Colonel Jones introduced himself as the recently installed (65th) Commander of the USACE – New Orleans District, serving as chairperson of the CWPPRA Task Force. He began by remarking that over the last thirty years the CWPPRA program has invested in projects which have yielded a net benefit of more than 100,000 acres along Louisiana’s coast. Col. Jones expressed his appreciation for and formally welcomed all in attendance. He reviewed emergency exit protocol and indicated the location of breakroom facilities. Col. Jones then invited Task Force members to introduce themselves; they did so in turn, with Mr. Haase extending words of formal welcome to Col. Jones. Task Force attending members are listed above.

IV. AGENDA and MINUTES

Colonel Jones asked if the Task Force had any changes to make to the agenda; none were proffered.

Col. Jones called for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Mr. Hill made the motion, which Mr. Kacir seconded; the motion carried without opposition.

Colonel Jones called on Alice Kerl, USACE, to iterate the procedure for public comment within this hybrid meeting format. Ms. Kerl did so for those in person and attending virtually; she also asked those attending in person to sign in for the record.

Colonel Jones called on Sarah Bradley, USACE, to present minutes of the last Task Force meeting. Ms. Bradley stated that the minutes had been sent to Task Force members previously for comment and approval; edits have been incorporated and the final draft of the minutes is provided in the Task Force binders. In lieu of reading them, she asks that the Task Force consider approving them as submitted.

Colonel Jones opened the floor for comment from the Task Force and the public; none were proffered.

Col. Jones called for a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Kacir made the motion, which Mr. Hill seconded; the motion carried without opposition.

V: TASK FORCE DECISIONS

Agenda Item #9 – Report/Decision: Status of the Navigation Aids and Signage (LA-328) Program and Request for a Budget and Incremental Funding Increase (Brandon Champagne)

Brandon Champagne (CPRA) began his report with a reminder that this project was approved in January 2022 in order to maintain existing Navigational Aids on closed CWPPRA projects. There are currently about 13 CWPPRA projects that now employ Navigational aids, a number which will undoubtedly increase as more projects are implemented and reach end of life. Each project requiring navigational aids necessitates detailed implementation procedures to ascertain costs and develop cost-share agreements, define specific nav-aid features and bid specifications, and acquire landrights agreements for the placement of and to assure access to the nav-aids for O&M. The cost of landrights procurement for the existing projects is an estimated \$1.7 million, considerably higher than the original cost approved, mainly due to unforeseen legal/private access issues. Mr. Champagne provided individual estimates of and justification for costs to secure landrights for each of the existing projects. This budget increase and incremental funding request is needed to secure the necessary landrights for existing projects. Future costs of landrights acquisition would (ideally) be considered during initial project planning and calculated into total project costs of proposed CWPPRA projects.

After a brief overview of other cost-saving options, Mr. Champagne formally requested a budget increase in the amount of \$880,000 to obtain (and complete) current landrights for LA-328.

Col. Jones called for Task Force and public questions and comments; none were proffered.

Col. Jones called for a motion to authorize the Budget and Incremental Funding increase of \$880,000 for O&M to complete landrights agreements acquisition and to implement LA-328. Mr. Weller made the motion, which Mr. Kacir seconded; the motion carried without opposition.

Agenda Item #10 – Decision: Request for a Scope Change and a Budget Increase for the CWPPRA FY23 Outreach Planning Budget for the Nicholls University Partnership Opportunity (Lauren Leonpacher, USGS)

Lauren Leonpacher (USGS) began the request by explaining that CWPPRA Outreach was approached by Nicholls State University (NSU) to establish a partnership with the conceived

Nicholls Coastal Center (NCC) – a planned research and educational facility intended to support and pursue protection, restoration, and adaptation efforts in Coastal Louisiana. Ground-breaking is anticipated in March 2023; projected completion is spring 2024. Construction is being funded by CPRA. The chosen location optimizes its access on Nicholls State University campus and to the surrounding community. The conceptual design includes research and engineering laboratories, exhibit space, conference and training spaces, and offices. CWPPRA and BTNEP (among other unspecified agencies) have been invited to invest in the exhibit space. Ms. Leonpacher provided details of the partnership, describing a professionally curated exhibit space dedicated to CWPPRA for 7-10 years, the content of which would be determined by CWPPRA. A one-time CWPPRA investment of \$77,000 would also include the availability of meeting/event space and require no operation and maintenance from CWPPRA staff. Collaboration with BTNEP could potentially result in leveraging of collective funding. Although final components of the contract have not been negotiated, Ms. Leonpacher iterated multiple benefits to be gained from this partnership with Nicholls University. She finally suggested that funding could potentially come from unused Outreach funds (since 2019) that have been returned to the Planning budget. She thus made the formal request for an Outreach Planning Budget increase for FY23 in the amount of \$77,000.

Col. Jones called for questions or comments from the Task Force; none were proffered.

Col Jones called for public comments. John Doucet, representing NSU, voiced to encourage support of CWPPRA involvement with the proposed Coastal Center, speaking with enthusiasm about the potential of the center to raise awareness of coastal issues, and declaring that NSU is “in the business” of producing future environmental professionals. No other comments were proffered.

Col. Jones called for a motion to authorize the Outreach Planning Budget Increase of \$77,000 for FY23. Mr. Doley made the motion, which Mr. Weller seconded; the motion carried without opposition.

Agenda Item #11 – Request for a No-Cost Increase, 20-Year Project Life Extension on the West Bay Sediment Diversion (MR-03) Project and a Transfer of Funding from O&M to Monitoring (Terri Von Hoven, USACE)

Terri Von Hoven, USACE, was called upon to present the next agenda item concerning MR-03, a PPL-1 project which reaches its 20-year end-of-life in November 2023. The project is located on the west bank of the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish approximately 4.7 miles north of Head of Passes. Originally, \$50.8 million was authorized to construct an uncontrolled diversion channel with an average river sediment discharge of 20,000 cfs. A secondary interim channel was modified to accommodate a sediment discharge of 50,000 cfs. A net acreage of 9,800 acres was anticipated. Throughout the project life maintenance events occurred in order to strategically place sediment retention devices (SREDs – i.e., engineered islands). By 2016, in a depth analysis report (USACE Mobile District) estimated that 12.5 million cf of sediment could be attributed to sediment retention (external of sediment placement). Studies show that high or low river flow affects where sediment tends to settle and confirm the efficacy of the SREDs. Studies confirm the overall success of the project with a reduction in open water acreage, an increase in aquatic vegetation, and an increase in land mass within the project boundary. Elevation surveys further demonstrate shallower conditions which are more conducive to land-accretion and emergent vegetation. All data supports the assumption that positive land gains will continue for

the duration of the project extension. Dr. Von Hoven went on to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the program – over the course of the 40 years (if this 20- year extension is granted) net acreage could total 4,759 at an average cost of \$10.2 thousand dollars per net acre. Lastly, she pointed out that the extension would result in no additional costs to the CWPPRA Program, but that remaining O&M funds could be transferred to Monitoring for continued observation and analysis. Available funds total \$5,820,220 and the projected cost estimate for the 20-year extension is \$3,726,087; an estimated \$2,094,133 could potentially be returned to the CWPPRA Program at the end of the extension. Dr. Von Hoven provided a comprehensive review of the CWPPRA Program’s 20-Year Decision Matrix, thus justifying this request for a No Cost Increase 20-year Project Life Extension, and a Transfer of Funding from O&M to Monitoring for MR-03.

Col. Jones called for Task Force and public comments or questions; none were proffered.

Col. Jones called for a motion to approve the No Cost Increase 20-year Project Life Extension for MR-03. Mr. Doley made the motion, which Mr. Kacir seconded; the motion carried without dissent.

Col. Jones called for a motion to approve Transfer of Funding from O&M to Monitoring for MR-03. Mr. Hill made the motion, which Mr. Doley seconded; the motion carried without dissent.

Agenda Item #12 – Decision: Request for an O&M and a Monitoring Budget Increase and Funding Allocation for the Holly Beach Sand Management (CS-31) Project (Kent Bollfrass, CPRA)

Kent Bollfrass, CPRA, did not make a formal presentation, asserting that all details are provided in the Task Force binders. On behalf of CPRA and NRCS, he simply iterated the request for an O&M budget increase of \$5,3347.81 and a Monitoring budget increase of \$371.21 in order to reconcile the budget prior to project closeout.

Col. Jones called for questions or comments from the Task Force and the public; none were proffered.

Col. Jones then called for a motion to approve the Request for an O&M and a Monitoring Budget Increase and Funding Allocation for the Holly Beach Sand Management (CS-31) in the amounts specified. Mr. Kacir made the motion, which Mr. Weller seconded; the motion carried without dissent.

Agenda Item #13 – Decision: Request for a Transfer of Approved Monitoring to Approved O&M, an O&M Budget Increase, and O&M Incremental Funding for the GIWW to Clovelly Hydrologic Restoration (BA-02) Project (Daniel Dearmond, CPRA)

Kent Bollfrass presented this request on behalf of Mr. Dearmond. Like the previous request, albeit “multi-step” scenario, Mr. Bollfrass asserted that this request is necessary in order to proceed toward project closeout. He specified the request as follows: a) an O&M budget increase of \$195,563.13, and b) a transfer of \$217,799.88 in available funds from the Monitoring budget to the O&M budget, and c) approval of the total of \$525,201.01 in Incremental Funding for BA-02.

Col. Jones called for questions or comments from the Task Force and the public; none were proffered.

Col. Jones called for a motion to approve the Request for a \$217,799.88 Transfer of funds from Monitoring to O&M, for an \$195,563.13 O&M Budget Increase, for a total O&M Incremental Funding Request in the amount of \$525,201.01 for the GIWW to Clovelly Hydrologic Restoration (BA-02) Project. Mr. Hill made the motion, which Mr. Kacir seconded; the motion carried without dissent.

Agenda Item #14 – Report/Decision: Request for Phase II Authorization and Approval of Phase II Increment 1 Funding (Sarah Bradley, USACE)

During December 2022 proceedings, the Technical Committee reviewed project information, took public comments, and voted on projects seeking Phase II approval. Highlighted in the table below are the projects that received the highest rankings as the result of voting during those proceedings. Ms. Bradley recited them according to ranking results.

CWPPRA Technical Committee Ranked list for Phase II Approval, Dec 2022

	Rank	Phase 2, Increment 1 Request
BS-37 East Delacroix Marsh Creation and Terracing (PPL28)	1	\$37,634,359
BA-217 Grand Bayou Ridge and Marsh Restoration (PPL28)	2	\$47,710,957
TE-117 Island Road Marsh Creation and Nourishment (PPL23)	3	\$29,204,548
PO-181 Bayou Cane Marsh Creation (PPL27)	4	\$36,648,434
BS-42 Phoenix Marsh Creation - East Increment (PPL29)	5	
PO-179 St. Catherine Island Marsh Creation and Shoreline Protection (PPL26)	6	
ME-31 Freshwater Bayou Marsh Creation (PPL19)	7	
CS-79 Oyster Lake Marsh Creation and Nourishment (PPL25)	8	

\$151,198,298

NOTES:

Projects were ranked collaboratively by the agencies

Jennifer Smith, NOAA Fisheries, initiated the presentations with BS-37 East Delacroix Marsh Creation and Terracing. The project was chosen as a PPL28 Candidate in January 2018, received Phase I funding in January 2019. Design Meetings (30% and 95%) were conducted in May and October 2022 respectively. The project is located immediately eastward of the Delacroix community – an area which has in the last 17 years (according to USGS satellite imagery) been converted by natural and man-made forces to mostly open water. Primary project features are two areas of confined marsh creation and nourishment (414 acres), 18,800 LF of terracing (a “field” to the east, and one long terrace northward) adjacent to the marsh creation area. This project is

geographically central to several others (in various phases of construction) along the Bayou Terre aux Boeufs Ridge. The request today is for approval of \$37.6 million in Phase II Increment I funding.

Kristen Ramsey, FWS, provided a summary of BA-217 Grand Bayou Ridge and Marsh Restoration – Increment I. The project is located on the west side of the Mississippi River, along the west bank of Grand Bayou, and is therefore consistent with the Master Plan goal. Planned project features include two marsh creation cells (249 acres) flanked by restored forested ridge (8,500 LF) along Grand Bayou. BA-217 is adjacent to two other projects – BA-42 northward and BA-240 westward – which are in various phases of construction, and it aligns with BA-257 southward – a PPL 31 project approved for Phase I funding. It will utilize the same pipeline corridor and capitalize on the West Pointe al la Hache Siphons, which introduce freshwater and nutrients into the marsh area. A cost-saving opportunity is possible if mobilization & demobilization of equipment can coincide with construction activities at BA-240. Today's Phase II Increment I funding request is for \$47,710,957.

Patrick Williams, NOAA Fisheries, gave an overview of TE-117 Island Road Marsh Creation and Nourishment. The project lies in eastern Terrebonne Basin – an area repeatedly impacted by hurricane activity, and for which construction of a protective landbridge has long been conceptualized. This project is the first (proposed along this landbridge concept) to receive preliminary construction funding approval (i.e. the Technical Committee's recommendation.) Project features are three confined marsh creation cells oriented almost centrally to Isle de Jean Charles (westward), Point aux Chiens (north-eastward), and Island Road (northward). It is adjacent (southward) to the Twin Pipeline corridor. A total of 295 acres of marsh creation and nourishment (utilizing dredge material from Lake Tambour) would provide protection of the communities and infrastructure and begin the process of rebuilding marsh along this design concept. The project meets CWPPRA criteria for critical need, cost-effectiveness, synergy, and provides resiliency for underserved cultural, commercial and residential concerns. Therefore, \$29.2 million is requested for Phase II Increment I funding.

Kristen Ramsey, FWS, made the last presentation – PO-181 Bayou Cane Marsh Creation. The project is located within the Upper Pontchartrain Basin along the northeastern shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain between Mandeville and Lacombe. The land (an approximate six-mile stretch) is primarily owned by the state or by the Big Branch NWR. The project goals are to construct seven confined marsh creation cells utilizing dredged material from the lake. The project will work synergistically with the Goose Point project (PO-33) and the Bayou Bonfouca project (PO-104), almost doubling the linear span of shoreline protection northward. The project meets CWPPRA criteria, most notably cost-effectiveness as it relates to AAHUs and acreage. Thus, the request for approval is \$36,648,434 for PO-181 Phase II Increment I funding.

Col. Jones invited Task Force comments or questions between each presentation; none were proffered. He invited public comment after all presentations had been made. Mart Black, Coastal Restoration Director for Terrebonne Parish spoke in full support of TE-117, reiterating the ongoing (and critical) land loss rates, and the long-term concern and broad-based support for establishing a framework of restoration projects in the region. No further comments or questions were proffered.

Col. Jones called for a motion to approve the selected projects for Phase II Authorization and Phase II Increment I Funding. Mr. Doley made the motion, which Mr. Kacir seconded; the motion carried without dissent.

Agenda Item #15 – Report/Decision: 32nd Priority Project List (Kristen Ramsey, FWS)

Kristen Ramsey, FWS, began by illustrating the locations of the ten candidate projects as they are distributed across the state. In December 2022 the Technical Committee selected two of the ten; those voting results were displayed in tabular format. Ms. Ramsey summarized the location, scope, goals, and anticipated fully funded costs of the two candidate projects. The request today being recommended by the Technical Committee is for Phase I approval of the PPL 32 projects as listed:

• Yscloskey Marsh Creation (Breton Sound Basin)	FWS	\$3,741,913
• Northwest Little Lake Marsh Creation (Barataria Basin)	FWS	<u>\$3,455,646</u>
	(total)	\$7,197,559

Col. Jones commended Ms. Ramsey, the stakeholders, project contributors at the federal, state and university levels for their efforts in defining future projects. He called for questions or comments from the Task Force and the public; none were proffered.

Col. Jones then called for a motion to approve the selected PPL-32 projects for Phase I authorization, and approval of Phase I funding which totals \$7,197,559. Mr. Weller made the motion, which Mr. Kacir seconded. The motion carried without dissent.

VI. INFORMATION

Agenda Item #3 – Report: Status of CWPPRA Program Funds and Projects (Baylissa Walter, USACE)

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 – 31) is \$3.272 billion. The total funded estimate (received since inception through FY2023) is \$2.605 billion, leaving a potential gap of \$667 million if the Program were to construct and maintain all projects to date. Current Task Force-approved funding for projects in Phase I, Phase II, and O&M and Monitoring totals \$2.428 billion. The current estimate of total allocated funding to agencies for individual projects totals \$2.102 billion. Thus, allocated funds for construction do not exceed funding received.

Ms. Walter next presented the Total Program Estimate as it would be if proposed budget increases and new funding requests are approved at these proceedings. Beginning with the current Total Program Estimate of \$3,271,870,445.53, the Task Force will be asked to consider \$1,081,282.15 in budget increases, and \$105,323,736.00 in new project phase authorizations. If approved, the new Total Program Estimate would total \$3,378,275,463.68.

Ms. Walter then iterated current construction funding availability. The CWPPRA Program has \$128,261,824 of funding carried forth from the October Task Force meeting. Anticipated DOI funding for FY23 amounting to \$89,642,066 has been authorized (but not yet received). Thus, a net total of \$217,903,890 is available for today's proceedings. The Task Force will consider funding recommendations today – four projects for Phase II, Increment I funding, two PPL-32 projects for Phase 1 funding, and three budget increases – which total \$159,806,777.03. Only the federal percentage (\$135,835,760.34) will be deducted from the available funds, leaving a balance of \$82,068,130.

Ms. Walter concluded with the overall Project Status graphic. CWPPRA has authorized 234 projects. The 129 active projects include 27 in Phase 1 Engineering and Design, 22 in Phase 2 Construction, 74 projects in the O&M and Monitoring phase, and 40 projects that have been completed and closed financially. Additionally, CWPPRA has deauthorized 49 projects, transferred 10 projects, and placed 5 in the inactive category. There are 6 technical support projects, which include Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS), monitoring contingency, storm recovery, Construction Program technical support, the wetland conservation plan, and Programmatic Signage.

Col. Jones called for Task Force and Public comments; none were proffered.

Agenda Item #4 – Report: Electronic Votes and Approvals (Sarah Bradley, USACE)

Col. Jones called upon Sarah Bradley to present results of recent electronic voting. Ms. Bradley announced that on November 17, 2022, the Technical Committee approved for recommendation the following scope changes:

- BA-217 Grand Bayou Ridge and Marsh Restoration
- BS-42 – Phoenix Marsh Creation (West Increment)
- BS-44 Phoenix Marsh Creation (East Increment)
- ME-31 Freshwater Bayou Marsh Creation

On December 5, 2022, also in electronic voting, Task force approved the above scope changes as recommended.

Col. Jones opened the floor for Task Force and public comments; none were proffered.

Agenda Item #5 – Report: Construction Update (Sarah Bradley, USACE)

Col. Jones called upon Ms. Bradley to present the Construction Report. Ms. Bradley in turn called upon agency representatives to provide the following construction status reports:

Robert Dubois, FWS, began with a construction update for South Grand Chenier Marsh Creation project (ME-21), a PPL-11 project with the dubious distinction of being the oldest unconstructed CWPPRA project history. The project site is in Cameron Parish, south of Hwy 82, adjacent to and west of the Rockefeller Refuge. Construction was completed in October 2022 and consists of two confined cells totaling 364 acres, two unconfined areas of fill totaling 26 acres, and the installation of earthen plugs in an area adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico (where dredge pipe was placed.) Articulated concrete mats (ACMs) were not installed as planned (to protect the earthen plugs) for several reasons: a) sediment accumulation adjacent to the earthen plugs resulted in the

natural formation of (protective) sandbars, b) an anticipated Gulf Shore project will provide incidental protection for the earthen plugs, and c) transport of the ACMs to the site would have damaged or destroyed existing marsh. Mr. Dubois provided pictorial evidence of the completed project, noting that while the confined areas are holding water (due to a heavy rainfall event preceding the photo acquisition), the dikes remain intact. He also provided pictures of the earthen plugs and naturally occurring sandbars. The final inspection was conducted in November 2022; final construction cost was \$15,137,410.

Ms. Kristen Ramsey, FWS, provided an update for the New Orleans Landbridge Shoreline Stabilization and Marsh Creation project (PO-169). She began by acknowledging the project team and project partners. The project consists of three marsh creation areas (MCAs) -- two along either side of Hwy 90 and the third at Bay Jaune Point – totaling 253 acres. The other feature is armored earthen containment dikes providing 15,900+ linear feet (LF) of shoreline protection along the outer perimeter of the marsh creation cells. The PPL-24 project was approved for Phase II construction in 2019; the Notice to proceed (NTP) was issued in November 2021. Construction began in December 2021. Earthen containment dikes and placement of ACMs has been completed. Dredging and fill operations have commenced at MCAs 1 and 3 utilizing borrow from Lake Pontchartrain and Lake St. Catherine respectively. Commencement of operations at MCA 2 are anticipated in February 2023; project completion is predicted in March 2023. Due to favorable bids, construction costs are an expected \$11,682,274 – about \$4 million less than the approved budget.

Col. Jones opened the floor for Task Force. Bren Haase, CPRA, appreciation for the updates, which he can share with colleagues and stakeholders across the state. He specifically commended the ME-21 project team for contending with the problems associated with the project over the years, and persevering in their quest to see the project through to completion.

Col. Jones opened the floor for public comments; none were proffered.

Agenda Item #6 – Report: Public Outreach Committee Report (Lauren Leonpacher, USGS)

Lauren Leonpacher, CWPPRA Outreach Coordinator, highlighted numerous activities, projects and events that the Outreach team was involved in from October 2022 – January 2023:

- The Team co-sponsored the Restore America Estuarine Conference held in October in New Orleans. Several CWPPRA agencies were involved. It was an opportunity to disseminate information about and promote the CWPPRA Program model; attendees came from across the U.S. and Canada. Team efforts included organizing and facilitating a session highlighting environmental education efforts of several “sister” agencies (CPRL, Sea Grant, and others).
- *WaterMarks360* online publication has marked its one-year anniversary of existence with on-going success apparent by the number of users (across numerous states), student guide downloads, positive feedback from educators and communities. She announced the next *WaterMarks360* project entitled *Our Changing Delta*, which focuses on the BS-11 Delta Management at Ft. St. Phillip project. The curriculum (in its final stages of development) includes informational videos, student guides, and an event-based card game, to educate

about how deltaic ecosystem function changes in response to events such as hurricanes, restoration projects.

- The final *WaterMarks360* Professional Development Training for teachers was held in October. Training sessions have been conducted across the coast in cooperation with the LaSTEM initiative; teachers receive CUEs and other incentives. Ms. Leonpacher continues to receive enthusiastic feedback from educators who are implementing the curriculum in their schools.
- The LaCoast.gov website is being redesigned, although essential content will remain available; launch date is anticipated in the coming months.
- New print materials are available – a condensed version of the *Understanding CWPPRA* booklet, and *Watermarks360* stickers.
- The 2022 Dedication Celebration was held virtually again during November. It featured 35 unique infographics which garnered about 6,000 responses from social media. The event culminated in participant prizes.
- The third Annual Wetlands Writing contest is underway and accepting submissions until the end of March.

Ms. Leonpacher went on to highlight several local festivals, events and project site visits at which Outreach members were present and/ or involved. The Louisiana Wetlands book display is now in the Iberia Parish Public Library; Ms. Leonpacher invited attendees to suggest future locations. She reviewed social media outreach statistics, ongoing projects (in addition to those mentioned earlier), and listed upcoming events and partnerships.

Col. Jones commended Ms. Leonpacher for her presentation and the efforts of the Outreach Committee to reach and engage the public.

Col. Jones called for Task Force questions or comments. Mr. Doley echoed the Colonel's remarks, emphasizing that outreach is integral not only to the public's understanding of the work of CWPPRA, but also to the education and development of future environmental science professionals.

Col. Jones called for public questions or comments; none were proffered.

Agenda Item #7 – Report: Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) Report (Leigh Anne Sharp, CPRA)

Leigh Anne Sharp (CPRA) was called to present the CRMS update. She began with a synopsis of the recent Monitoring Workgroup Meeting Review that occurred in January 2023. At that meeting several issues were considered:

- The potentiality of transitioning to satellite-derived imagery is being explored. The last coastwide aerial photography event is to occur in 2024.
- CRMS website revisions are being made, including new video tutorials (under development), an online vegetative community tool, and an updated marsh analysis map. Also available is real-time hydrologic data (in contract with an independent vendor); this data is only available to Monitoring Workgroup members.

- The reference monitoring network – specifically the rationale for a network approach, and its randomized statistical design – as it enhances data collection, analysis and dissemination. A monitoring prioritization survey was sent to relevant agencies.
- A data mining exercise to determine marsh elevation changes at several CWPPRA (and one CIAP) project site(s) was not completed during the MWG meeting but will be finalized and made available to the Environmental Workgroup members to inform future engineering and planning efforts.

Ms. Sharp then focused on current activities, including the 2023 Elevation Change and Accretion data collection (which is done cyclically), and Vegetation Change data collection (which is done annually in each basin.) The data results in improved assumptions, reveals clear limitations and enhances modeling in the development of the 2023 Coastal Master Plan. Elevation Change and Accretion data (specifically) helps to infer new subsidence estimates.

Col. Jones thanked Ms. Sharp for her presentation and called for questions or comments from the Task Force and the public; none were proffered.

Agenda Item #8 – Report: Status of the Coastwide Salvinia Weevil Propagation Facility (LA-284) Project (Ronny Paille, FWS)

Ronnie Paille (FWS) initiated his report asserting that this is a bio-control project – an effort to control the spread of Giant Salvinia by producing and distributing weevils known to specifically attack and control that invasive species. Selected as a Coastwide project in 2017, the original budget of \$3.8 million included some construction costs. Rather than construct ponds, budgeted funds have been utilized to rent, operate and maintain four (4) ponds at ULL Cade Farm, and 4 ponds at St. Gabriel utilized for weevil propagation, harvesting and (ultimately) distribution to the public. Most of the budget is spent on O&M and data collection conducted by LSU AgCenter (lead by Dr. Rodrigo Diaz). This data collection monitors adult and larval weevil populations, and largely determines an optimal time for harvest and release events. Mr. Paille demonstrated that the number of landowners participating in releases has increased yearly, as has the number of parishes throughout the state into which weevils have been released.

Mr. Paille shifted his focus to problematic issues which have become apparent despite the increases in participation and release site locations. At the St. Gabriel ponds, invasive apple snails are now in the system. At the Cade ponds, invasive Cuban Bullrush has been found growing on top of the salvinia. Both invasives render those ponds unusable for harvest. LSU has, therefore, initiated greenhouse propagation of the weevils, which allows controlled water temperature to extend (tropical) weevil propagation time, and potentiate earlier (and repeated) release of the weevils into sites before the salvinia growth is too dense. Greenhouse propagation also greatly reduces the possible introduction of invasives.

Another major aspect of the project is release site monitoring (currently conducted at two landowner sites – Bayou Cane and Delcambre.) The Bayou Cane site consists of two release sites and two control sites. At the Delcambre site the release and control sites are rather contiguous, which confounds the monitoring. Drone imagery for vegetative surveys and weevil density (field) monitoring occurred ten times (each) over the course of three years after weevil release. Monitoring data indicates that weevil populations are negatively impacted by cool water temperatures. Salinity level data is inconclusive. Storms events and tides affect the sites by moving the salvinia (and weevil populations) in or out. Whether a reduction in surface coverage

of salvinia may be attributed to successful introduction of the weevils or to higher salinity levels in unclear, but apparently revegetation can occur upon mats of dead or unhealthy salvinia.

Ancillary efforts by LSU include outreach through social media, increasing student involvement, research and publications. A cold-tolerant weevil has been identified in South America; LSU researchers are considering bringing those in and studying their potential for use in the (mostly temperate) climate throughout Louisiana. Plans also include switching the release (and subsequent monitoring) of harvested weevils to an “upstream” watershed strategy and eliminating USGS drone imagery (which is ineffective in forested swamp areas).

Col. Jones opened the floor for Task Force questions and comments. Mr. Haase inquired about the number of growing seasons/ releases which have thus far been conducted; Mr. Paille replied that there have been five. Mr. Haase asked about landowner feedback; Mr. Paille asserted that there has not been any, aside from the fact that more landowners participate every year. He also noted that LSU conducted releases on Miami Corp lands prior to this project approval with reported success. However, because cold temperatures and storm events negatively impact weevil densities, and because the salvinia recolonizes from upstream sources, the problem has not been eliminated. Hence the landscape/ watershed approach seems logical.

Col. Jones opened the floor to public comment. Dr. Rodrigo Diaz, present virtually, commented made two assertions: 1) that the public has access to the harvested weevils and those requests can be made known to the AgCenter at any time, and 2) that a cold-tolerant sub-variety of weevils has been located; USDA has approved its transport into the U.S. and the first release is possible by Summer 2023. A question submitted in the chat feature of the virtual meeting (regarding the specific source location in S. America) was answered directly by Dr. Diaz. No other questions or comments were proffered.

Agenda Item #16 -- Additional Agenda Items

Colonel Jones took this opportunity to announce that Chris Doley, NOAA Fisheries, is stepping down as Task Force representative, and offered words of commendation for his 14 years of service in that role. Col. Jones invited Task Force comments; all Task Force members responded in turn and expressed appreciation for Mr. Doley’s leadership, willing guidance and support, thoughtfulness, even-keeled character, and long-term partnership in the CWPPRA Program.

Col. Jones presented Mr. Doley with a token of appreciation and invited him to comment. Mr. Doley asserted that the CWPPRA model of restoration is unequalled in its efficacy, its success, and in the passion and dedication of its members as they confront daunting coastal challenges. He expressed honor, pleasure and gratitude for his time with CWPPRA colleagues. He introduced his replacement, Leslie Craig.

VII. REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Colonel Jones called for any additional public comments.; none were proffered.

VIII. CLOSING

Ms. Bradley was called upon to iterate the following schedule of meetings, which she did as follows:

A. Priority Project List 33 Regional Planning Team Meetings

February 7, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Region IV Planning Team Meeting	Lake Charles
February 8, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Region III Planning Team Meeting.	Morgan City
February 9, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Region I & II Planning Team Meeting	Mandeville
February 23, 2023	10:30 a.m.	Coastwide Electronic Voting	(via email, no meeting)

B. The Technical Committee meeting will be held April 6, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. at a

C. Future Program Meetings*

February 7, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Region IV Planning Team Meeting	Lake Charles
February 8, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Region III Planning Team Meeting	Morgan City
February 9, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Region I & II Planning Team Meeting	Mandeville
April 6, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee Meeting	Baton Rouge
May 4, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Task Force	Lafayette
September 7, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee Meeting	New Orleans
October 5, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Task Force	New Orleans
December 7, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Technical Committee Meeting	New Orleans

*subject to change

IX. Adjournment

Col. Jones expressed appreciation for everyone in attendance and their comments in today's meeting. He asked for final Task Force comments; Mr. Doley (belatedly) acknowledged sincere appreciation for Patrick Williams, Cecilia Linder and other colleagues at NOAA Fisheries.

Colonel Jones invited Mr. Doley to adjourn the proceedings. Mr. Doley made the motion; there was no audible second. The motion carried without dissent and the meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.