

**BREAUX ACT**  
**Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act**  
**TASK FORCE MEETING**  
**25 January 2024**  
**Minutes**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Colonel Cullen Jones convened the 110th meeting of the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force. The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. on January 25, 2024. The meeting was conducted at the Tulane Coastal and River Center, 1370 Port of New Orleans Place, 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. Britt Paul, Acting (NRCS, for the U.S. Department of Agriculture)  
Mr. Patrick Williams, Acting (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 (65<sup>th</sup>) Commander of the USACE – New Orleans District, serving as chairperson of the CWPPRA Task Force. He began by praising the work the CWPPRA program has accomplished over the last thirty years. Col. Jones emphasized that Louisiana is losing 80 percent of the nation’s coastline. He expressed that since the 1930s, the state has lost approximately 1800 square miles, which is equivalent to the state of Delaware, of which he is a native. He restated his appreciation for and formally welcomed all in attendance. Col. Jones recognized the contributions of Mr. Brad Inman to CWPPRA describing him as a staunch supporter and key pillar of the CWPPRA program. Col. Jones then invited Task Force members to introduce themselves; they did so in turn. 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. Haase made the motion, which Mr. Weller seconded; the motion carried without opposition.*

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

**V: TASK FORCE DECISIONS**

**Agenda Item #7 – Report/Decision: Request for Phase II Authorization and Approval of Phase II Increment 1 Funding (Kaitlyn Richard, USACE)**

Colonel Jones called on Kaitlyn Richard, USACE, to review the Strategy and Criteria for Project Selection that was utilized by the agencies to collaboratively determine the most impactful projects. Ms. Richard proceeded to explain the Technical Committee developed the strategy and criteria for project selection and it was implemented in December of 2022 for selecting Phase II construction projects. In December of 2023, the criteria were used for both Phase I and Phase II projects. The criteria were developed in response to funding limitations and increasing construction costs and include cost effectiveness, critical landscape feature, critical area of need, synergy, as well as critical infrastructure protection. Other considerations, such as stakeholder support and sustainable borrow sources are also factored into the selection. The priority has been set to get projects constructed and reduce the backlog of projects in Phase I Engineering and Design.

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:

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

	<b>Adjusted total score (with weights)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Phase 2, Increment 1 Request</b>
Reggio Marsh Creation (BS-43)	<b>7.03</b>	<b>1</b>	\$41,922,882
St. Catherine Island Marsh Creation and Shoreline Protection (PO-179)	<b>5.48</b>	<b>2</b>	\$27,931,521
South Grand Chenier Baker Tract Marsh Creation (ME-32)	<b>5.23</b>	<b>3</b>	\$30,879,285
Phoenix MC-East Incr (BS-42)	4.68	4	
Bay Raccourci Marsh Creation and Ridge Restoration (TE-156)	4.68	5	
Freshwater Bayou Marsh Creation (ME-31)	3.79	6	

\$100,733,688

NOTES:

Projects were ranked collaboratively by the agencies

Projects were presented in the order included on the Agenda.

Robert Dubois, FWS, initiated the presentations with TE-156 Bay Raccourci Marsh Creation and Ridge Restoration. The project was chosen as a PPL29 Candidate and is in western portion of the Terrebonne Basin. The project is consistent with the 2023 State Master Plan; 286d Marsh Creation and 286c Ridge Restoration. The area has suffered dramatic land losses from 1932 to 2016. The project features include 16,350 linear feet, or 17 acres of forested ridge habitat along the southern bank of Bayou DeCade, and 341 acres of marsh creation and 103 acres of marsh nourishment. Using Lake Mechant as a borrow source will restore a total of 461 acres of critical marsh and ridge habitat. Phase II increment I request was \$35,330,359, with a fully funded project cost of \$42,006,694. The cost effectiveness was calculated to be \$115,721 per acre. The project is synergistic with many projects in the area including the TE-28, the Brady Canal Hydrologic Restoration Project; TE-34, Penchant Basin Natural Resource Plan, Increment 1; TE-39, South Lake DeCade Freshwater Introduction; TE-44, North Lake Mechant Landbridge Restoration; TE-72, Loss Lake Marsh Creation and Hydrologic Restoration; TE-138, Bayou DeCade Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation; and the Ducks Unlimited Bay Raccourci Marsh Enhancement and Terraces. The interior loss rate is -0.29% per year as calculated by USGS, for critical area of need. The critical landscape features include restoration of a portion of Bayou DeCade Ridge, the restoration of a portion of Bay Raccourci shoreline, and the North Lake, Lake Mechant Landbridge. There is minimal infrastructure associated with this project.

Kristen Ramsey, FWS, provided a summary of PO-179 St. Catherine Island Marsh Creation and Shoreline Protection. Located in Orleans Parish, almost entirely within the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, PO-179 is a PPL 26 project that was approved for Phase I engineering and design in January 2017. The goal of this project is to restore the marsh that was degraded in the area in the vicinity of Chef Menteur Pass and to protect a critical stretch for the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline. The project includes two marsh creation cells totaling 231 acres, and 14,476 linear feet of shoreline protection. The project would net 169 acres at the end of its 20-year life. While the project has the lowest Increment 1 request, \$27.9 million, and lowest fully funded costs, at \$32.6 million, the cost effectiveness was not in the high category. The project has synergy with PO-22, Bayou Chevee Shoreline and Protection project, as well as the Fish and Wildlife Service-funded shoreline protection project that is embedded within that PO-22 project. It is less than a mile from US Highway 90, which a critical hurricane evacuation route for the community of New Orleans.

Kristen Ramsey, FWS, continued with the BS-42 Phoenix Marsh Creation East presentation. The project was part of PPL 29 and was approved for Phase I engineering and design in January 2020. It is located in the Breton Sound Basin in Plaquemines Parish. The goal of the project is to restore marsh habitat by addressing an area of significant degradation and high land loss, -1.17% per year. It will also be serving as one increment of the Breton Sound landbridge extension concept. There are two marsh creation cells totaling 366 acres, netting 268 acres at the end of the 20-year life. These will work synergistically by creating continuity with the Breton Landbridge Marsh Creation West project, BS-38, and the Mid Breton Landbridge Marsh Creation and Terracing project, BS-32. This project proposes to borrow from a renewable sediment source in the Mississippi River, the Myrtle Grove Anchorage. While the cost effectiveness at \$200,000 is low, the borrow source is a renewable sediment source. The Phase

II, Increment 1 request for this project is \$51 million, and the fully funded cost is \$56.1 million. The team will continue to look for ways to enhance the cost effectiveness of the project.

Doug Jacobson, EPA, proceeded to present the BS-43 Reggio Marsh Creation Phase II request. As a PPL 30 candidate, it was approved for Phase 1 engineering design in January 2021. He thanked CPRA and NOAA for their invaluable assistance with the project. The goal of this project is to restore marsh habitat east of the community of Reggio by creating and nourishing an area to be tidal marsh during the 20-year project life. The project will aid in reducing wetland loss and enhancing resilience features for Reggio in St. Bernard Parish by creating 519 acres of intermediate marsh utilizing four sub-cells with borrowed material from Lake Lery. There is synergy with East Delacroix Marsh Creation and Terracing project, BS-37; the North Delacroix Marsh Creation and Terracing project, BS-41; Lake Lery Marsh Creation, BS-16; Phase I and Phase II, Lake Lery Marsh Creation, BS-17; and the Breton West Marsh Creation, BS-38. The project will also work with the Breton Sound Landbridge and provide critical infrastructure protection along LA Highway 300. Loss rates are dramatic at -1.22% per year. EPA's phase II request, the incremental funding of \$41,922,882 based on the project's fully funded cost of \$46,707,631.

Ron Boustany, NRCS, presented the ME-32 South Grand Chenier Baker Tract Marsh Creation project and took the opportunity to thank the Miller family, NRCS, and Rockefeller Refuge. The project is located in Cameron Parish, Mermentau Basin, south of Highway 82 and is part of the 2023 State master Plan in South Grand Cheniere Marsh Creation #207. The area is approximately 401 acres and is expected to net 346 acres, with an additional 66 acres possible, if a favorable bid is received. This is a cost-effective project at just over \$100,000 per acre and will work synergistically with ME-20, various terraces and the state's Mermentau Inundation Relief project. It is an area of critical need with a loss rate of -1.04% per year and the project will provide protection for Highway 82 as week as the Chenier. The Phase II, Increment 1 is \$30.1 million and the fully funded cost for the project is \$34.8 million.

Angela Trahan, NRCS, finalized the presentations with ME-31 Freshwater Bayou Marsh Creation. She expressed appreciation for her coworkers at NRCS, CPRA, stakeholders and landowners. The project is located in Vermilion Parish with the goal to create new wetland habitat, reduce degraded marsh while reducing wave erosion. Approximately 1.5 million cubic yards of Gulf near shore borrow will be used to create two cells totaling 428 acres, netting 282 acres. Both Clean Water Act Section 404 and Section 408 permits have been obtained. The cost effectiveness for this project is in the medium range at \$122,000 per net acre. Synergistically, the project will work with ME-04 Freshwater Bayou Wetland Protection and Hydrologic Restoration project and the NAWCA has implemented the Freshwater Bayou Shoreline Enhancement project. The loss rate for the area is also in the medium range, -0.53% per year. The Phase II Increment 1 cost is \$30,571,307, with a fully funded cost of \$34.3 million.

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, Terrebonne Parish Coastal Restoration Director, spoke in favor of TE-156 as it would not only help restore marsh, but it will help build both the Raccourci and DeCade ridges. No further comments or questions were proffered.

Martin Miller, whose property is adjacent to the Rockefeller Refuge, stated benefits are already being seen with ME-20 and the Miller family will continue to cooperate with Mr. Boustany with the ME-32 project.

Col. Jones then requested Kaitlyn Richard reiterate the Technical Committee’s recommendation for the record. Ms. Richard restated the Technical Committee’s prioritization of the most impactful coastal restoration projects utilizing the selection criteria with the recommendation of approval of Phase II authorization and Phase II, Increment I funding for the Reggio Marsh Creation, BS-43 project, \$41,922,882, the St. Catherine Island Marsh Creation and Shoreline Protection, PO-179, \$27,931,521, and South Grand Chenier Baker Track Marsh Creation, ME-32, \$30,879,285.

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

Colonel Jones called for a ten minute recess.

**Agenda Item #8 – Report/Decision: 33<sup>rd</sup> 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 2023 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 33 projects as listed in the table below. The Technical Committee recommended the highlighted projects.

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

In the Pontchartrain Basin there are two projects. The Biloxi Marsh Shoreline Protection project aims to slow shoreline erosion rates along the Lake Borgne shoreline with 15,952 feet of a foreshore rock dike of lightweight aggregate core. Net acres are 118 with a fully funded cost of \$44.7 million. Bayou Ducros Marsh Creation is located in Golden Triangle adjacent to the MRGO, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet and intends to restore marsh south of Bayou Ducros reinforcing structural integrity of the bayous. The project entails 320 acres of marsh creation and

179 acres of marsh nourishment using borrow from Lake Borgne. Net acres are 336 with a fully funded cost of \$34.4 million.

Two projects are in the Breton Sound Basin. Bayou Terre aux Boeufs Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation project located Plaquemines Parish. The project includes marsh creation and nourishment, as well as restoration of a forested ridge. The project entails 358 acres of marsh creation and 66 acres of marsh nourishment using borrow from Lake Petit while restoring 27,011 linear feet of the forested ridge. Net acres are 336 with a fully funded cost of \$47.7 million. South Delacroix Marsh Creation project is immediately west of the community of Delacroix and south of Bayou Gentilly. The project goal is to restore marsh south of the historic ridge with borrow from Petit Lake. Net acres are estimated at 332, with a fully funded cost of \$46.6 million.

In the Barataria Basin, 479 acres will be created, and another 77 acres nourished with the West Dupre Cut Marsh Creation project. Borrowing from Bayou Rigolettes, the project will net 430 acres with a fully funded cost of \$42.9 million. The Northwest Little Lake Marsh Creation Extension project is expected to create approximately 225 acres and nourish an additional 87 acres while restoring approximately 1.9 miles of the Little Lake and Bay L'Ours shoreline. At a fully funded cost of \$32.1 million, the goal of the project is to restore marsh habitat that was significantly impacted by Hurricane Ida and to restore a portion of the Little Lake shoreline. The Southeast Golden Meadow Marsh Creation project will create 294 acres and nourish an additional 39 acres of marsh with borrow from Bayou Lafourche. The project aims to address the vulnerability of the South Lafourche Hurricane Protection Levee with a net of 250 acres at a fully funded cost \$37.6 million.

With in the Terrebonne Basin, the Eastern Terrebonne Landbridge Marsh Creation Increment 1 project will create 400 acres and nourish and additional 90 acres that will address high rates of land loss in the Eastern Terrebonne Basin southwest of Golden Meadow. The borrow source is Laurier Bayou and the project would net 370 acres at a fully funded cost of \$45.9 million. The Carencro Bayou Diversion project will reconnect freshwater flows from Bayou Penchant to marsh and Southern Terrebonne by reestablishing flow through the Bayou. At a fully funded cost of \$22 million, the project will net 286 acres.

The final project is in the Mermentau Basin, Gulf Shoreline Protection West, plans on construction of 10,560 linear feet of shoreline protection in the form of a foreshore breakwater with a lightweight aggregate core. The project would net 213 acres, at a fully funded cost of approximately \$47.8 million.

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; none were proffered.

He then asked for public comment. Mart Black, Coastal Restoration Director for Terrebonne Parish, referred to a letter sent to the Task Force that states the selection criteria is a step in the right direction, however, still needs tweaking, as it relates to projects in Terrebonne that were not selected. Terrebonne is starved for freshwater and sediment and the sediment rich Atchafalaya River provides them through Bayou Penchant. With minor adjustments at Superior Canal, that freshwater and sediment can be kept in Terrebonne Parish. Addressing Carencro Bayou Diversion, it is a relatively inexpensive project that can potentially nourish 2000 acres of marsh and should be reconsidered.

Col. Jones proceeded to thank Mr. Black for his comments and acknowledged receipt of the letter. He also stated that the Task Force is in the process of drafting a formal response and expressed appreciation of the feedback and engagement on the selection criteria. Col. Jones then requested Ms. Richard state the Technical Committee’s recommendation. She stated the project information in the following table.

**Project Selection, Phase 1**

	<b>Adjusted total score (with weights)</b>	<b>RANK</b>	<b>Phase I Request</b>
South Delacroix Marsh Creation	7.25	<b>1</b>	\$4,345,285
Northwest Little Lake Marsh Creation Extension	6.84	<b>2</b>	\$3,057,830
			\$7,403,115

*Col. Jones then called for a motion to approve the selected PPL-33 projects for Phase I authorization, and approval of Phase I funding which totals \$7,401,115. Mr. Paul made the motion, which Mr. Weller seconded. The motion carried without dissent.*

**VI. INFORMATION**

**Agenda Item #2 – 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 – 32) is \$3,344,711,210.28. The total funded estimate (received since inception through FY2024) is \$2.6 billion, leaving a potential gap of \$724 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 \$2.5 billion. The current estimate of total allocated funding to agencies for individual projects totals \$2.2 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 \$3,344,711,210.28., the Task Force will be asked to consider \$91,916,283 in budget increases, and \$104,441,889.00 in new project phase authorizations. If approved, the new Total Program Estimate would total \$3,449,153,099.

Ms. Walter then iterated current construction funding availability. The CWPPRA Program has \$82,068,130, of funding carried forth from the [May](#) Task Force meeting. Anticipated DOI funding for FY24 amounting to \$92,008,058 has been authorized (but not yet received). Thus, a net total of \$161,007,592 is available for today’s proceedings. The Task Force will consider funding recommendations today – three projects for Phase II, Increment I funding, two PPL-33 projects for Phase 1 funding, – which total \$108,136,803. Only the federal

percentage (\$91,916,283) will be deducted from the available funds, leaving a balance of \$69,091,309.

Ms. Walter concluded with the overall Project Status graphic. CWPPRA has authorized 236 projects. The 131 active projects include 25 in Phase 1 Engineering and Design, 26 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 6 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 #3 – Report: Electronic Votes and Approvals (Kaitlyn Richard, USACE)**

Col. Jones called upon Kaitlyn Richard to present results of recent electronic voting. The October Task Force meeting was cancelled because of the potential government shutdown and required an electronic vote of all decision items. The decision items involved incremental operations, maintenance and monitoring funding that was approved for the projects and all were approved by the Task Force. Ms. Richard then explained that CWPPRA Standard Operation Procedures requires a change in scope resulting in a variance of more than 25 percent from the total project cost, the number of net acres created, protected and restored, the net average annual habitat units, or the ratio of the total cost to the number of net acres created, protected, and restored, or total project cost to total project net average annual habitat units. She then announced the Task Force approved the Technical Committee recommendation of the following scope changes:

- CS-78 No Name Bayou Marsh Creation and Nourishment, October 20, 2023, scope change
- ME-23 South Grand Chenier Baker Tract Marsh Creation, November 28, 2023, scope change
- BS-43 Reggio Marsh Creation, November 22, 2023, scope and name change

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

### **Agenda Item #4 – Report: Construction Update (Kaitlyn Richard, USACE)**

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

Mr. Mike Nichols proceeded to highlight the PO-75 LaBranche Marsh Creation Project. It is located on the southwest shore of Lake Pontchartrain, adjacent to PO-17, in St. Charles Parish. The PO-75 LaBranche East and PO-133 LaBranche Centra were combined for one LaBranche construction project at an estimated cost of \$43 million. Approximately 6.2 million cubic yards of material from the nearby Bonnet Carre Spillway will be placed into three marsh creation cells. Currently, there are 54,000 feet, linear feet of containment dikes under construction. In addition, 6,848 linear feet of tidal creeks, and excavation of 39 tidal ponds, to



depths of 7.5 feet are planned. Mr. Nichols proceeded to show a series of construction photos that demonstrated not only construction progress but birds flocking to the construction areas. To date, 33,611 feet of containment dikes have been constructed in marsh creation areas 1 and 2, while in area 3, 12,000 feet of containment dikes have been built. To date, 340,000 yards of material have been moved, in April pumping should begin, and by the end of 2024, construction should be complete.

Ms. Kristen Ramsey, FWS, provided an update for the New Orleans Landbridge Shoreline Stabilization and Marsh Creation project (PO-169). She began by describing the project's location on either side of US Highway 90 at Bay Jaune Point. The PPL-24 project was approved for Phase II construction in 2019. With two borrow areas, one in Lake St. Catherine and the other in Lake Pontchartrain, 253 acres of marsh were created and nourished in three cells. Additionally, the project would protect 15,900 linear feet, or approximately 3 miles of shoreline through the placement of articulated concrete mats and earthen containment dikes. In February 2023, the northern expansion area of marsh creation area 2 was approved, in which an additional 25 acres were created and nourished. Ms. Ramsey then reviewed the history of the project. Construction began in December of 2021. At the May 2023 Task Force meeting, the CWPPRA community was informed of the insolvency issues of Magnolia Dredge and Dock that forced them to default and thus prevented completion of the project. The bonding company, Philadelphia Insurance, is responsible to complete the contract at the current bid price. At the time of default, the construction of the project was nearly 70% complete, with the completion of marsh creation area three and the installation of all articulated concrete mats and dredging of Marsh Creation Areas one and two well under way. CPRA worked with Philadelphia Insurance to award the contract for completion to Coastal Dredging Company and dredging of marsh creation area two resumed in December. The contract completion date is March 17, 2024, however, inclement weather may delay the completion. Once marsh creation area 2 is accepted, the repairs to the ACMs of marsh creation area one. In summary, Notice to Proceed was issued November of 2021, construction began in December 2021 and the expansion of marsh creation area two was approved in February 2023. The anticipated completion date is March 2024. A favorable bid was received in the amount of \$12.5 million.

Robert Dubois, FWS, presented a construction update of the BS-32 Mid-Breton Landbridge Marsh Creation and Terracing project. He described the project location in Plaquemines Parish along Bayou Terre aux Boeufs. In January 2023 bids were advertised and in April 2023, a reduction in scope involved the removal of terraces and marsh creation area five, as well as a reduction of acreage in Marsh creation unit two. The construction contract was awarded in May 2023, with construction commencing in September 2023 that is expected to be completed by November 2024. Mr. Dubois proceeded to show images of marsh creation cells with various levels of construction that also demonstrated the vulnerability of the communities that the project will help protect.

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 inquired about the 39 tidal ponds in conjunction with the PO-75 project. Mr. Nichols responded that despite challenges, the ponds were achieving the desired depth and there will be shallow water areas in two to three years when it all settles out. Mr. Haase encouraged all to highlight the fact that the project can be seen with travelling east to west from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. Mr. Williams, NMFS, thanked the NRCS team for their collaborative efforts with this project.

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

**Agenda Item #5 – 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 2023 – January 2024:

- *WaterMarks360*, CWPPRA project fact sheets and CRMS data have been a remarkable tool to use in the classroom. Outreach program members attended tow education conferences to present Watermarks 360.
- The HBCU Climate Change Conference was held in New Orleans and provided a wonderful opportunity to network with local scientists.
- Ocean Commotion is an annual event held by Louisiana Sea Grant at which CWPPRA was an exhibitor. Over 1700 students and 200 adults were in attendance and are able to interact with a variety of CWPPRA Outreach activities such as Louisiana wetlands trivia.
- In Houma, the Rougarou Fest is an annual event that allows for community engagement.
- In November, John Snell conducted a media tour featuring the LaBranche East Marsh Creation project.
- Also in November, the Nicholls State University Coastal Center groundbreaking was held, and construction complete by the end of the year. The Outreach Committee continues to work with the exhibits team to feature CWPPRA as a problem-solving entity as well as the program's history.
- *WaterMarks360* is enjoying great success, with over 1.8 million page views. The most recent endeavor, *Our Changing Delta*, enjoyed over 2000 student guide downloads. Professional Development Training for teachers was held in November, with over 60 educators in attendance. Ms. Leonpacher continues to receive enthusiastic feedback from educators who are implementing the curriculum in their schools. The upcoming *Watermarks360* will feature the Cameron Creole Freshwater Introduction project.
- Ms. Leonpacher then discussed the CWPPRA social media presence.
- New print materials are available – a condensed version of the *Understanding CWPPRA* booklet, bookmarks, CWPPRA coastal checklist, and *Watermarks360* stickers.

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 will be in the St. Charles Parish Public Library, 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.

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

### **Agenda Item #6 – 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 programmatic notes and then moved on to preliminary drought impacts:

- The 2021 CRMS land/water data has been published and is available for all three regions. CRMS provided one-kilometer square spatial analyses that allow for comparison of 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2021. An additional coastwide aerial photography event is planned in 2024.
- The next CRMS contract is being awarded. The SOP has been updated in support of the recent RFP.
- Elevation updates have been completed and applied to CIMS. The hydro portion of the CRMS website will be available soon.
- RSET and accretion data are being collected. Poor salinity values are expected.
- Recent drought impacts will be studied with additional soil samples. Drought stress is being noted as is any brown marsh encountered. All vegetation stations will be studied this summer and will inform the drought effects. Because this is a forested vegetation year, herbaceous cover and tree diameters will also be measured. There were areas of the coast that were inaccessible because of the drought. The drought was also responsible for missing data due to low water. The limits of the salinity meters were tested by the extremely high salinities recorded at well over 100 parts per thousand. Some positive affects of the drought were noted, as some sites that had been frequently flooded enjoyed an expansion of vegetation, as seen in 2018 with some elevation gains. Drought impacts will be better known by the end of the summer.

Col. Jones thanked Ms. Sharp for her presentation and called for questions or comments from the Task Force.

Mr. Paul, NRCS, commented that missing data is, in fact a data point. He then went on to express appreciation for such a system to capture events such as these. Mr. Paul inquired if there were any indications that there will be a brown marsh situation similar to that of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Ms. Sharp replied not at this time, however, elevation change and accretion monitoring will be elucidated this fall.

Col. Jones then asked for any comments from the public; none were proffered.

### **Agenda Item #9 -- Additional Agenda Items**

Col. Jones then asked for any additional agenda items from the Task Force and from the public; none were proffered

## **VII. REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

## VIII. CLOSING

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

### A. Priority Project List 34 Regional Planning Team Meetings

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)

B. The Technical Committee meeting will be held April 4, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. at a

### C. Future Program Meetings\*

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

## 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. Haase made the motion; there Mr. Williams seconded. The motion carried without dissent and the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.*